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Imagined Futures of Same-Sex Couples

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Abstract

This research explores how older same-sex couples in Scotland imagine their future. While there is a growing number of sociological studies looking at lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) ageing, these mostly focus on the intersection of age and sexual identity, often leaving out the impact of the past and present lived experiences on the ageing process. Sociological studies of time, and, more specifically, of the future, often exclude older populations due to assumptions that older people belong to a non-futurity (Sandberg 2015) because they are closer to the end of their lives. Similarly, studies on sexuality tend to explore younger people's experiences, invoking the idea of the asexual older age. By drawing on Adam and Groves' (2007) theory of imagined futures, Mead's (1934) work on the role of time in constructing identities, and May's (2013) idea that the self and society are relational, this research argues for the exploration of older age and the future as mutually constructive. To that end, the thesis asks the following question: How do older same-sex couples navigate the intersections of sexuality and ageing in imagining their futures? In answering this question, the research addresses the future needs, hopes, concerns, and fears of older same-sex couples in Scotland, and explores how the lived experiences of the participants' past and present figure in the imagination of their futures.

Drawing on fourteen semi-structured joint interviews with seven same-sex couples in Scotland, and on written accounts the couples produced between the interviews, the research explores the construction of the couples' past, present and future lived experiences. The interviews and written accounts highlight the role of the past and

present in the couples' imagination of the future, which is conceptualised through collective, interpersonal and imagined relationships. The findings also show that not only do these couples think about the future, but they also actively participate in its formation, through political activism and public engagement, imagining the future of Scotland as utopian. Based on these findings, the research argues for a closer examination of the relational aspect of personal biographies and the socio-historical contexts of people's lives in studies about the experience of ageing in same-sex couples.

By exploring the lives of older same-sex couples, and by presenting their stories and sharing their hopes, fears, and imaginations of the future with a wider audience, this research gives a voice to a (still) invisible population in ageing and sexuality studies. From an empirical perspective, the research investigates the lived experiences of older same-sex couples in Scotland within the socio-political contexts of their youth, middle, and older age, and explores the couples' joint constructions of their futures. Methodologically, the study contributes to the utilisation of semi-structured joint interviews in conducting qualitative research and exploring couple relationships. The thesis argues for a reconceptualization of the argument that older people have no future agency by focusing on the narratives the participants shared about their imagined short- and long-term futures. Finally, the thesis presents the idea that the interpersonal, collective and imagined relationships the participants formed during their lifetimes allowed them to imagine the future as utopian, constructing their imagination from specific cultural and historical events.

Lay Summary

This research is about older same-sex couples in Scotland and how they think about their future. The research looks at how people talk about their past and present, and how their experiences are reflected in the imagination of their future. For the purpose of this research I interviewed 7 older same-sex couples who lived in Scotland. I conducted two interviews with each couple, and between the interviews the couple wrote about their future in a notebook I gave them.

Results show that the couples who participated in this research imagine their future in a very similar way. They all talked about the struggles they experienced in their past and the positive changes they are witnessing in the present and explained that they expect to see these changes continue in the future. This research also shows that the couples created different relationships with others throughout their lives, for example, with the wider LGBTI community and the Scottish society. These relationships and communities were visible in the couples' future as well, and a lot of hope for creating a better future was put in the younger generations of Scottish citizens. The couples imagined their future in two ways – they talked about the short-term future, the one they would experience, and the long-term future, the one that would happen after they died. The imagination of the short-term future included concerns about their health, finances, and living situation, and some couples were afraid they would face discrimination based on their sexuality in formal care and medical institutions. The long-term future was more positive, as the couples imagined Scotland as a utopia where positive changes would ensure increased equality and inclusivity of the LGBTI population.

Because of their age, the same-sex couples who participated in this research spent their teens and early twenties in a society which rejected their sexuality and same-sex relationships. They also participated in various social and political movements that fought for equal rights of the LGBTI community. These experiences, both bad and good, are the reason why the couples imagine their short- and long-term futures the way they do. This research also plays a part in giving a voice to an invisible population of older same-sex couples. Through the stories presented in this thesis, I hope to raise awareness of the experiences these couples went through and what these experiences mean for their present and future lives.

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Chapter I: Introduction

"Study the past if you would define the future."

— Confucius

The future has always, paradoxically, been a time and place that is both uncertain and dependent on our actions. From environmental issues such as global warming and climate change (Page 2006), impacts of political events and referendums such as Brexit (Jacobs 2018; O'Neill 2018), to the future of work and employment (Donkin 2010), we are apprehensive about what the future holds. Among these large-scale concerns for our future, there are also the smaller, more personal ones, that are embedded in our daily lives. The actions we take and the decisions we make are guided by our anticipation of future events (Macrae et al. 2015), making the future an essential part of our present. This thesis explores the narratives about large- and small-scale futures told by older same-sex couples in Scotland. The main aim of the thesis is to present the narratives of these couples and illustrate how futures are imagined, constructed and realised, and how social change impacts the personal narratives of imagined futures. The thesis draws on Adam and Groves' (2007) concept of imagined futures, as the futures that individuals and groups create through the knowledge, actions and ethics shaped by their past and present. Throughout the thesis I argue that the intersection of sexuality and ageing serves as a key element in constructing interpersonal, collective, and imagined relationships which in turn allow the couples to imagine the future as a form of utopia (Bloch 1995). The relationships that exist in

the participants' lives, whether real or imaginary, are connected to imagined communities (Anderson 1991) which are created through shared knowledge and a sense of belonging to a collective (Fromby 2017). Therefore, the main argument of the thesis is that the relationships that these couples form throughout their lives with different communities and with each other allow for a specific imagination of the future. Before exploring imagined futures and communities in greater detail in Chapter II, this chapter offers an empirical and theoretical context from which this research developed and goes on to outline the historical context of the research participants' lives. The chapter then offers conceptual and terminology clarifications before presenting the research questions and the outline of the thesis.

1. Research Context

With a background in English literature, my initial plan was to do a PhD in that subject area, and to focus on the ageing population in contemporary literary fiction. While I was researching and writing a proposal that would take me in that direction, I noticed that I had not encountered a lot of research on LGBTI[1] (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex) ageing. Out of curiosity, I decided to investigate the matter further, and I found that even in social science there had not been a lot of work done on older LGBTI individuals, but even less on older same-sex couples. After extensively reading about non-normative ageing experiences, I decided to explore this 'invisible' population, as Blando (2001) and Shankle et al. (2003) call it, through the topic of imagined futures of older same-sex couples.

[1] This and other key terms will be clarified in Section 3 of this chapter.

1.1. The Invisible Population

Decreased fertility and mortality rates, along with improvements in "nutrition, sanitation and economic development" (Willson 2007, p. 148) have led to population ageing. Despite this, most Western societies still idolise youth, beauty, and economic productivity, creating an environment in which older people can become invisible (McCann et al. 2013). Adding to that, heteronormativity is still the norm in forming relationships and families, despite advances made towards equality of other sexual identities. As such, older LGBTI individuals have been underrepresented in research until a rapid development of social research on ageing in the 1960s (Willson 2007), and the subsequent recognition of LGBTI ageing in academic research in the late 1970s (Kimmel et al. 2006). Since then, the sociology of ageing continues to be an important area for academic debate (Willson 2007), focusing on issues such as cultural representations of older people in literature, media and culture (Kriebernegg, Maierhofer and Ratzenböck 2014), discussions of rejuvenating products and techniques aimed to prolong youth (Katz and Marshall 2003), and more practical problems concerning the increasing number of older people in different societies (Reher 2015; Colombier 2018; Sammons et al. 2019).

Even though there is an emerging body of research concerning LGBTI ageing (e.g. Heaphy 2007a; Knauer 2016; Fredriksen-Goldsen et al. 2017a), there are issues within this area that are still under-studied (Heaphy 2007a). One of the reasons for this, according to Calasanti and Slevin (2001), is that "researchers on aging tend to assume that everyone is heterosexual or that any difference has no consequence, while scholars of sexuality tend to focus on the young" (p. 7), and such assumptions often erase the non-normative ageing experiences, such as those of older same-sex

couples. Likewise, Cronin and King (2010) argue that invisibility surrounding older "lesbian, gay or bisexual" people (p. 1) is enforced by double marginalisation caused by older age and sexual identity (Shankle et al. 2003), and even triple marginalisation because of age, gender, and sexuality, experienced by older lesbian women (Traies 2016). The lack of research on older LGBTI people contributes to "suboptimal care at end of life and into bereavement due to assumed heterosexuality, lack of awareness about same-sex relationships and homophobia" (Almack, Seymour and Bellamy 2010, p. 909). Furthermore, Hughes (2009) argues that treating older people as a homogeneous group reinforces the invisibility of the older lesbian and gay population, since service providers usually make assumptions that their clients are heterosexual.

Apart from academic research, the invisibility of the older LGBTI population and same-sex couples can also be observed in the census data. In the 2011 census, 45% of the Scottish adult population was either married or in a registered same-sex civil partnership (Scotland's Census 2011), but there is no exact data on the number of older same-sex couples. There are estimates of between 545,000 and 872,000 LGBTI people over 65 in the UK (Fenge 2014), but again, the number of same-sex couples, whether cohabiting, married or living apart together, is unknown. The 2021 Scottish census aims to introduce the category of sexual orientation in order to monitor for equality, service planning and provision (Scotland's Census 2021). The introduction of this category will hopefully present a clearer image of the numbers of LGBTI individuals and same-sex couples in Scotland, which will be useful for academic research and policy development[2].

[2] Although this census category is not without its criticism, particularly around the validity of the gathered data (source: https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/dec/27/scottish-census-body-backs-self-id-guidance-for-sex-question).

1.2. Futures of the Older LGBTI Community

The intersection of older age and sexual identity has, in the context of studies on the future, implied that certain individuals, for example older same-sex couples who participated in this research, do not belong to the future (Sandberg 2015), and that they are "figured by the cultural imagination as being outside mainstream temporalities and standing in the way of, rather than contributing to, the promise of the future" (Port 2012, p. 3). Moreover, older people are often framed as "unproductive burdens" (Dengen 2014, p. 2) who drain existing resources, mostly provided by younger people. Younger people are also perceived as the ones who have agency in creating the future, both a personal, and a public and political one, through their political engagement, social movements, and generally by having more time in front of them to make changes.

When it comes to the LGBTI population, and particularly to gay men, the idea of "non-futurity" (Sandberg 2015, p. 20) is also shaped by the legacy of the HIV/AIDS epidemic of the 1980s, when people who contracted HIV or AIDS were considered as having a limited lifespan which erased the possibility of the future. However, this thesis challenges the idea that older same-sex couples and LGBTI individuals do not belong to the future by presenting the imaginations of different futures by older same-sex couples. The thesis argues that these couples do not only occupy the future but construct it with younger generations in mind. The participants' present and future engagement with political and social issues stems from their past experiences, which need to be contextualised within the historical and cultural contexts of their youth. The following section, therefore, outlines the historical context of the participants' youth, i.e. the time when most of the participants were in their late teens and early twenties,

and later chapters draw on the events explored below to illustrate the interplay of the past, present and future in the lives of older same-sex couples, and to explore the intersection of sexuality and ageing in their imagination.

2. Historical Context of the Research Participants' Lives

The age of participants in this research ranged from 36 to 77, with at least one partner across the seven relationships being over 55. While the rationale for setting the age limit at 55 will be further explored in Chapter III, Section 2.3.2, it is important to contextualise the lives of the participants within relevant political, cultural and historical frameworks.

2.1. Hegemonic Heterosexuality

During the 1970s and 1980s, when most of the participants were in their teens and early twenties, their lives were framed by negative opinions on their sexual identities, as the various legal, cultural, and policy frameworks positioned heterosexuality as the norm, and anything else as either a disease (D'Augelli and Grossman 2001) or criminal behaviour (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al. 2017b). This was particularly the case for gay men, as they could face being arrested for importuning (Lunan 2013), engaging in same-sex relationships, or in any other form of same-sex activity, either in private or in public (Weeks 2007) until 1967 in England and Wales, and 1980 in Scotland. With the HIV/AIDS epidemic of the 1980s, gay men became even more stigmatised because of the negative perception of their "narcissistic and recklessly immature pleasures" (Castiglia and Reed 2012, p. 3) as the main source of the disease. The increased stigmatisation of the gay male population during the 1980s in the UK impacted how the participants who experienced these events first-hand lived their lives then, how

they live them now and imagine living them in the future. Their past was framed and dictated by heteronormativity, valuing heterosexual relationships above others and establishing gendered norms (Brook 2018), which positioned the LGBTI population on the margins of their society. As Weeks (2007) argues, until the 1980s in the United Kingdom, heterosexuality was not considered as one of many forms of sexual identity that were possible, it was the "hegemonic form, institutionalised in all the major social organisations of the culture" (p. 80), and through its heteronormative ideals it created a binary relationship between the heterosexual and the other, in this case LGBTI sexualities, placing them on different ends of the spectrum, and not acknowledging the nuances in between. The Women's Movement and the Gay Liberation Front of the 1960s and 1970s aimed to dismantle this binary through fighting against heteronormativity, patriarchy and established power relations (Weeks 2007). These movements were a starting point for a number of campaigns which will be outlined below, and which shaped the lived experiences of the research participants, leaving their mark on their present and future.

2.2. Dismantling the Hegemony

One of the first attempts to decriminalise homosexuality was the 1957 Wolfenden Report (Scicluna 2017). The report suggested that sexual acts happening in private, mostly concerning men who had sex with men, unmarried women, and prostitutes, should not be legally sanctioned. While the Wolfenden Report played an important role in decriminalising homosexuality in Illinois, in the United States in 1961, and in Canada in 1969 (Lahey and Alderson 2004), it had less impact in the United Kingdom, where it was originally produced. The report constrained same-sex sexual activity, particularly that of gay men, to the private sphere in the UK, while at the same time it

increased prosecution and harassment of gay men in public spaces, portraying them as "second-class citizens" in the eyes of the "'decent', 'respectable' sexual subjects", i.e. the heterosexual majority (Hubbard 2001, p. 53). The events that followed allowed the LGBTI population to slowly reclaim their position in the public and to become recognised as valid sexual citizens, especially after the introduction of equal marriage (Richardson 2017). Homosexuality was decriminalised in 1967 in England and Wales (Criminal Justice Act 1967), and 13 years later, in 1980, in Scotland (Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980). While these legal changes promised more freedom for the LGBTI population, the changes in public opinion and other areas of society did not follow so quickly. For example, it was only in 1973 that homosexuality was no longer considered a psychiatric disorder in the Unites States (de Vries 2015) and was declassified as a mental illness by the World Health Organisation in 1992 (Stonewall 2016). In 1988, the then prime minister of the United Kingdom, Margaret Thatcher, introduced the Section 28 of the Local Government Act (Local Government Act 1988; Weeks 2007), which prohibited promoting homosexuality in schools, and framed same-sex relationships as unacceptable family relationships.

During the years between 1988 and 2000 there were further attempts to make legal changes that would benefit the LGBTI population, such as lowering the age of consent to 16 instead of 21 for men who have sex with men, which was rejected in 1994, and lowered instead to 18 (Stonewall 2016). 2000 marked a series of positive changes for the LGBTI population in Scotland, mostly due to the devolution of the Scottish Parliament and a new legislative freedom over health and social work, education, local government and housing, justice and policing, and tourism, among others. The establishment of the Scottish Parliament, following the referendum in 1997 (Mitchell

2000), allowed Scotland to move in a different direction from the rest of the United Kingdom, which was particularly visible in advancing LGBTI rights.

In 2000, Section 28 was abolished in Scotland, but not in England and Wales, where it was repealed three years later (Stonewall 2016), and the ban on LGBTI people serving in the armed forces was lifted at the same time[3]. 2004 saw the passing of the Civil Partnership Act, which gave same-sex couples the right to form civil partnerships, giving them the same rights as married opposite-sex couples in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In 2007, the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act, allowed same-sex couples equal rights in adopting and fostering children. Following this, the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act was passed in 2013, and came into effect in 2014 in England, Scotland and Wales. The most recent developments include the 2017 posthumous pardon to all gay men who were prosecuted because of their sexuality and the introduction of same-sex marriage in Northern Ireland in 2020. Based on the overview of relevant social, political and legal changes that happened in the last 40 years, Scotland represents an interesting and important context for studying older same-sex couples as they experienced a wide range of social change, from illegality, to living in one of the most progressive policy contexts in Europe.

3. Conceptual and Terminology Clarifications

This thesis uses *intersectionality* as one of the key terms in framing the research questions and in exploring the narratives that were shared by the research participants. Intersectionality implies that identities are multidimensional (Tomlinson 2013), and

[3] Although the legacy of this ban is still present today: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hampshire-50720216

are constructed by different aspects, such as gender, age, sexuality, class, and ethnicity, among others, which work together and contribute to the construction of our identities. As the impact of these various aspects changes throughout our lives, due to the changing socio-cultural contexts we inhabit, but also due to our own understanding of these facets, so does our identity constantly develop and change, taking on a fluid, rather than static, form.

In the context of the data analysis, I focused on the intersection of age, sexual identity, gender, and nationality of the research participants. While class and religion, for example, can also be key elements of identity, due to the research aims and the scope of this thesis, I made the decision not to fully include these aspects in the analysis of the participants' narratives. As will be explained in Chapter III, Section 2.4, the participant sample was fairly homogeneous in their background, as they were all white, middle-class, technologically literate, with a rich social life and support networks. In order to fully explore the element of class, a more varied sample would have been necessary, and the impact of religion on the couples' lives has been discussed and is planned for publication in future work.

The thesis uses the term *older* to refer to individuals over the age of 55. Based on Neugarten's (1974) ideas, people from 55 to 75 belong to the young-old group, and are "relatively healthy, relatively affluent, relatively free from traditional responsibilities of work and family and are increasingly well educated and politically active" (p. 187). While the initial participation age emerged from reviewing existing literature on ageing (e.g. Williams and Fredriksen-Goldsen 2014; Stacey and Averett 2016; Wilson, Kortes-Miller and Stinchcombe 2018) and an aim to explore narratives of people who experienced relevant social changes outlined in Section 2, Neugarten's

(1974) definition of the young-old is an almost perfect fit for the sample of research participants. However, by placing the age limit at 55, this thesis does not claim that those over 55 should be considered older, but rather uses this age to ensure the participants experienced events which might have been relevant for the imagination of their future, and, in addition, allows the participants to define themselves as older or not. More details on different understandings of the term 'older' will be explored in Chapter III, Section 2.3.2.

The thesis frames *interpersonal*, *collective*, and *imagined* relationships as key aspects of individuals' lives through which they construct their identity. Building on May's (2013) argument that the self and society are relational, the thesis argues that the relationships the participants formed throughout their lives position them within a specific generation (Gilleard and Higgs 2002) and allow them to imagine the future the way they do. The different relationships that the participants explicitly described through their narratives and that emerged from the data had an important role in the imagination of their future. While their role will be addressed in Chapter VII, Section 2.1.1, this section conceptualises each type of relationship within the framework of this thesis.

Interpersonal relationships are the relationships the participants formed with their partners. They are defined as intimate relationships (Jamieson 1998) which are constructed through everyday interpersonal practices (Gabb 2008). These relationships play a role in the construction of the individual's identity, as the individual views and presents themselves in relation to their partner (Cooley 1902). The thesis focuses on partner relationships, because these relationships are the focus of the present research,

and couple relationships were part of everyday interaction for the research participants, transcending the boundary between the past, present and the future.

The participants also constructed *collective relationships* by positioning themselves within different groups, such as the LGBTI community. The key aspect of collective relationships is a shared knowledge of past events that the participants outlined as relevant in their lives, and that were often based on collective memories (Tavani et al. 2015). The participants constructed collective relationships with the wider LGBTI community and the generation of older (LGBTI) people by using the pronoun 'we' to indicate relational belonging.

'We' was also used in narratives on Scotland and the *imagined relationship* the participants had with the Scottish society. These relationships differ from the collective ones as they do not only depend on the participants' self-identity of belonging but are conditioned by the participants being accepted as part of the group, in this case as part of Scottish society. Imagined relationships are based on Anderson's (1991) ideas on imagined communities, which share a history, and a common goal for the future. While half of the participants (seven out of fourteen) were not from Scotland, and had only moved here later in their life, all of them presented themselves as being part of the Scottish nation, through the use of language, as indicated above, and through participation in political movements that directly impacted the future of Scotland.

Another clarification that is required at the beginning of this thesis is the use of the terms *LGBTI*, *lesbian*, *gay*, and *same-sex*. As this research is based in Scotland and explores the Scottish cultural and historical context, the term LGBTI is used as the one that is dominant in governmental publications and policies. As with existing research on sexuality and sexual identity, using the most common terms, namely lesbian, gay,

bisexual, and queer, creates a risk of developing a 'one term fits all' problem, presenting a homogeneous image of the population that is studied, excluding a number of experiences in the process (Eliason 2014). As this thesis argues, sexual identities are dynamic and can vary across time, places and situations (Diamond and Butterworth 2009), and the same individual might use different terms in different social and historical contexts of their lives. For these reasons, any term is a compromise that may not always exactly fit. Taking this into account, the thesis uses the terms lesbian and gay as the ones that most of the participants self-identified with.

The thesis also uses the term *same-sex* to allow for a wider set of experiences and to recruit participants who do not identify as being in an opposite-sex relationship, while not constraining them to labelling themselves as lesbian or gay and to being attracted to the members of the same or the opposite sex (Toft and Yip 2018). As this thesis illustrates, many of the participants have been involved in opposite-sex relationships in the past, further explored in Chapter IV, Section 2, and some argued they might do so in the future as well. Being in a same-sex relationship in the present allows for the thesis to explore how the participants' identities are constructed by this kind of interpersonal relationship, and what role their current relationship plays in the imagination of their future.

4. Research Questions

Against the historical and research context outlined above, and in dialogue with empirical data and existing academic literature (Alvesson and Sandberg 2013) on LGBTI ageing and futures studies, this thesis aims to answer the following research question:

Research Question 1: How do older same-sex couples navigate the intersections of sexuality and ageing in imagining their futures?

The main research question directs the empirical investigation, emphasising the focus on older same-sex couples' imagination of the futures within a discussion of sexuality and ageing. To further clarify the focus of the study, three additional research questions are presented:

Research Question 1.1: What is the connection between the past, present, and future in the couples' narratives of their imagined future?

The second research question explores the role of the past, present and the future, and their mutual construction, in informing and constructing the couples' imagined futures (Adam and Groves 2007). The third question explores the role of relationships in the imagination of the future:

Research Question 1.2: How do interpersonal, collective, and imagined relationships feature in the couples' narratives and what is their role in imagining the future?

The third research question focuses on the relational aspect of the couples' lives, exploring in which way interpersonal, collective, and imagined relationships impact the imagination of their future. The final research question explores the intersection of historical time, generation and sexuality:

Research Question 1.3: How do themes of historical time, generation and sexuality appear and intersect in their accounts?

The final research question is in line with the broader research interest in the intersection of sexuality and ageing, addressing the impact of generation (Plummer 2010) on sexuality and its changing conceptualisations over time.

5. Thesis Outline

This chapter has contextualised the lives of the research participants and positioned them within relevant historical and cultural contexts. It offered the rationale for studying the ageing LGBTI population and introduced the main research questions. Chapter II presents a review of literature on LGBTI ageing and futures studies and identifies gaps in these two areas of research which have guided the development of this thesis. The chapter then explores sexuality as a socially constructed concept, and the mechanisms employed in its construction, as well as a discussion of relationships, temporality, and the concepts of utopias and imagined futures, establishing the main theoretical framework for the thesis. Chapter III explores the methodology of the research, outlining the research design, the methods used in collecting the data, and the process of analysing the data, reflecting on my positionality as a researcher in the context of the current research. Chapter IV is the first of three data chapters, and it explores the couples' narratives on their past and present lived experiences, illustrating the impact of a heteronormative cultural and historical context on their lives and the interplay of the past and the present in their accounts. Chapter V focuses on the short-term future through stories of choice, independence, and control, and the ways in which the couples imagined the futures that would occur during their lifetime. Chapter VI presents the imagination of the long-term futures and the fear, hope, and trust the couples expressed for the futures that might exist after they have died. Finally, Chapter

VII offers a conclusion to the entire thesis, presenting the main conceptual and empirical contributions of this research, its limitations and practical implications.

Chapter II: Literature Review

1. Introduction

This chapter offers a review of relevant literature on sexuality, "both a narrative of identity and a performativity of practice" (Higgs & Gilleard 2013, p. 87), and temporality, or "temporal being" (Baars 2012, p.150), which serve as the main theoretical frameworks for this thesis. The chapter narrows down the focus of the thesis and links literature on sexuality and temporality to the area of LGBTI ageing, offering a comprehensive overview of theoretical and empirical ideas presented in these areas so far. The aim of this chapter is not only to present and discuss relevant literature but to identify gaps which this thesis aims to fill (Alvesson and Sandberg 2013). The chapter begins with a brief overview of research on LGBTI ageing and futures studies conducted so far. It then explores sexuality, its definition and use in other sociological research, and links it to research on older LGBTI individuals and same-sex couples, arguing that sexuality needs to be understood as fluid and relational, and as constructed by the historical and cultural contexts of individuals' lives. The chapter then focuses on temporality, linking together identity, sexuality, and time, and presents an argument that sexuality is informed and regulated by biographical time. The chapter concludes by positioning this thesis in relation to the current literature on LGBTI ageing and futures studies and outlining the key ideas that will be explored in the data analysis chapters.

2. LGBTI Ageing

The last two decades have seen a growth in research on LGBTI ageing (e.g. Ward, River and Fenge 2008; de Vries and Croghan 2014; Harley and Teaster 2016; Simpson, Almack and Walthery 2016). Most of the research on the LGBTI ageing experience has focused on specific health needs of the older LGBTI population (e.g. D'Augelli and Grossman 2001; Fredriksen-Goldsen and Espinoza 2014), presenting consistent findings that the mental and physical health of older LGBTI individuals is impacted by experiences of discrimination and stigmatisation in their youth (de Vries 2015). Other research, mostly carried out in the United States (Espinoza 2014; Sullivan 2014; Johnston and Meyer 2017) and the United Kingdom (King and Cronin 2016; Ross 2016; Westwood 2016; Wathern and Green 2017) explores housing needs and preferences of older LGBTI individuals and same-sex couples, in relation to existing housing for older people. Further research on LGBTI ageing explores perceived discrimination (Knauer 2016; Stacey and Averett 2016), bereavement in older same-sex couples (Green and Grant 2008; Fenge and Fannin 2009; Jenkins et al. 2014), support networks and families of choice (Grossman, D'Augelli and Hershberger 2000; Pugh et al. 2015; Westwood 2013a; Knauer 2016), and end-of-life issues (de Vries and Gutman 2016; Westwood 2017b; Wilson et al. 2018).

The older LGBTI population has gained recognition in ageing studies only recently (Heaphy 2007a), due to the prevalence of heterosexual ageing as "a taken-for-granted norm" (Westwood 2019, p.1), which left little space for other sexual identities to be explored. Concepts such as successful ageing helped in framing older age as heterosexual and inclusive of a privileged group of older people who are able to maintain good health, physical activity and social ties into their later life (Fabbre

2014), excluding all those whose ageing experience does not fit into this framework. In addition, sexuality and queer studies added to the invisibility of older LGBTI individuals by focusing on the younger generations and excluding the experiences of the older LGBTI population (Brown 2009), in part due to challenges in accessing research participants, which will be outlined in Section 2.2 below.

2.1. Successful Ageing

Successful ageing is a concept developed by Rowe and Kahn in 1997, and is based on the idea that in order to age successfully, an individual needs to have the following three components in their older age: "low probability of disease and disease-related disability, high cognitive and physical functional capacity, and active engagement with life" (p. 433). Over the years there have been a number of authors who have criticised the successful ageing model, arguing that it puts too much responsibility on the individual, which then enforces the idea that the individual can "fail at ageing" if they do not succeed in maintaining good physical and mental health, and strong social ties (Flatt et al. 2013, p. 952). Stowe and Cooney (2015) argue that the concept of successful ageing only takes into consideration the later years of an individual's life, not considering the "development, history, and the importance of relationships over time" (p. 44), areas of inquiry this research focuses on.

Older LGBTI individuals share a specific experience of ageing framed by the social changes they experienced during their lifetime (Van Wagenen, Driskell and Bradford 2013), and are often excluded from the successful ageing narrative as they are at risk of having less social support and family ties than their heterosexual peers (Westwood 2017a), and therefore are more likely to be alone and isolated, unable to maintain "an active engagement with life" (Rowe and Kahn 1997, p. 433). Andrews (2009), in her

theoretical exploration of successful ageing, argues that in order to understand what successful ageing means for an individual, both the individual and cultural narratives of their life need to be taken into consideration, forming a complete image of what it might mean to age successfully. However, it is also important to understand that some individuals do not want to, or are not able to, age successfully (Timonen 2016), and that instead of prescribing what is necessary to age successfully, more emphasis should be put on exploring different avenues and experiences of ageing to get a more comprehensive picture of the different ways people age.

2.2. Empirical Inaccessibility

While the reviewed literature suggests that concepts such as successful ageing can erase the LGBTI ageing experience from within a theoretical perspective, as outlined above, there are empirical difficulties in exploring the older LGBTI population as well. Sue Westwood (2013b), for example, focuses on problems in accessing older lesbian women, arguing that there are certain criteria which should be met in order to successfully recruit this population, such as the researcher being "(an older) lesbian herself" (p. 384), using an informal and egalitarian communication style, providing "sufficient information about herself and her motivations, […] and is vouched for by other older lesbians" (p. 384). As will be outlined in more detail in Chapter III, some of these requirements were met in this study, such as sharing information and motivation behind the research, but others, specifically age and sexuality, were not, resulting in significant challenges in building rapport required to attract research participants. McCormack (2014) outlines further difficulties in reaching the older LGBTI population, which include the issue of potential participants not being out in public, not identifying with the labels such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender,

and not feeling comfortable discussing sexuality with people outside of their support group or counsellors.

Likewise, Grossman (2008) suggests that the reason why the older LGBTI population is difficult to research lies in the historical and cultural contexts they grew up in. Focusing on the context of the United States, Grossman (2008) argues that older LGBTI individuals came of age during a time when "homosexuality per se was still listed as a mental disorder" (p. 53), and this, as well as many other negative stereotypes from their youth, shapes their openness about their sexuality in the present. Similar challenges can be identified in the context of the United Kingdom by exploring the historical events the older LGBTI population experienced in their youth, which were outlined in the previous chapter.

All of the arguments presented above play a part in the lack of representation of the older LGBTI population in gerontological and sexuality research, which may, consequently, result in assumptions of heterosexuality, or even asexuality, i.e. stereotypes of older people not being interested in dating, intimate relationships or having a partner (Grossman 2008). The absence of research on LGBTI ageing creates misconceptions about the older LGBTI population, including those that they are "depressed, lonely, and sexually undesirable" (Fredriksen-Goldsen 2016, p. 6) and "pathetically miserable" (Reid 1995, p. 2). These stereotypes emerge from not knowing or understanding the lived experiences of older LGBTI individuals and same-sex couples, and from legal frameworks informed by heteronormativity, which impact societal opinions on same-sex couples and sexual minorities. The negative image of the old and isolated LGBTI person erases the lived experiences of those individuals who are not depressed or lonely and who have a partner, children, or are in contact

with their family members on a regular basis (Westwood 2015). While more recent research on older same-sex couples takes into consideration the diversity of their lived experiences (Kimmel et al. 2006; Fredriksen-Goldsen et al. 2017b), more work still needs to be done to include the older LGBTI population in academic discussions, policy and practice conversations, and housing and care provision debates.

3. Researching the Future

Along with being underrepresented in ageing studies, older LGBTI individuals and same-sex couples have not been included in research about the future. This section explores futures studies literature, and links sexuality and age to arguments about who is entitled to occupy the future. Futures studies grew significantly in the last decade (Godhe and Goode 2018), but the development of the field had its origins in the 1940s and 1950s (Bell 2003). While people were interested in predicting and preparing for the future since "the dawn of human prehistory" (Bell 2003, p. 2), the sociological inquiry into the future began with modernity, a period of vast social changes and establishment of modern institutions (Giddens 1990), as people began to grasp the idea that the future was theirs to "make, shape and exploit" (Adam 2011, p. 592). Modernity is often juxtaposed to the traditional ways of life (Giddens 1990), marking a break with established beliefs, and the development of scientific progress, visible, for example, in the ways individuals and groups think about time. In the context of futures studies (Bell 2003), the impact of modernity was visible in new ways of thinking about and imagining the future.

3.1. Modernity and Social Change

Modernity has been followed by a period of further social change which some authors call late modernity (Heaphy 2007b), although terms such as high modernity (Giddens 1991) or postmodernity (Harvey 1989) are also in use. Heaphy (2007b) argues that late modernity has been a period in which private matters became entangled with the public and political sphere, and in which the traditional ways of life gave way to new values and norms (Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan 2001). The characteristics of late modernity include reflexivity and breaking up with old norms and customs, and the transformation of "the content and nature of day-to-day social life" (Giddens 1991, p. 2), which in turn allows for the creation of non-normative ways of life, reflected in part through different sexual identities (Jones 2011; Simpson et al. 2017; Hughes and King 2018) and queer temporalities (Halberstam 2005). Furthermore, the reflexive mechanisms of late modernity helped in deconstructing the binary of the "heterosexual-homosexual" model (Weeks 2007, p. 80) by presenting sexuality as non-linear (Russell, Clarke and Clary 2009), instead of having two clear ends of the spectrum, strengthening the link between sexuality and historical time. The intersection of late modernity, relationships and futures studies will be further explored in section 5 of this chapter, focusing on the interpersonal, imagined and collective relationships individuals form during their lifetime, and the consequences of these relationships for the future.

If modernity was a time of unprecedented social change, late modernity has amplified the break with tradition and established social norms, reflected in the way people thought about time. The idea that the future was ours to colonise (Adam and Groves 2007) is no longer just a financial perspective but occupies the academic realm as well.

This research focuses on the field of inquiry that Bell (2003) calls *futures studies*, i.e. studies that explore "alternative futures" (p. 2). The idea of the plurality of futures is significant, as it steers away from the beliefs that there is only one future which is predetermined, and people's actions have no impact on it (Adam and Groves 2007). Bell (2003) further explains that the use of the plural instead of the singular form of the word 'future' aims to avoid potential mix-ups with studies done in the future, and to emphasize the need to study different alternative futures (Dror, 1971). Futures studies, then, focus on a plurality of possible futures, instead of one, predetermined, future. The shift in thinking about the future as having many variations includes the understanding of human agency and the realisation that the actions taken in the past have consequences in the present (Adam and Groves 2007). Adam and Groves (2007) call these kinds of futures "present futures" (p. 28), i.e. futures that are planned for, imagined, projected, and created "*in* and *for* the present" (p.28, emphasis in the original). Present futures have replaced "future presents", which focused on predestination (Adam 2011, p. 592) and did not consider human agency as an element in their creation. An example of human agency in the past that has impacted not only the present, but the foreseeable future as well, was the explosion of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in 1986 (Cook 2018). This and similar large-scale events have become the focus of futures studies (Cook 2018), which explore the impacts of past and present actions on the present and the future respectively. The interplay of the past and the present on the future is encompassed in the field of imagined futures, futures that, as mentioned above, have already been planned for, imagined and constructed (Adam and Groves 2007).

3.2. The Future is for the Young

A number of existing research on the future focuses on younger people, with little to no focus on exploring how the older populations, both heterosexual and LGBTI, imagine or think about their futures. Patterson, Forbes and Peace (2009), for example, conducted their research with one hundred young people from New Zealand, aged between 16 and 18. The focus of the research was to explore how these individuals imagined their older age, which was defined as being 80 years old, and the results indicated that the participants imagined a linear progress of their careers, relationships, and ageing, resulting in the idea that older age is a time "for harvest" (Patterson et al. 2009, p. 431). The research further argued that young New Zealanders imagined their old age in an accomplished and optimistic way, creating a homogenised image of old age, and problematising those older adults who did not fit into the idea of "accomplished ageing" (Patterson et al. 2009, p. 433). Carabelli and Lyon (2016), in their research on younger people's imagination of the future, argue that it is important to understand the agency younger people have in creating and moving toward the future, and to understand the future as a "process of becoming, reshaping, and transformation" (p. 15). Further research on younger people's imagination of the future include Patterson and Forbes' (2012) exploration of gender roles and obligations in the future, Bryant and Ellard's (2015) research on the imagined future of disenfranchised younger people in Australia, and Rich and Evans' (2013) study of young women's imagined futures and their agency in the UK context. Another example of smaller scale research in the UK is that by Lyon and Crow (2012), who revisited research done on the Isle of Sheppey and compared young people's (16 to 18 years old) imagined futures from 1978 and 2009/10.

While the focus of futures studies is mostly on the younger generations, there are some authors who explore the futures of older workers in employment and retirement settings. Forma et al. (2005), for example, focus on pension reforms and older workers' (those over the age of 50 (Ekerdt, Kosloski and DeViney 2000)) retirement plans in the Finnish context, and Loretto (2010) explores policies and attitudes towards older workers in the UK. While these and similar research (Laliberte Rudman 2006; Loretto, Vickerstaff and White 2007; Young and Tinker 2017) focus on the older population, it is mostly form the point of view of employability and retirement, often leaving out other aspects of the individuals' identities, such as gender, sexuality, or class, and focusing on the short-term future of the research participants. The themes outlined in these research projects will be revisited in the data chapters, as they include concepts about ageing which I wish to revisit and critique through the thesis data.

As noted earlier, focusing on the younger generations in researching the future may be a result of explicit or implicit assumptions that there is little or no future for the older ones, as they are closer to death (Sandberg 2015). In this thesis I argue that older people do imagine their future, and that death is often not the end of their imagination. To date there is only some empirical research on how older same-sex couples, or even older LGBTI individuals, imagine their future, mostly focusing on their short-term imagined futures. Hughes (2008), for example, explored the imagined living communities of the older lesbian and gay population in Australia, focusing on their expectations of health and aged care service delivery. Jones (2011) explored how bisexual individuals imagined their future. Her participants ranged in age from 19 to 66 years old, including both the younger and the older population, and her findings show that the participants in the study imagined a positive and non-normative future.

Both of these authors focus on the short-term futures, the ones that will be experienced by the individual during their lifetime, and do not explore the participants' perceptions of the long-term ones, i.e. the ones that will happen after the individual dies (Cook 2018).

To summarise, the lack of research on LGBTI older people's imagined futures might lie in Sandberg's (2015) argument about how gay men who were openly out during the 1980s HIV/AIDS epidemic are perceived to have no future, because their lifespan was considered limited due to the disease. Becoming older also means that the individual comes closer to the end of their life (Baars 2017), so there is an assumption that there is no future to think about besides end-of-life care and funeral arrangements. From a practical point of view, as mentioned above, approaching the older LGBTI population can be problematic so there is a difficulty in recruiting participants for potential research. Added to that, thinking and talking about the future can be a sensitive topic (Elmir et al. 2011) for people who have long-term health problems, terminal illnesses, or just do not want to think about the uncertainty of the future, further narrowing down the number of potential participants and hence discussion in this area. The combination of these factors, namely focusing on youth, not being able to recruit older research participants, and excluding the LGBTI population from futures studies creates an image of the future as being the realm of the heterosexual younger individual who has agency in its planning and construction, once again positioning the older, LGBTI, population on the margins of futures studies. Therefore, the following section explores the construction of sexuality through time and across different contexts, illustrating how the intersection of sexuality and age created a perception of older LGBTI sexualities as not belonging to the future.

4. Sexuality

This section provides an overview of literature on sexuality. The section does not aim to systematically cover this vast area of research, but rather focuses on heteronormativity, normalisation, and sexual citizenship as concepts relevant for the construction of sexuality in the context of this research. The section begins by defining sexuality as belonging to the private and the public, spheres which are often mutually interchangeable (Richardson 2004). The section then introduces the concept of sexual citizenship to illustrate how heteronormativity regulates and others LGBTI sexualities and older individuals. Following this, the section further explores the mechanisms that erase both older and LGBTI sexualities on a population level. The section ends by exploring the impact of social change and historical and cultural contexts on the formation of LGBTI sexualities.

4.1. The Private, the Public, and the Heteronormative

Sexuality is shaped by the socio-historical context of an individual's life (Weeks 1997), by their personal, human, experience (Hockey and James 2003), and the intersection of the two. Heterosexuality occupied the public sphere throughout history, by romanticising opposite-sex relationships (Ahmed 2014), celebrating marriage as the desired union between a man and a woman, and constructing public spaces with heterosexual identities in mind (Hubbard 2001). While sexual identities are becoming more varied, heterosexuality is still considered the most valid and legitimate form of sexuality (Blasius 1994; Ingraham 2005; Brook 2018). This is particularly visible in legislations, policies and narratives about couples and families, which mostly focus on the heterosexual couple (Blasius 1994). However, within the norms that developed and changed in late modernity, the assumptions and dominance of heterosexuality have

been challenged, at least in some Western societies[4]. What was once the dominant, grand narrative of sexual identity has slowly been disputed by other sexual narratives and the symbolic portrayal of their presence in society through pride parades, rainbow flags and a variety of other symbols that fight for their visibility. As Heaphy (2007a) argues, sexuality is an important portrayal of power relations and social change, with LGBTI identities serving as a means of resistance to the heterosexual norm.

Heterosexual norms, enforced through legal frameworks, policies, and societal opinions, restricted non-normative sexualities into the private sphere, into spaces where couples and individuals could potentially be free to engage in relationships that defied the heteronormative standard. However, the distinction between the private and the public in this context, as well as many others, is not clear-cut. As Richardson (2004) argues, LGBTI identities were expected to exist only in the private sphere, which holds contradictions in its definition because it was associated with the home and domesticity, ideas that were incompatible with non-normative sexualities. This means that "lesbians and gay men are constituted as belonging in the private sphere at the same time as they have been historically excluded from it, where this is associated with the spaces of the 'home' and family life" (Richardson 2004, p. 405).

The private sphere is never truly private, especially in discussion around sexual identities. The private is impacted by public opinions, state policies, and legal frameworks, and the socio-historical context in which these are formed. Not being allowed to exhibit their sexual identities in public, and not being allowed to form

[4] While countries such as Malta, Belgium, Finland and the United Kingdom (among others) actively participate in ensuring full equality, there are societies which still enforce extreme homophobia and violations of human rights, such as Belarus, Turkey, Poland and Russia (source: https://www.rainbow-europe.org/country-ranking).

families and relationships in private positioned LGBTI identities in a limbo between the two, where they never fully belonged to one or the other, and, consequently, had no rights to claim sexual citizenship (Plummer 2001). As Kontos et al. (2016) argue, sexual citizenship includes "enfranchisement, belonging, equity and justice, and rights balanced by responsibilities" (p. 316), which, according to the authors, are often denied to individuals who do not identify themselves as belonging to the heterosexual majority. Sexual citizenship is also denied to those who have a (perceived) diminished capacity of decision-making, for example older people and people with dementia (Simpson et al. 2017). Based on this argument, young heterosexual individuals and couples can enjoy the freedom of sexual citizenship in both the private and public spheres, while those groups and individuals whose sexual identity or age do not fit into the dominant heteronormative narrative are not entitled to the same treatment (Sabsay 2012). Plummer (1995) further argues that ageing bodies are often considered as asexual and older people are perceived as unable to control their bodies, feelings, and actions, especially if they are constrained to a formal care institution which further limits their agency (Simpson et al. 2017). This presents yet another contradiction in the utilisation of private spaces for controlling sexual expression because of the unclear boundary between the private and the public in formal institutions (Willcocks, Peace and Kellaher 2017). Before exploring the intersection of age and sexuality, however, it is important to outline some of the mechanisms through which sexuality has been regulated and made (in)visible in modern societies.

4.2. Regulation and (In)Visibility of LGBTI Sexualities

Drawing on Foucault's (2008) writing on biopolitics, this section explores its regulatory power at a population level and argues that the biopolitical agenda does not only erase non-normative sexualities from a nation's imaginary but does so with the older population as well. One of the goals of modern nations is to "be as large and as active as possible" (Foucault 2008, p. 318), and one of the ways to achieve this goal is to invest in the health, hygiene, and the birth rate, reflected in a young population which works towards economic and population growth of the nation. The biopolitical agenda, therefore, holds the idea that the children and young people are the future and that having children should be the primary goal of the citizens of that nation (Edelman 2004). Biopolitics is most often enforced through legal frameworks and policies, and incentives for young couples to have children. Historically, there is evidence of extreme ideological measures to ensure the strength and prosperity of a nation, such as during the Nazi regime in Germany (Moses and Stone 2012), when, along with political and religious prisoners, around 10,000 gay men were detained in concentration camps (Lautmann 1981; Jensen 2002).

Identifying as LGBTI can, at least in Foucauldian terms, imply that the individual engages in sexual relations for pleasure and not reproduction, and is therefore not participating in the biopolitical agenda of their nation (Foucault 1978). A parallel can be drawn here with the older population as well. Based on existing stereotypes of asexuality in older age (Kimmel et al. 2006; Hughes 2009), the older individual is rarely conceptualised as part of an intimate relationship, and even more rarely as a sexual being. The ageing body also loses its reproductive purpose, so even if an older couple is still sexually active, that activity will not result in offspring who will fit into

the biopolitical agenda. The intersection of older age and sexuality in this case results in an almost complete erasure of the older LGTBI individual and same-sex couple from their nation's future.

This reproductive aspect of sexuality, and its role in the growth and development of nations, gained prominence in the 18th century, along with other "mechanisms of knowledge and power centering on sex [termed as] the hysterical woman, the masturbating child, the Malthusian couple, and the perverse adult" (Foucault 1978 p. 103, 105). Though these aspects of sexuality might have been developed to describe the deviant sexual identity, i.e. one that did not focus on reproduction, in their attempt to prescribe what is normal sexual behaviour they have given a name to different aspects of sexuality. By doing so, they have opened an avenue for further developments of sexual identities in the decades to come, allowing the queer, non-reproductive sexualities focusing on pleasure (Foucault 1978) to emerge. What these mechanisms of power also suggest is that sexuality is a social construct and not a natural given (Foucault 1978). As such it has been defined and moulded by the dominant group, in this case the good (hetero)sexual citizen who uses their rights "of sexual expression and identity" (Richardson 2017, p. 211) for the betterment of their society, and who has the power to (de)legitimise other sexualities and make them (in)visible. History, however, shows that the desire for legitimacy and visibility of marginalised groups often necessarily begins within those very groups, with their own social movements and political activism.

One of the most prominent movements that aimed to increase the visibility of sexual expression was the sexual revolution of the late 1960s (Freeman 2010). The lesbian and gay movements of the 1980s (Freeman 2010) aimed to increase visibility of the

othered, of the ones who did not fit into the heteronormative narrative, and to fight for equality and recognition as full citizens (Plummer 2003). It is important to note, however, that not every member of the minority group desires to be assimilated into the dominant group (Plummer 2003). Viewing heterosexuality as the dominant norm, and a means through which political legislation is developed around othering LGBTI identities, frames sexuality as "a site where power is exercised" (Blasius 1994, p. 10).

One of the ways in which power, defined here as both the ability to control someone and to have the agency to do something (Hearn 2012), is exercised over the LGBTI population is through the idea of ordinariness (Richardson and Monro 2012). The desire to be considered as valid as the heterosexual couple, while not completely responsible for their development, has informed legal acts such as civil partnership and same-sex marriage, in an attempt to apply traditionally patriarchal and heteronormative institutions (Heaphy, Smart and Einarsdottir 2013) to a population whose ethos was to resist and fight against them (Weeks 2007). Richardson and Monro (2012) argue that the queer citizen can only become ordinary and mainstream through the established, heterosexual and monogamous, public institutions of marriage. However, as Plummer (2003) argues, not everyone wants to be normal or ordinary in this sense. Those who do not wish to compromise the way they present their sexuality for the sake of ordinariness, the so-called radical LGBTI groups, use it as a power to be "transgressive, to be radical, to be a threat, to be queer" (Plummer 2003, p. 42). Conversely, the assimilationist LGBTI groups argue that getting recognition allows them to finally enjoy the rights they have been denied in the past. These debates also play a part in the presentation of sexual identities, often creating a discrepancy between

the sexual identity an individual occupies and the expectations that their identity brings.

4.3. Generational Constructions of Sexuality

As illustrated above, as well as in Chapter I, the current older LGBTI population in the United Kingdom have lived through social changes that redefined sexuality and the way it could be performed, presenting an argument for understanding sexuality as non-linear and open to change during an individual's life (Giddens 1992). Studying social change in the context of sexuality requires an approach that explores "individual experiences and their influence on personal choices" (Traies 2016, p.15) as well as the "cultural frames and institutional and structural conditions" (Mayer 2009, p. 414) in which these experiences are lived, i.e. a life-course approach. According to Gabb (2008), the life-course approach is a useful tool in examining social change from an individual's perspective, as it explores how the micro and macro aspects of social change are interconnected and how they impact the individual's understanding of their lived experience (Mayer 2009). The life-course approach is also useful in studying cohort effects on the lives of individuals, such as those that emerged from the data and will be explored in Chapters IV, V and VI. Cohort, usually described as belonging to a group who shares the same historical experience (Hockey and James 2003), is socially constructed (Schuman and Scott 1989). It is one of the main elements of generation, which consists of, as Gilleard and Higgs (2002, p. 373) argue "a shared temporal location (i.e. generational site or birth cohort), shared historical location (i.e. generation as actuality – exposure to a common period or era), and finally a shared socio-cultural location (i.e. generational consciousness – or 'entelechy')". A generation usually includes members who were born in a similar time span (Thomson

2014), such as the Baby Boomer generation, i.e. those born between 1946 and 1964, after the Second World War. Based on the three shared locations outlined by Gilleard and Higgs (2002), this research uses the term generation to denote common experiences and belonging to a specific temporal, spatial and cultural context, shared by the participants in this research.

While the term 'generation' can be understood as relating to lineage (Schuman and Scott 1989), this thesis uses it to denote a wider set of experiences that an individual or couple goes through in their lifetime, and that in turn construct specific identity traits. As Traies (2016) explains, "men and women who adopted a non-heterosexual identity and/or lifestyle later in their lives might form a third identity cohort, also cutting across age boundaries" (p. 14). This is how 'generation' is used in the context of this thesis – as a sense of identity that is shared across individuals and groups. While Traies (2016) argues that the "non-heterosexual identity" (p. 14) needs to be adopted in later life to belong to this identity cohort, this thesis argues that belonging to a generation is not limited to a specific age. Generation encompasses the experiences of the younger and the older participants, bridging the age gap between partners (e.g. William and Peter who were born 29 years apart), and drawing on the couples experiences as they identify with the wider LGBTI community.

Plummer (2010) discusses the importance of past sexual generations in the construction of the present and argues there is no "one clear sexual reality out there" (p. 188), an idea that is reflected in the data in this thesis as well. Exploring generations (Plummer 2010) can result in a number of sexual realities, as the same historical events could be, and are, experienced by individuals belonging to birth cohorts 20 or 30 years apart. Experiences of social change that are shared among the participants in this

research are not only invaluable in studying the life-course, but also serve as a link between sexuality and temporality. As different historical contexts defined sexual identities in different ways (Blasius 1994), exploring the participants' lives through the lens of the past, the present, and the future illustrates how different time periods impacted the construction of their sexuality, both from their individual perspectives, and from the institutional norms in place during a given time. The following section further explains the impact of historical time on lived experiences and the construction of sexuality.

5. Temporality

There is a consensus in sociological literature that, like sexuality, the way we understand time is related to our individual perception which in turn is shaped by the historical and cultural contexts we live in (Butola 2011; Baars 2012). The way we measure time has changed through history, with earliest methods of measuring time dating to 1500 BCE (Grattan 2016), implying that, since the very beginnings of organised societies, people had the need to understand and capture the passing of time and organise their life accordingly. Throughout history and across different cultures, there have been different ways of measuring time. The way a society measures time and the way its citizens are organised based on that measurement of time can provide insight into the culture of a given society. Time is inevitable in the construction of one's identity, and it plays, as intimated above in the discussion of generation, an important role in the construction of individuals' sexual identity as well. This section focuses in more detail on the role of time in the construction of identity and the self through the exploration of interpersonal, collective and imagined relationships individuals form throughout their lives. The section also explains the concepts of chrononormativity and queer time as two temporalities which are, at the same time, in tension with, and co-dependent on each other, and which play a role in identity construction. The section ends with an analysis and interpretation of the concepts of imagined futures and utopia as times and spaces where queer time can be realised (Muñoz 2009), and which hold the hopes, fears, desires and potential imaginaries (Jagose 1996; Rodríguez 2014) of older same-sex couples.

5.1. Time, Self, and Memories

Sorokin and Merton (1990) argue that time does not flow in a linear line and at a constant rate, but is influenced by the significance of the events an individual or a group experiences in their lifetime, making some events seem shorter than others when they happen, but longer when looking back on them. This is consistent with Jackson (2010), who draws on Mead's conceptualisation of time and identity, and argues that the present shapes the past, because, as people tell stories about their lives, they reconstruct the events that happened in the past to fit them into their present. May and Muir (2015) argue that people construct their identities through stories about the relationships they formed during their lifetime, and through positioning themselves within these different relationships and historical times. The stories which reflect the relational aspect of people's identities are organised in their own subjective ways (Mead 1934) and are most often presented in the form of memories. Taking the point that identity construction is relational, there is always someone else against whom an individual's identity is formed, the generalised other (Jenkins 2008) who serves as a comparative point for our actions and behaviour. Throughout an individual's life, the generalised other can be manifested through interpersonal, collective or imagined relationships, which are then recounted in the form of memories. Memories are, therefore, a combination of our own recollection of events and relationships we experienced and formed in the past, and the media or public representations of those events, which make memories social constructions as well (Loong 2012; Doan 2017).

Jedlowski (2001) explains that memories are constantly "selected, filtered and restructured" (p. 30) to fit the needs of the present. Collective memories emerge from shared historical events, such as the Vietnam war, for example, or, more specific to

this research, campaigns against Section 28. Our own, 'personal', memories, are the product of individual recollection, the collective memory of the society we live in, and the memories of the people we interact with (Dudai and Edelson 2016). A further argument for memories being socially constructed is the fact that some encounters leave a bigger impact on one's life than others, and people can bring these encounters back from the past and use them to construct their identity in the present, as can be seen in the work by Cathrine Dengen (2014). In her book she explains how "memory talk" (Dengen, 2014, p. 70) plays an important role in self-understanding. Her participants, older people living in the village of Dodworth in the United Kingdom, used memory talk to describe their lives in the village and position themselves, and others, inside the social and cultural life of the village. Going back to Mead's ideas (1934), Dengen's (2014) participants were constructing their selves not only in relation to others (Cooley 1902), but also in relation to the time and place they inhabited. However, this construction of the self through memory talk is not completely personal, as argued above, but is framed by certain socio-cultural norms that can also be explored through the organisation of time, which, as is the case with other forms of identity construction, is guided by certain temporal norms, such as chrononormativity and queer time.

5.2. Chrononormativity and Queer Time

Chrononormativity is "the use of time to organize individual human bodies towards maximum productivity" (Freeman 2010, p. 3). Exploring Freeman's (2010) idea further, and applying it to the context of this research, it could be argued that chrononormativity favours heteronormativity, and, by extent, heterosexuality, and that it has a strong relationship with biopolitics. According to van Eden-Moorefield et al.

(2011), heteronormativity “privileges the traditional nuclear family built around heterosexual coupling” (p. 565) because of the probability of such coupling resulting in children, who will continue the legacy of the family and the nation into the future. Opposite-sex couples are the ones who are expected to have children and therefore organise their lives according to the dominant temporal norms. As Freeman (2010) further explains, calendars, diaries, and other ways in which people measure time are used to create rhythms that should be followed, and that are guided by chrononormativity. Over the course of the lifetime, these rhythms become so ingrained in the individual’s life that people become unaware of their control. As with heteronormativity, chrononormativity plays a role in othering the groups who do not follow the normative temporal trajectories, i.e. groups who do not profit from a heteronormative temporal organisation (Freeman 2010). In this way, time plays a role in identity construction, through the creation of habitus, which is “a socially constituted system of cognitive and motivating structures, and the socially structured situation in which the agents' interests are defined” (Bourdieu 2013, p. 76).

Habitus is structured by the past and present experiences of the individual, and it helps construct the present and the future as well (Bourdieu 2013), as individuals and groups draw on their past experiences and act in anticipation of the future. Habitus is also “systematically ordered” (Maton 2008, p. 51), and, when applied to time, implies that certain events are expected to happen at a certain time, creating knowledge of when to do something, instead of just what to do. The shared actions and their time of doing create a temporal habitus that places individuals into groups who follow the same temporal norm, and the membership in such groups depends on the successful execution of specific tasks at a specific time (Freeman 2010). In this sense, temporal

habitus is structured and informed through chrononormativity, as some individuals and groups will be more successful in following shared temporal norms, while others will either be unwilling or unable to do so. The successful execution of temporal trajectories creates mechanisms which make chrononormativity similar to heteronormativity, as both privilege some groups over others, normalize certain actions while rendering others deviant, and underpin policies, institutions and norms that favour the dominant group. The minority group, in this context older same-sex couples and LGBTI individuals, are required to either assimilate into the temporal norms, or create their own, resulting in a generational habitus (Milton et al. 2015).

As Maton (2008) argues, habitus is not set, it can evolve and transform, guided by past knowledge, present circumstances and future prospects. It is possible, then, to transform the dominant habitus so that it follows a different set of experiences and knowledge, such as the one belonging to the generation of LGBTI individuals who not only share a common history but direct their hopes towards a shared future. By sharing memories from the past and hopes for the future, the members of such a generation attempt to step out of chrononormativity and into queer time (Halberstam 2005), creating their own temporal trajectory which ultimately allows them to imagine the future and construct utopias.

The development of queer time is partly a response to "family, heterosexuality, and reproduction" (Halberstam 2005, p. 1). It is not its complete opposition; queer time and space can include family, relationships, marriage, and even reproduction. In the framework of this thesis, queer time is the temporal trajectory that does not necessarily follow chrononormative rules of the dominant group, but rather creates a temporal norm of its own, using different life events to define the milestones in an individual's

life. Furthermore, as Muñoz (2009) explains, thinking and imagining the future requires a queering of the present, and stepping out of the here and now, into the there and then. Queerness, according to Seidman (1995, p. 118), "suggests a positioning as oppositional to both the heterosexual and homosexual mainstream", and this thesis illustrates how queer theory can be employed to challenge the normalising identity politics among both the heterosexual and LGBTI groups. As will be illustrated in Chapters IV, V and VI, the participants themselves challenged their positionality in relation to both the heterosexual and LGBTI groups, constructing a queer sense of identity which moved between the dominant and the other, both in terms of their sexuality and the temporal norms they followed.

The temporal norms of chrononormativity governed the lives of the participants in this research in a way that resulted in many of them engaging in opposite-sex relationships and having children in order to conform to the dominant temporal structure, while coming to terms with their own sexuality. For the participants a dissolution of these relationships followed, usually after the individual decided to come out. The events that happened afterwards often strayed away from the prescribed temporal norms, linking queer time to the development of the individual's sexual identity (Halberstam 2005). While chrononormativity presumes everyone is heterosexual, queer time, however, makes use of sexuality in defining the key events for LGBTI individuals, such as coming out to family and friends. Coming out is an event that is considered one of the most important milestones in a LGBTI person's life, whether the experience is positive or negative (Ryan, Legate and Weinstein 2015). Coming out represents a disruption in the chrononormative timeframe as it negates the assumption of heterosexuality, illustrating the role time plays in the construction of identity (Mead

1934), by positioning coming out as a milestone that redefines the significant events in life which should be used to count the passing of time.

Queer time and chrononormativity flow alongside each other, and if an individual decides not to follow the prescribed norms of temporality, they are stepping into queer time. However, the two temporal concepts cannot be completely separated from each other, as queer time requires chrononormativity for its construction. Without the dominant norm, be it temporal or sexual, there is no 'other' that would challenge and oppose it, illustrating the relational aspect of these two temporal concepts. Another opposition that informed this research was that between the present and the future, realised in the data through narratives around utopia.

5.3. Imagined Futures and Utopia

Imagined futures are futures that are conceptualised, created and constructed in the present (Adam and Groves 2007). They hold the knowledge of the past and the present, as our imagination depends on and is driven by knowledge about past events and experiences:

> Emptied of content and meaning, the future is simply there, an empty space waiting to be filled with our desire, to be shaped, traded or formed according to rational plans and blueprints, holding out the promise that it can be what we want it to be. (Adam and Groves 2007, p. 11)

This definition of the future resonates with the imagination of utopias, as places and times that are constructed based on people's knowledge and experiences, and that are usually imagined as better versions of the temporal and spatial present. Bloch (1995) explains that certain requirements need to be fulfilled for utopias to come into existence, such as sharing a sense of an imagined or real relationship to a community. Communities share knowledge of past and present social change, and they imagine

future utopias which reflect that knowledge (Bloch 1995). The participants in this research constructed interpersonal, collective and imagined relationships through their narratives of the past, present and future, and these relationships made their imagination of utopia possible, because they served as links to different communities. The construction of these relationships, to each other as a couple, to the generation of older LGBTI people, and to Scotland as a nation, positioned the participants in a specific context in which their imagination of the future both transcended and included their sexuality. Based on Edelman's (2004) argument, the future is limited to the heterosexual population through the biopolitical agenda which favours procreation and the delegation of the future to children.

As Muñoz (2009) explains, queerness is the very thing that allows individuals to imagine the future and see past the present as it "propels us onward, beyond romances of the negative and toiling in the present" (p. 1). Queerness is required not only for imagining the future, but for imagining it in a form of utopia, as better and more hopeful than the present. Because queerness has the ability to disrupt established norms, so it disrupts the routine of the present and the complacency one might feel with the events that are happening now (Muñoz 2009). One of the most important drivers in both queer and utopian thinking is hope (Cook 2018), as it holds agency for thinking about the future (Bryant and Ellard 2015). Hope is based on previous knowledge and experiences and can therefore help in realising the imagined future (Cook 2018), unlike desire which is only "wishful thinking" (p. 113). Bloch (1995) explains this in detail, arguing that even if utopian thinking emerges as an individual and private thought, it "contains the tendency of its age" (p. 479), i.e. it draws on social change and cultural contexts to create the utopian thought. This is why, Bloch (1995)

continues, various authors wrote about utopias as a response to the cultural and historical context they lived in. Applying Bloch's (1995) ideas to the research participants and their narratives of a hopeful future, one can better understand the social changes that impacted their way of thinking and created their vision of a shared utopia.

6. Conclusion

This chapter presented an overview of the key literature on LGBTI ageing, futures studies, sexuality and temporality, relevant for the theoretical and empirical contexts of this thesis. The section on sexuality introduced the debate about the private and the public, arguing that the two are not distinct and separate spheres, but work to inform and construct each other. The intersection of the private and the public was explored through the concepts of sexual citizenship and heteronormativity, and, using the examples of LGBTI identities, the section illustrated the difficulties of belonging to one sphere or the other (Richardson 2004). Following this, the section explored the impact of heteronormative ideals on the regulation and (in)visibility of LGBTI sexualities, illustrating how heteronormativity informed the creation of institutions of marriage, opposite-sex coupledom, and family (Kitzinger and Wilkinson 2004; Brook 2018) which marginalised individuals and groups who did not conform to these norms. The section also explored the impact of the intersection of sexuality and age on the concept of biopolitics, presenting an argument for the exclusion of older same-sex couples and LGBTI individuals from the future of their nation. The section ended by presenting an argument for exploring social change and generation in relation to sexuality, particularly because events and experiences from individuals' past

constructed the present and future, and the different cultural and historical contexts impacted on their understanding of sexuality.

The following section explored time and its role in the construction of sexuality. The section began by drawing on Mead's (1934) work on the relevance of time on the construction of the self, exploring the role memories had in the narratives of the present, and presenting relationships as key elements in identity constructions. Following this, the section explored the idea of chrononormativity as a dominant temporal norm through which the participants formed relationships in their past. The section argued that chrononormativity shared similar characteristics to heteronormativity, through which it marginalised individuals and groups who did not follow the dominant norm. As a response to this, Halberstam's (2005) concept of queer time was introduced, as a form of opposition and a critique to the dominance of chrononormativity. The section concluded by presenting ideas on imagined futures and utopias, concepts developed by Adam and Groves (2007) and Bloch (1995) respectively, as times and spaces where the disruption of the established temporal norms is not only welcome but necessary.

Based on the literature presented above, biographical age and sexuality play a part in whether an individual or couple will be included in the public imagination of the future. The intersection of the two places an individual into non-futurity because of their lack of a reproductive drive. Being in a same-sex couple, and an older one at that, further marginalises that individual and their partner because of assumptions that such coupling will not result in children who will help in strengthening their nation. Research questions 1 and 1.1 directly address these issues by exploring the intersection of historical time, sexuality and ageing. Enforced by biopolitics and

chrononormativity, the reproductive role of sexuality erases older same-sex couples from both the present and the future. The existence of queer time and queer utopias allows for a creation of a space and time where, and when, older same-sex couples can plan, act on, and imagine futures free of heteronormative pressures. Research questions 1.2 and 1.3 problematise these aspects through an examination of interpersonal, collective, and imagined relationships that permeate the couples' past, present and future, and that serve as a basis for utopian thinking. The relationships the couples formed during their lifetime also played a role in the construction of their identities, as the couples framed themselves within and against these relationships (Cooley 1902; Mead 1934).

As Heaphy, Yip and Thompson (2004) argue, it is important both to look beyond sexuality in researching LGBTI ageing, and to embed sexuality into the social contexts of older LGBTI individuals' and same-sex couples' lives in order to better understand their lived experiences and the cultural and historical contexts that surround them. The following chapter discusses the methodological approaches that were employed in this research, presenting the design and research strategy, introducing the research participants and the methods used in their recruitment, as well as outlining the data collection and analysis methods, all of which helped in addressing the main research question: How do older same-sex couples navigate the intersections of sexuality and ageing in imagining their futures?

Chapter III: Methodology

1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design and strategies employed in preparation for the collection and analysis of the data, and for addressing the research questions. The first section of the chapter explains the rationale behind using qualitative research methods to collect and analyse the data and introduces the research participants. The chapter then outlines the main criteria required for participation in the research, explaining each requirement, and touches upon some of the limitations in recruitment, which will be explored in more detail in Chapter VII. The second section of this chapter presents the data collection methods, starting with a discussion of a pilot study that was undertaken before the data collection itself, explaining why it was not included in the final data collection process, and introducing the methods that were used, semi-structured joint interviews and written accounts. The chapter then illustrates the ways in which data was recorded, organised and analysed, outlining two rounds of analysis and the techniques employed during this process. The chapter ends with ethical considerations of the thesis and the steps that were taken to ensure consent, anonymity and confidentiality.

2. Research Design and Strategy

The aim of this research is to explore how older same-sex couples in Scotland imagine their future. In order to do so, it was necessary to focus on the narratives the research participants shared during the data collection process, and to analyse and interpret them so that the participants' personal experiences could be explored within a

sociological framework. Throughout the research I have employed elements of grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss 1990), in order to get a multi-dimensional understanding of the participants' experiences and stories. Grounded theory is a useful method in qualitative research as it allows new ideas to emerge throughout the data collection process (Van Wagenen, Driskell and Bradford 2013). One of the prerequisites of taking a grounded theory approach is to enter the field of research with as little a priori assumptions as possible (Corbin and Strauss 1990). While an approach with no assumptions is virtually impossible, partly because of the knowledge and experiences the researcher carries with them into the data collection, and partly because of existing literature on the topic that is being researched, aspects of grounded theory were still useful in revealing initial themes in the data. By using elements of grounded theory I was able to gather qualitative data on how the participants made sense of their experiences (Seidman 2006; Ingham et al. 2017), in a way that reflects their subjective knowledge and positions them in a wider discussion of LGBTI ageing and the futures.

2.1. Ontology and Epistemology

As intimated by the above, this research employs a social constructionist ontology, which defines the production of everyday knowledge as a result of sense-making from the perspective of the research participants (Kitzinger 2007). From a constructionist viewpoint, the role of the researcher is to take the narratives produced by the participants and make sense of them by employing his or her own knowledge of theories, concepts, and ideas that are present in everyday lives. Social constructionism requires the researcher to be critical of the "taken-for-granted knowledge" (Burr 2003, p. 2) that surrounds them, and to be mindful of the historical and cultural specificity

of the categories and concepts which are used, for example sexual identity. Another aspect of social constructionism is that meaning and understanding emerge from social interaction (Lock & Strong 2010), such as the interpersonal, imagined and collective relationships this research presents. The decision to use joint interviews stemmed from this ontological position as well, as joint interviews help "capture the process through which people (co)construct and interpret their own social reality in the context of shared realities" (Zarhin 2018, p. 844), which can then be critically explored by keeping in mind the specific cultural and historical context in which this reality is constructed.

The epistemological position employed in this research was that of phenomenology. Phenomenology aims to understand how people make sense of their everyday life (Ritchie and Lewis 2003) and is rooted in philosophical ideas about the study of experience (Smith et al. 2009). As Smith et al. (2009) explain, phenomenology is useful in understanding lived experiences because it "invokes a lived process, an unfurling of perspectives and meanings, which are unique to the person's embodied and situated relationship to the world" (p. 21), reflecting the relationship between self and society (May 2013) that is central to the development of interpersonal, collective and imagined relationships explored in this research. Phenomenological epistemology is also useful in narrative analysis as it emphasises the subjectivity of the narrated experience (De Fina and Gerogakopoulou 2015), sharing the main ideas of social constructionism in its attempt to explore knowledge as presented by the research participants (Kitzinger 2007), and explored in the data collection and analysis.

2.2. Qualitative Approach to Studying Imagined Futures

In order to provide in-depth answers to the research questions, this research adopted a qualitative approach. Qualitative research methods are suited for research on lived experiences that, in the context of this research, encompass past, present and future relationships, as well as events that happened in the past, the stories about the present, and the imagination of the future. As Orel (2014) argues, qualitative research methods offer tools for a deeper understanding of the relationships individuals form with each other, presenting nuances and details, as well as participants' justifications and explanations of certain events and issues, which might be lost in quantitative research. As Hendrick and Hendrick (2000) argue, "qualitative research is positioned to make unique contributions to the understanding of close relationships in ways that reflect their unique nature and forms, their distinctive processes, the individual's role in their creation and interpretation, and the contemporary sociohistorical context" (p. 30).

The intersection of the couples' lived experiences and the socio-historical contexts of their past and present became the most important aspects of the data as they opened up avenues for an investigation of LGBTI ageing in an original way, as will be illustrated in the contributions in Chapter VII. Qualitative research methods are particularly appropriate for studying the LGBTI population, and other marginalised populations as well, because they do not only allow the participants to share their stories, but they also empower the often silenced and invisible groups by exploring the narratives which might not be the focus of traditional research (Hash and Cramer 2003, p. 49). Having in mind that the group I intended to interview might be wary about sharing their stories with people outside their social group, I opted for a qualitative approach that would

not only put the focus on their stories, but would provide a friendly context for sharing them.

2.3. Participants

In order to take part in this research, the participants needed to be in a same-sex relationship, mutually defined by both partners as a significant couple-like relationship, regardless of its duration and co-residence. One of the partners needed to be over the age of 55, and the other one could be of any age. 55 was chosen in light of existing literature on ageing (e.g. Knauer 2016; Stacey and Averett 2016; Westwood 2017a), as was explored in Chapter I, Section 3. Furthermore, LGBTI individuals who were over 55 at the time of data collection experienced important legal changes in the United Kingdom, such as the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1967 in England and Wales, and 1980 in Scotland, the introduction of civil partnership in 2004 and the introduction of equal marriage in 2014. The participants also had to live in Scotland to be eligible for the research, as will be explained below, in section 2.3.3. The following table offers an overview of the research participants, and more detailed accounts about the couples can be found in Appendix I:

Name	Age	Current relationship (duration and status)	Living in Scotland	Children	Approximate age of coming out/year of coming out
Fred	65	26 years / married	17 years	No	Early 30s/1980s
Robert	76	26 years / married	17 years	Yes (2)	Late 40s/1990s
Sharon	64	26 years / married	All her life	Yes (1)	N/A
Anna	46	26 years / married	All her life	No	N/A
William	65	6 years / married	Since 1991	No	Early 30s/1980s
Peter	36	6 years / married	Not living in Scotland	No	Late teens/early 2000s
Gloria	58	17 years / LAT	41 years	No	Late teens/1970s
Emily	77	17 years / LAT	27 years	Yes (6)	30s/1980s
Kathy	57	4 years / LAT	13 years	Yes (2)	40s/early 2000s
Rachel	58	4 years / LAT	Since 1995	No	30s/early 1990s
Sarah	61	19 years / married	All her life	Yes (3)	Early 40s/Early 1990s
Jane	56	19 years / married	All her life	Yes (2)	Late 30s/Late 1990s
Alan	63	16 years / married	All his life	No	30/1983
Jeff	70	16 years / married	16 years	No	17/1963

Table 1. Participant information

2.3.1. Coupledom as a Recruitment Criterion

As Gabb (2008) argues, the decision to conduct couple interviews impacts the content and quality of the data, and depends on the goals of the research at hand. The decision to recruit couples rather than individuals was guided by the conceptual and empirical points raised in Chapter II, namely the lack of research on older same-sex couples in general, and their invisibility in research on futures. Focusing on the couple rather than on the individual better captures the partners' "joint commitment to their relationship" (Hydén and Nilsson 2015, p. 717), and, consequently, provides insight into how their present and future are jointly constructed. As this research explored the relational aspects of people's identities, recruiting and interviewing couples allowed for a better understanding of interpersonal relationships that were negotiated on a daily basis (Valentine 1999). The experiences the partners shared with each other in their daily lives created narratives that reflected the intersection of their own personal understanding and the interpersonal one, which developed through talking and sharing stories with each other (Zarhin 2018).

2.3.2. Age of the Participants

The age of the participants was one of the main recruitment criteria. As mentioned above, at least one of the partners needed to be over 55, placing their age at the lower end of the so-called young-old group (Neugarten 1974). Having participants from this age group allowed for a display of experiences before and after certain political and historical events, as well as experiences before and after retirement, which is recognised as one of the key turning points in both individuals' and couples' lives (Mock 2002). Different disciplines and different authors within the same disciplines position the beginning of older age at different times. Organisational studies, for

example, argue that older workers are those over the age of 50 (Loretto 2010), as do some authors in the area of sexuality studies (Gott and Hinchliff 2003), the World Health Organisation (2015) places the beginning of older age at 60, and further examples show that there is no clear consensus on when older age begins. For example, Coleman, Kearns and Wiles (2016) include people over 65 in their study on older people, and other authors use the term 'older' often without outlining which age it entails (Caceres and Frank 2016). The diversity in defining older age points to the idea that it is both dependent on the context in which the research is taking place, and that it is necessary to take the subjective perception of older age into account when exploring the ageing population.

2.3.3. Living in Scotland as a Recruitment Criterion

The final requirement for participation was that the couple lived in Scotland at the time of the interviews. Scotland was chosen because of its current progressive legal frameworks for the LGBTI population, and because of the developments of these frameworks throughout its history. All but one couple were physically in Scotland at the time of the interviews. William and Peter shared their time between England and Scotland, and as they were in England when we had the interviews, the interviews were conducted over a video-communication software Zoom. The choice of Scotland as a research site was also guided by recent political developments, such as the independence referendum in 2014, and the Brexit referendum in 2016. As the independence referendum took place before the beginning of this research, I expected it to have an impact on the participants' lives, and, as will be illustrated in Chapter VI, it did. The Brexit referendum took place just before my first interview, and, similarly to the independence one, the participants discussed it in relation to their present lived

experiences and the imagination of the future. While a country that advocates equality and inclusivity might be seen as a good place to find older same-sex couples who meet the above criteria, the research sample consisted of seven couples, pointing to a wider problem of invisibility that could not be resolved with progressive political changes.

2.4. Recruitment Process and Challenges

The participants were recruited through social media groups and through advertising the call for participants among relevant non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Because of this recruitment method, the participant pool consisted of people who had access to the Internet, had technological know-how, and were involved in the NGOs in some capacity. Each couple was asked if they knew of anyone else who might want to participate, but this did not yield any results. The difficulty of recruiting older same-sex couples was due to the invisibility and stigma of the older LGBTI population in general, and, as one of the participants remarked, even if an older same-sex couple was out, they might not want to discuss their sexuality for research purposes as this would mean sharing things they might want to keep private.

Another restriction in recruitment was my position as a researcher. As Westwood (2013b) argues, and as was outlined in Chapter I, in order to approach and study older lesbian women, the researcher's age and sexual identity would ideally be the same as the participants', and this was a barrier in approaching this participant group, which was sometimes explicitly vocalised. For example, while I was advertising this research and looking for participants, I came across an online group of lesbian women who argued they would not talk to me because I was not a lesbian myself. These limitations need to be taken into consideration when analysing the data, because the couples who participated in this research belonged to a group of highly-educated, mostly middle-

class, people, who were politically active their whole lives and were therefore more open to sharing their stories with a researcher who did not share their sexual identity. These and other limitations will be further explored in Chapter VII.

3. Data Collection Methods

The research used semi-structured joint interviews and written accounts as primary methods to collect the data. Before the actual data collection, a pilot questionnaire was used to test out a method that I considered as part of the data collection. This section begins by exploring the pilot study and explaining why it was not included in the data collection process. The rationale behind using joint interviews and written accounts will also be outlined in this section, including their benefits and limitations. The section ends with introducing the data analysis methods, outlining a two-stage analysis approach that included a thematic and narrative analysis.

3.1. Pilot Questionnaire

As the focus of the research was on imagined futures, I decided to test out a method in which couples would imagine how their daily lives played out in the present, and then in 10, 15 and 20 years. The pilot was in a form of a table with the days of the week and specific times of the day listed on the left side, and the years outlined above. Below is an example of a filled-out table for Monday:

Question		*Now*	*In 10 years*	*In 15 years*	*In 20 years*
		Answer	**Answer**	**Answer**	**Answer**
Monday	What are you doing on Monday mornings?	I usually wake up around 6:30am when my boyfriend leaves for work. I stay in bed for another hour and wake up at 7:30. I usually make a tea and eat an egg or leftovers if we have any from the night before.	I will probably wake up at 6am before my husband goes to work and I can imagine myself getting one kid ready for school and feeding a younger infant/ baby.	Again, I think I will wake up early before my husband and get our two kids ready for school and then either he or I will drop them off before we go to work.	I will probably wake up around 6am, and go for a run before work. I have big plans to get in shape by the time I'm 48. Plus I guess my children can get themselves ready for school at this point.

Table 2. Pilot questionnaire

The participants for the pilot study had to be in a relationship, but the age of the participants was not relevant at this point. Each partner filled out the table by themselves and then had the option to share it with their partner. The main idea behind the questionnaire was to explore how couples imagined their daily lives in the present and the future, and four couples, recruited through Facebook, agreed to participate. While the data produced in the pilot offered some insight into how these couples imagined their future, I realised most participants focused on their daily routines and did not imagine their lives would change a lot in 10, 15, or 20 years. This is not to say that the data was not useful, but for the purpose of this research I aimed to get a more

nuanced narrative about the future, and decided that this method of collecting data would not be as useful for what I was hoping to explore. Nevertheless, the pilot study was an important step in the data collection, as, according to Bryman (2004), pilot studies are useful in testing out that the planned method functions well, and that the questions are both suited for the study and the research participants. Realising that the questionnaire did not provide the quality and depth of data I was hoping to get, I decided for a more open-ended design in the form of written accounts, which will be explored in more detail below. While the pilot data was not used in the analysis, it was an important step in developing the final approach to data collection as it clarified which areas of the participants' experiences I wanted to focus on, thus aiding in the design of the interview guides for gathering in-depth participant accounts.

3.2. Semi-Structured Joint Interviews

From the very start of this project, I felt that semi-structured joint interviews were the most suitable method of data collection for the research questions I was exploring. I was interested in how the participants would jointly construct the narratives about their present and future, an aspect of the interview process which would have been lost if only one partner was interviewed. The rationale behind using semi-structured interviews was the fact that they allowed for flexibility, as I could ask questions that were not initially written in the interview guide but arose during the interviews itself (Bryman 2004).

New questions arose with every interview I conducted, sometimes from my own ideas and sometimes from the participants themselves. For example, when we were discussing civil partnership and marriage, Jeff asked Alan if he thought that marriage changed the dynamics of their relationship. Alan argued it did not, but Jeff explained

that marriage gave them more credibility than a civil partnership and therefore made their relationship more valid. Following this exchange, I included the question in subsequent interviews as I believed it would produce narratives on the visibility and legitimacy of the relationship, as well as on the temporal aspect of the participants' lives. One of the issues with including new questions in interviews was that these questions were not posed to the couples I interviewed previously. This was resolved by returning to the questions in the second interview, and some couples gave answers to them even without me explicitly asking.

Semi-structured interviews were also used to give the participants a chance to talk about issues they found important and to tell stories about their lives that they considered relevant for our conversation. The importance of personal narratives and lived experiences of the couples in this research is visible in the data chapters, and the semi-structured interviews offered a good method for exploring those experiences and the meaning the couples made of them (Seidman 2006).

The decision to conduct two interviews with each couple was motivated by two reasons. Firstly, as the couples were asked to produce a written account after the first interview, the second interview served to explore and discuss their accounts. Secondly, repeated interviews provide a "valuable opportunity to verify and deepen understandings formed in the first interview, to follow up missed lines of enquiry or to seek additional clarification about some topic that had been discussed" (Vincent 2013, p. 351). All of these aspects of repeated interviews were utilised in the research, as will be illustrated through the data chapters, and outlined in the final discussion in Chapter VII.

The first interview was used to build rapport and to get information on the couples' perception of their relationships, daily lives and histories. The interview questions were based on existing literature on LGBTI ageing and covered topics that emerged from various empirical research (e.g. Heaphy et al. 2004; Sharek et al. 2015; Putney et al. 2018). Prior to the first interview (Appendix III), the participants were asked to fill out a short questionnaire (Appendix II) which included information on their age, nationality, relationship status, number of children (if they had any), how long they have lived in Scotland and how long they were in their current relationship. This data was collected to get background information on the participants and is presented at the beginning of this chapter, in Table 1. During the first interview we mostly discussed how the couple met, their coming out stories, the reasons why they did or did not decide to get married or register for a civil partnership. The data I gathered in the first interview also included information on support networks and the relationships the participants had with their families. The first interview ended with an introduction to the future as the main theme that would be covered in the written accounts and the second interview.

The second interview (Appendix IV) usually took place three to four weeks after the first one. The one exception were Robert and Fred, whom I met six months after our first interview as they lived in the very north of Scotland and our plans to have the second interview over Skype did not work out because Fred was ill at the time we should have had the interview. In the end, they came to Edinburgh for a holiday and we met for our second interview. Between the two interviews, all couples were asked to write an account of their future in a notebook I provided, a method of data collection which will be explored in Section 3.3. of this chapter. The written accounts were

relevant for the second interview as most of the questions I asked revolved around what the couples wrote. The second interview started with me reading through what they had written, and, after reading their accounts, asking the couple to guide me through it, to explain why they put in the things they did, and how they did it. Other questions that were asked in the second interview also included topics that emerged from the literature on LGBTI ageing, such as fear of discrimination (Wathern and Green 2017), and health and care concerns (Putney et al. 2018), as well as questions about ageing in general, including, but not limited to, retirement decisions (Mock and Schryer 2017) and support networks (Grossman et al. 2000). The interview ended with a question whether there were any changes the couples hoped to see in the future, and an invitation to add anything they think we might have missed.

3.2.1. Benefits and Limitations of Joint Interviews

Using semi-structured joint interviews had its benefits and limitations. Joint interviews are often considered "second best" (Bjørnholt and Farstad 2014, p. 3) to individual interviews. This idea is based on an assumption that joint interviews do not allow the researcher to get close to the "unencumbered voice of the interviewee" (Bjørnholt and Farstad 2014, p. 4). Heaphy and Einarsdottir (2012) argue that the advantages of interviewing couples together are "the potential to aid recollection of events and create a space where partners can possibly correct each other" (p. 55), as well as the observation of couple interaction. Through joint interviews, couples told their stories together and the "relational and interactive elements" (Sakellariou, Boniface and Brown 2013, p. 1564) of their joint construction of narratives surfaced through their discussion. Furthermore, joint interviews avoid certain ethical problems that would be

present in individual interviews, such as one partner asking for information that the other one shared with the researcher.

However, there are ethical issues that might arise in joint interviews as well, such as "coconstruction of consent" (Mellor, Slaymaker and Cleland 2013, p. 1402), where the individual's consent to participate in the research is influenced by their partner's. Other potential disadvantages include instances in which the presence of both partners can prevent disclosure and lead to the interview being dominated by one partner (Heaphy and Einarsdottir 2012), which might lead to the other partner's story to be harder to discern from the jointly constructed one (Sakellariou et al. 2013). While there were instances in which one partner talked more than the other, he or she always turned to the other one for affirmation or clarification of events they were discussing. The choice between individual and joint interviews also depends on the research questions and the aims of the research. As this research explored the shared experiences of the ageing process and the imagination of the future, using joint interviews was a decision I made guided by these criteria. Furthermore, as Valentine (1999) argues, "most household reality is shared reality" (p. 68), and, as was visible from the data, both partners shared some aspects of their imagined futures with each other and constructed them within imagined and collective relationships, which will be explored through the following chapters.

3.3. Written Accounts

As mentioned above, apart from joint interviews, I used written accounts as a data collection method in order to get an in-depth view of the couples' imagined futures. The written accounts were, in most cases, done in a notebook that I gave the participants after our first interview. Some of the participants, like Alan and Jeff, wrote

their account on the computer and sent it to me before our interview, so I had time to read through it before our second meeting. This section further explains the rationale behind using the written accounts, the couples' ways of doing them, and the contribution of this data collection method to the overall research.

The written accounts the couples were asked to do did not require writing an entry each day, or in specific time intervals. Rather, the idea was for the couples to note down their thoughts about the future at any time they wanted. The instructions that were included in the notebooks I left them were as follow:

> Personal representations of your future
>
> Use this notebook to create a personal representation of your future. It can be in a form you find most suitable (short written piece, drawing, photograph, for example of a place you imagine retiring to, recording or video – these you can send to me by email). You and your partner can create these representations together or separately, that's up to you. However, the representations need to be in this notebook – using one notebook allows you to know what the other person is doing and to discuss any ideas or thoughts about your future together.

By following these instructions, both partners shared their thoughts on the future with one another, and their accounts reflected not only their imagination but also contextualised it within their daily lives (Hyers 2018). The two most common ways in which the couples wrote in the notebooks (or on the computer) was in a form of a dialogue where both partners took turns in writing their entries on several occasions, and one partner writing their part and then giving it to the other one to respond, without revisiting the notebook afterwards. The couples who lived together used the dialogue method, as the notebook was always available to both partners, while the couples who lived apart did it separately because of the logistics of being in the same place at the same time. Some entries, such as Sarah and Jane's, included images as well as text:

Figure 1: Entry from Sarah and Jane's notebook: "What we love now"

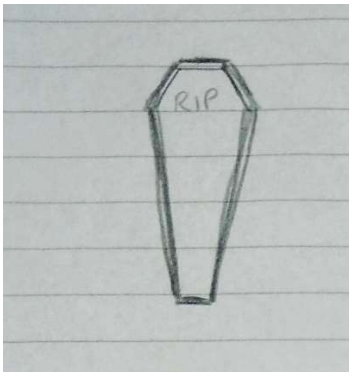

Figure 2: Entry from Sara and Jane's notebook: "We are afraid of losing"

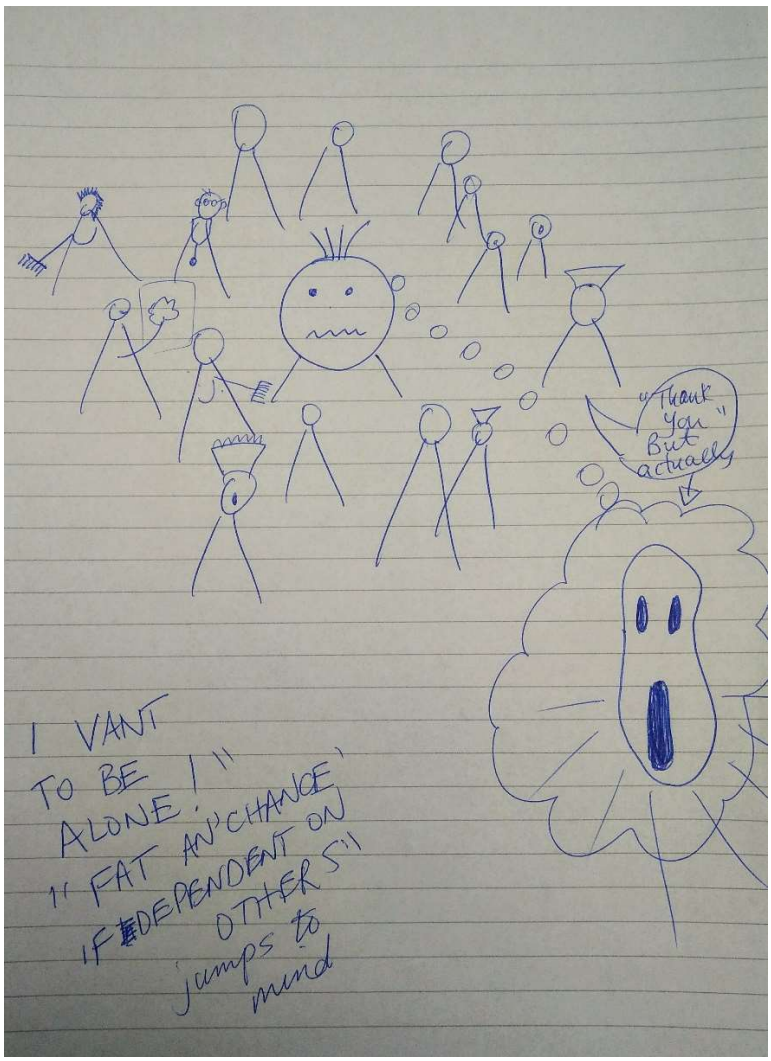

Figure 3: Entry from Sarah and Jane's notebook: "I want to be alone!"

Apart from writing and drawing, another format in which these accounts were produced was a rap poem by Kathy presented below[5]. Parts of the poem will be further explored in the following chapters:

[5] The name of the city Kathy mentions in the poem has been removed due to anonymisation.

Proud

I know I'm getting old
But I can still be bold
Not left out in the cold
Still one within my fold

I know I'm getting round
But I can still be found
Not hiding but unbound
Still shouting out my sound

You know I'm really gay
Can that still cause affray?
Not hiding it today
Still got lots to say

It's me who's really proud
Standing out from the crowd
Demanding equal rights aloud
We will never be cowed

So, you wonder why I'm shouting all this rhetoric and protest
As I blunder through my outing as a lesbian confessed
My thunder I am touting like a catholic possessed
Hereunder is some spouting of a future that is blessed

Rose and I are in love this happy state should not be put asunder
We are like hand-in-glove firm in our traits not able to plunder
Listen to our hope Guv, don't steal our fate cause you will hear our thunder
We're in heaven above not being straight so don't you make a blunder

I also love my city at one end of [motorway]
With a castle so pretty, a skyline to resonate
[city] is more gritty, Rose is a keen reprobate
Its humour is quite witty, I sometimes try to emanate

We often are together in one place or the other
Not though forever cause this would kinda smother
We separate whenever giving us a break from t'other
So, transport is an endeavour we require to remain fun-lovers

Communication is important for our relationship to blossom
We need a fair assortment to support our microcosm
Phoning and texting is concordant to stop our moods hitting rock-bottom
Continue the enthrallment by calling each other 'possum'

We want any intervention to recognise our status and preferences
We don't want apprehension of becoming stateless with severances
To suffer circumvention of our rights and heinous negligence's
Those without comprehension putting us in shapeless dresses

The hetero-normative society tries to smother our ambition
Not wanting our variety to feed social transition
They subject us to psychiatry to freeze our recognition
This all propagates anxiety we can't help our predisposition

So, this is our story
Sometimes a bit gory
Then we release our fury
See us now in all our glory

We always live in hope
This allows us to cope
Life is within our scope
Pride for us is, dope

Yes, we are very proud
We will not be bowed
Our sexuality is our shroud
Our voice will be heard aloud

We are a happy pair
Our lives we truly share
God has answered our prayer
We walk through live with pride, yeah!

Having interviewed the couples and then read their accounts, it was clear that the dialogue format reflected the way they discussed things in person as well. However, some of the things that came up in their accounts were not present in the interviews, such as ideas and thoughts about the future that one partner had and the other was not aware of. These ideas did not only serve as a point of discussion in our second interview, but positioned the action of writing in the notebook as a method of reflexivity for the participants, as it revealed topics of conversation they had not discussed before, and, in some cases, motivated the couple to think about their future in the first place. Gloria, for example, explicitly mentioned that writing in the notebook focused her attention to the hopes and fears she had about the future. Sarah and Jane expressed a similar argument in our second interview, where they explained that this activity made them talk about their future and focused "the mind" (Sarah, second interview) on how they imagined it.

The written accounts also presented some themes that did not come up during the interviews. For example, Fred and Robert explained they did not discuss end-of-life issues in the interviews, but they did raise the question of death in the notebook. Fred was the first one who mentioned it, and Robert replied to his thoughts by agreeing it was something they should discuss but found it "exceedingly hard to do" (Robert, written account). Reflecting on this in the second interview, Fred and Robert argued that they did not discuss death because it was inevitable and therefore there was no point in concerning themselves with it. Emily and Gloria wrote in the notebook separately, with Gloria writing her part first and Emily adding hers later. One of the things that came up during our second interview in relation to their written accounts was the fact that the two of them never discussed living accommodation in the future,

but both of them wrote about it. This not only motivated them to have a discussion about accommodation, but it also helped them in realising how both of them wanted to live in the same sort of setting in the future. These, and other themes that emerged from the written accounts will be explored in more detail in Chapters IV, V and VI.

Two couples did not complete the writing activity in the format it was presented to them, i.e. by writing about their future in the notebook or on the computer, but they did discuss the future before our second interview. William and Peter prepared a discussion about an object, an electric piano, they imagined would be important for their lives together, and explained how they had already planned for its location in their home. By doing so, they actively decided on a topic that they wanted to discuss in our second interview, also imagining it would be something I would find useful for my research. Sharon and Anna explained that they have discussed their future, but had not written anything down, partly because they forgot, and partly because Sharon had medical issues with her wrist, so she was unable to write. The things they discussed between themselves before our interview were linked to them getting married a couple of months before the first interview. They explained that being married opened new discussions about the future, specifically concerning financial and health aspects of it, and the prompt they got from the notebook motivated them to talk more about these issues.

While the logistics, the completion of the accounts, and the way in which they were presented varied from couple to couple, it was clear that the notebooks and the thought of having to write in them impacted on the couples' daily lives and the discussions they had about the future, and affected the depth and quality of the collected data. The following section outlines the data organisation and analysis methods, explaining the

process of using a qualitative data analysis software and outlining the two analysis methods that were employed.

4. Data Organisation and Analysis

This section outlines the process of recording, transcribing and importing the data into a data analysis software NVivo 11, as well as the process of securely storing the transcripts. The section also presents the methods used in the data analysis, explaining their suitability for the research questions and this specific group of participants.

4.1. Collecting, Transcribing and Organising the Data

The interviews were conducted from November 2016 to June 2018. The interviewing process was initially planned to last around 12 months, but in some cases the period between the two interviews lasted longer than the anticipated three or four weeks, and the couples were interviewed at different times. All interviews were recorded on my phone, and a second recording device (another mobile phone) was used for a back-up recording. The interviews took place in the locations the participants chose, mostly in their own homes or cafés, with one set of interviews having been conducted over Zoom, a conferencing video-chat website. Once an interview was over, I imported the recording onto the University of Edinburgh secure and password-protected OneDrive server. I transcribed each interview as soon as it was recorded and made notes on recurring themes in order to include them in subsequent interviews and to start the data organisation early. I also copied the couples' written accounts into Word and imported them into NVivo for easier analysis. The interviews were transcribed with an aim to get as much verbatim as possible, including pauses and hesitations during the interviews as important indicators of the way the participants approached certain

questions. However, as Elliott (2005) argues, it is almost impossible to transcribe an interview in a way that would capture all of the nuances and meaning that were shared during the interview itself. In order to convey these nuances in the transcripts, I included cues that might help express the tone of the interview. For example, to illustrate the ways in which the participants discussed certain topics, I included notes on laughter, which sometimes indicated humour, and sometimes a way to discuss a potentially difficult topic in a light-hearted way (Soilevuo Grønnerød 2004; Myers & Lampropoulo 2016).

The transcribed interviews and written accounts were imported in a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data AnalysiS (CAQDAS) software, NVivo 11. Using an analysis software allowed for flexibility, as it saved the work I have done on the data and allowed me to go back to it over and over again, making necessary changes and adding new codes. This was important as new themes emerged with every interview:

> Ideas which occur to an analyst some time after the data collection process can be inserted at the appropriate place, say in previously entered fieldnotes. New codes can be added at will or material coded in several different ways at once. At the same time, the raw data remain close at hand and are ready for inspection. (Fielding and Lee 1991, p. 3)

The flexibility that NVivo offered was useful in developing emergent themes and codes. The initial codes, i.e. "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language based or visual data" (Saldaña 2009, p. 3), were revisited in repeated coding cycles. This way the data analysis was consistent, and the use of codes was constantly examined (Creswell 2009).

4.2. Thematic Analysis

The initial round of data analysis focused on discovering the most common themes in the written accounts and the interviews. Thematic analysis, according to Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012), focuses on "identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas" (p. 13) that emerge from the data. In a thematic analysis, the researcher is exploring the underlying meaning in the interview transcripts, as well as the explicit content of the data (Bryman 2012). Furthermore, thematic analysis is commonly used in analysing different types of documents (Bryman 2012), including, in the context of this research, the interview transcripts and the written accounts, so it was a suitable analysis method for the data at hand.

Initial themes included explicit topics the participants discussed, such as 'family', 'relationship history', 'retirement', and 'Scotland', and subsequent themes, which mostly developed in combination with a narrative analysis, were more implicit ones. These included 'supporting each other', 'fear of losing', and 'being out', among others. The themes were organised by codes I developed and assigned to the interview transcripts and the written accounts in NVivo in the two rounds of analysis. On average, the themes in the transcripts were assigned around 30 codes, and the total number of codes at the end of the data analysis was 86. The advantage of using thematic analysis is that initial themes can be "derived directly from the participant's responses" (Fenge 2014, p. 294), even during the interviews, so the analysis process can start simultaneously with the data collection. This was particularly useful during the second interview, when I read through their written accounts and picked up some initial themes I then discussed with the couple. As Bazeley (2013) argues, thematic codes that emerge from the data are useful in categorising parts of the data into

different themes, but a more in-depth approach is needed in order to explore how these codes create a narrative from the participants' accounts. In order to get depth and tease out more nuanced ideas, I employed a narrative analysis method in the second round of data analysis.

4.3. Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis is a technique that explores the ways in which people make sense of their realities and it allows the researcher to explore how the story is being told, instead of what the story is (Phoenix et al. 2010). The primary aim of narrative analysis is to explore the stories people share in their everyday lives, and how their stories, or narratives, are constructed in relation to larger, collective, narratives shared by a particular community or group (Murray 2018). As will be explored in Chapters IV, V and VI, the participants often made sense of their realities through various relationships they formed in their life, be they interpersonal, collective or imagined.

Narrative analysis allows for these relationships to come forward from the stories the participants shared. For example, Alan and Jeff talked about how the doctor would always ask one of them how the other one was doing, illustrating the positive reactions they got from people they interacted with. While this example, which will be explored in more detail in Chapter IV, Section 2, might have been a way for Alan and Jeff to illustrate how their immediate society perceives them, it also pointed to a comparison with their past, where their relationships might not have been accepted so positively. This example also shows that narrative analysis can be used to tease out the temporal nuances in the data, an aspect of the participants' stories that was key in constructing their relational identities (Mead 1934; Jackson 2010), and to analyse the interactions

between the partners as they shared their stories with the researcher (Czarniawska 2011).

As Czarniawska (2011) argues, during the interview process, the participant and the researcher, or, in the case of this research, the couple and the researcher, create a narrative through interaction. It is not only what was said during the interview that is analysed, but the way in which it was said as well. Rapley (2007) argues that during interviews, the researcher needs to be aware of how their "interaction produced that trajectory of talk, how specific versions of reality are co-constructed, how specific identities, discourses and narratives are produced" (p. 16). To maintain this awareness during the analysis of the interview transcripts I referred to the notes I made about how the couple interacted during our interviews. For example, when analysing the discussions about topics the couple did not agree on, I returned to the fieldnotes to remind myself of their interaction throughout our interviews and to analyse the discussion in line with existing codes (Corbin and Strauss 1990).

Apart from analysing interview transcripts and partner interactions, narrative analysis was used in analysing the written accounts the participants produced (Murray 2018). In order to facilitate analysis, each account was rewritten in a Word document and imported into NVivo for easier organisation and initial coding. I approached the written accounts as parts of life narratives the participants decided to share with me. What was missing in the analysis process were the language cues the participants exhibited during face-to-face interviews, so there was a risk of misunderstanding the meaning behind some of the entries. However, this was overcome by being acquainted with the participants after our first interview, familiarising with their intonation and manner of speaking, and by asking for clarifications on their accounts during our

second interview. Sarah and Jane, as was illustrated above, included little drawings in their written account as well, and these served as guidance in analysing the tone of their entries. By using narrative analysis in the written accounts, I was able to 'read between the lines' and explore the "complexities of personal and social relations" (Esin, Fathi & Squire 2018, p. 203) the research participants presented through their dialogues, drawings and poems. More detailed analyses of the written accounts will be represented through the data chapters.

5. Ethics

While talking about the future might not be considered a sensitive topic in itself, as it does not directly cause "harm to participants, eliciting powerful emotional responses such as anger, sadness, embarrassment, fear and anxiety" (Elmir et al. 2011, p. 12), it carries with it potential discussions about death, illness, care needs, or other distressful future situations. Another source of a 'powerful emotional response' were the questions about the participants' sexual identity, a topic regarded sensitive by the ESRC Framework for Research Ethics (2015). Keeping these two aspects of the research in mind, it was necessary to ensure the couples felt comfortable while doing the interviews to minimise any potential stress that could occur. Apart from providing all the relevant information about the research and giving the couples a chance to ask questions about it, the couples decided where they wanted the interview to take place.

The research was granted a Level 2 ethical clearance at the School of Social and Political Science at the University of Edinburgh in May/June 2016. The data gathered was handled according to the guidelines of The Data Protection Act (1998), and the research was designed along the following ethical principles: consent, anonymity and

confidentiality. To ensure participation was voluntary and that the informed consent of the participants was clearly received, the research was conducted using best practice (Blaikie 2010), which will be outlined below. The research kept to the highest ethical standards to ensure that there was no harm to participants or the researcher, that the information sheet (Appendix V) and consent form (Appendix VI) have been read and understood by all participants, that there was no invasion of privacy of the participants, and that the goals and objectives of the research were known to all participants (Bryman 2004).

To ensure consent, one of the partners was approached directly via email prior to our first meeting. Through email correspondence I made sure that both partners were happy to participate and to be interviewed together by sending them an information sheet detailing the research topic and encouraging them to ask any questions they might have about the study and their role in it. On the day of the interview the research topic and the participant's voluntary involvement were once again clarified through a verbal and written consent form. The participants were made aware that they did not have to answer any questions they did not want to, and that they could decide to stop the interview or their participation at any point without needing to give an explanation (Roulston and Choi 2014).

To ensure anonymity, the names of the participants and any family members they mentioned were replaced with pseudonyms, and the names of the places they lived/worked in were removed from the transcripts or replaced with the name of the country instead of a city, town or region. Efforts were made to exclude potentially identifying information. The transcripts were not shared with third parties for any reason, with the researcher being the only person who had access to them. All data

were kept on secure password-protected University servers, and any paper copies were locked in an office desk, to which only I have access.

To ensure confidentiality, I worked on building rapport and a relationship of trust with each couple. Efforts were made to view the situation from their perspective and relate empathically, ensuring there is no coercion, and allowing for flexibility and re-scheduling if necessary. These methods were useful because the better the researcher understands and identifies with the interviewee's situation, the better the data is likely to be (Gabb 2008). The quality of the achieved rapport is evidenced by the quality and depth of gathered data. One participant said that she was telling me something because the interviews were confidential and anonymised, which was a good indication of the level of confidentiality I have achieved with the couples and was a sign that they have understood what participating in the research entailed. Limits to confidentiality such as using some quotes to illustrate arguments in presentations at academic conferences were emphasized before the couples agreed to take part in the research and were included in the written consent form. Participants were reassured that no identifying data will be presented, and the quotes would not have any elements that could be used to recognise them.

The final point that needs to be considered in the context of the data collection is my position as the researcher and how it impacted my relationship with the research participants (Finlay 2002). Through the interviews and the written accounts, I have heard and read stories the couples decided to share. Some of the stories reflected mundane, everyday experiences, and others carried a significant amount of emotional baggage with them. For instance, one of the participants told me his first sexual encounter with a man happened when he was raped. While his account produced

interesting and important data, I was aware that discussing rape often invoked feelings of humiliation, de-humanisation and threat (Doherty and Anderson 2004), and I did not wish the participant to experience these feelings. Being aware of the fact that some of the stories the couples shared would have an emotional impact both on them and on myself, I dealt with such accounts by stepping away from the data in order to create some distance and ensure my emotions were not guiding the data analysis, but also using emotional reflexivity in the interviews do reflect and respond to the participants' narratives emphatically (Holmes 2015).

As with most qualitative in-depth research, there was always an element of my own perception and understanding of the world present in the data collection and analysis (Dean et al. 2018), as were the participants' own ideas about me as a researcher. At some point in all of the interviews I was asked if I was gay, and in some cases the assumption was made without the question being posed. I decided to share my sexual identity with the participants, telling them that I was straight, and I was aware of the potential change in their responses or even willingness to participate further (Finlay 2002). After telling my participants that I was not, they followed with a question "why are you doing this [the research]?". I offered both the reasoning arising from the academic discourse (the gaps in the literature and a need to explore LGBTI ageing in more depth), and a personal one (raising awareness of issues that surround older same-sex couples and LGBTI individuals). By explaining my motivation behind conducting this research, I did not only provide justification to the research participants, but also reiterated the research goals to myself (Ballinger 2008).

6. Conclusion

This chapter outlined the main research strategies that were employed in this research, namely elements of grounded theory and the interpretative phenomenological approach, and the reasons for their use. The chapter then explored the rationale behind approaching the research topic with qualitative research methods and the choice of the research participants, justifying each criterion the participants had to fulfil in order to participate. Following this, the chapter outlined the data collection methods, describing in detail the pilot questionnaire, semi-structured joint interviews and the written accounts, and illustrating how the two methods used in the data collection produced rich data which shows the depth of the couples' relational experiences. The chapter then explained the data organisation and analysis processes, explaining the process of recording and transcribing the data, as well as offering a guide through the two rounds of the data analysis. The chapter ended with ethical considerations of the research, exploring the steps that were taken to ensure confidentiality, consent and anonymity, and outlining the considerations of my own positionality within the research. Having outlined the methodology of the research, the following three chapters will present the empirical data, beginning with a chapter on the intersection of the past and the present, and moving on to the chapters on the short- and long-term futures respectively.

Chapter IV: The Past and the Present: Out and (In)Visible

1. Introduction

As was outlined in Chapter II, the past, present, and future exist at the same time (Adam 2010). During the interviews, the participants described their past and present lives, telling stories about coming out, accepting their sexuality, engaging in their current relationships and making those relationships visible and legitimate. The stories the participants told about their past reflected the importance of their sexual identity in the decisions they made in their youth, and how these decisions impacted on their present. This chapter focuses on the interplay between the past and the present, exploring how each time period plays a role in constructing and informing one another (Jackson 2010). It begins with an exploration of the participants' coming out stories as one of the most important parts of their lives.

As the chapter illustrates, coming out does not happen in a single instance; it is an iterative process that these couples go through day by day, and, for some, it is a process that will never stop. In the context of historical time, the coming out experience is relevant as it serves as a link between the heteronormative pasts and the more inclusive and queer presents the participants live in, and it presents a break in the chrononormative flow of time (Halberstam 2005; Luciano 2011). The second part of the chapter presents the narratives on blessing ceremonies, civil partnerships and marriage, as mechanisms through which the couples made their relationships valid and visible for their own sake, but also for the sake of the society they live in (Richardson and Monro 2012). The role of these narratives is to illustrate how the past and present

are not two distinctly different times, but how they inform each other and create social change which in turn plays a role in creating the interpersonal, imagined and collective relationships that act as fundamental elements of the couples' imagined futures.

2. Reflecting on Coming Out Narratives: The Intersection of the Past and Present

One of the remnants of the past that all participants carried with them into the present was the impact of heteronormativity on their formative years as teenagers and young adults. Heteronormative ideals informed legal Acts, such as the introduction of Section 28, and impacted societal opinions on the 'correct' form of sexuality and intimate relationships (Brook 2018). As outlined in Chapter II, heteronormativity is a system built on the dichotomy of the dominant and the other (Farrier 2015), in this case heterosexuality as the dominant, and all other forms of sexuality and gender expression as the other. Weeks (1997) illustrates this point on the example of male and female sexuality, arguing that male sexuality is so dominant and pervasive that it is taken for granted, and that it frames the way we look at the world. The same principle could be applied to heterosexuality. Because of its long-established position as the only valid form of sexuality (Blasius 1994), all other forms of sexuality are viewed in relation to it and are therefore framed as deviant (Focault 1978). By positioning opposite-sex relationships as the norm, heteronormativity excludes same-sex coupling, enforcing homophobia and even legitimising violence against LGBTI individuals (Brook 2018).

2.1. Coming Out as Gay: Discrimination and Visibility

The older male participants in this research have grown up during a time when being gay was perceived as a mental illness (D'Augelli and Grossman 2001), and their behaviour was considered criminal (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al. 2017b). Even though

the socio-cultural context of Scotland is different today than it was in their youth, the male couples' lives and parts of their identities are still impacted by past experiences of heteronormativity, homophobia and discrimination, illustrating the relational link between the self and society (May 2013).

When discussing their lives today, the couples often contrasted them to how things were in the past, while they were younger. Fred, for example, discussed the difference between his and Robert's, his partner's, youth as gay men, and the lives younger gay men were leading today:

> One of the problems is that gay people of our age, as we were all brought up at a time when what we did was illegal, we could be sent to prison for, we could lose our jobs for, et cetera, so people of our age may be less likely to be open than younger people. You might see lots of younger gay couples holding hands in the street, it will be very, very rare that you'll see, well me and Robert don't, because we were brought up in an era where to do so would have, at best, led to talks, and at worst, at a certain time, would have led to prosecution.
> (Fred, 67, second interview)

Not showing public displays of affection was a way to avoid prosecution at the time when being homosexual was illegal, up to 1967 in England and Wales, and 1980 in Scotland. Both Fred and Robert lived in England before 1967, and they were aware what was at stake if they engaged in a same-sex relationship or disclosed their sexual identities. Fred's story illustrated how the behaviour he experienced in the past impacted the way he and Robert performed their relationship in public in the present. It also offered an insight into the collective relationship Fred believed he and Robert had with other older gay men, as they shared the same experiences in their youth and, as Fred imagined, they would probably act in the same way in the present, in their older age. As argued above, even though Fred was aware there was more acceptance and inclusivity of gay men in Scotland today, he and Robert still remembered the fear

they felt in the past. Fred's comparison of the younger and older generations of gay men also illustrated the different socio-cultural contexts in which the two groups came of age and formed their sexual identities. In the following extract, Fred's argument further depicted the interplay of the past and the present:

> … and of course, you guarantee confidentiality, but people in the closet are still going to be, I mean I know when I was in the closet. Even with confidentiality, it would have meant admitting things to myself as well.
> (Fred, 67, second interview)

This was Fred's reply to our discussion of the difficulty of recruiting older same-sex couples for participation in this research. Fred said that the reason behind the older LGBT population being invisible and closeted in the present was the need to hide their sexuality in the past. This extract illustrated the fluidity of the past and present through Fred's way of talking about both temporalities as being intricately linked one to the other and sharing the role of constructing life narratives and identities (Jackson 2010). Moving between the present and the past allowed Fred to rationalise the thoughts he might have had in his youth, as he reflected on them from the point of view of a gay man who might not have the same fears in the present. The difficulty he experienced in admitting his sexual orientation to himself in his youth further implied how deeply ingrained heteronormativity was in his, and others', lives. Heteronormativity did not only make it difficult to come out as lesbian or gay to one's family and friends, but to themselves as well, for fear of deviating from the established norm shared by the individual's community (Rosenberg, Kottorp and Johansson 2018). The next extract by Robert further illustrated Jackson's (2010) argument about the role of time in the construction of identity and the mechanisms some of the participants employed in order to stay within the expected sexual norms:

> Yes, I was trying, I mean, I think that I was on a sort of denial trip all in all, and that I didn't sort of really, I always knew I was gay, but I managed to sort of hide from it and pretend it wasn't there. That's really why I got married I guess, but then when the marriage came to an end, that's when I really had to face it, you know.
> (Robert, 76, first interview)

Robert told the story of his marriage from the perspective of the present and explained why he believed he was doing it in the first place. This extract illustrated Mead's (1934) idea of the past being constructed by the present, as the story of Robert's marriage changed its meaning as time went by. In his youth, Robert used marriage to hide his sexual identity from others and from himself, believing that following the heteronormative path would make him normal and ordinary (Richardson and Monro 2012) in the eyes of his immediate community. The language Robert used in talking about his marriage, using terms like 'denial trip', 'hide from it', and 'face it', framed his sexuality as something negative, and almost dangerous, that he needed to pretend was not there. Reflecting on the struggles he faced in the past, both from his own understanding of sexuality and from the expectations of others, Robert was aware that he used the marriage to pass as straight (Fuller, Chang and Rubin 2009) and to postpone or completely avoid coming out. In the end, he 'really had to face' his sexuality, implying how difficult it was to continue hiding from it.

Engaging in opposite-sex relationships in their youth was an experience that was shared among most of the participants. Some, like Robert, did so to pass as straight, and others, like William, explained that they were experimenting with their sexuality:

> I didn't know myself for many years, so I presumed myself heterosexual, and had several heterosexual relationships 'till the 1980s. About the same time as becoming sexually active with women, I became sexually active with men in an entirely different way. I was never then dishonest about it, I actually said what my feelings were to my women partners, and as the AIDS thing started, it developed, the woman I was with then had some concerns, but I just sort of

> decided at that point if I met a woman, I would forgo men, while being completely open about eyeing up guys on the street. If I met a man, then I'd go on that journey. And, in that particular time I met a woman, and then I realised having sex, or from the fork in that direction, that was the wrong direction. (William, 65, first interview)

The 1980s were a turbulent time for the gay population in the United States and the United Kingdom as the HIV/AIDS epidemic was starting to spread, eventually reaching its peak in the late 80s and early 90s (Rosenfeld, Bartlam and Smith 2012). 1980 marked an important milestone for the LGBTI population of Scotland as it was the year when homosexuality was decriminalised. Despite this positive political move, however, the HIV/AIDS epidemic stigmatised gay and bisexual men, and, as William explained above, raised concerns related to the spread of the disease outside the LGBTI domain. William was honest about 'eyeing up guys on the street' while he was in relationships with women, and this might have added to their perception of him as promiscuous or exhibiting risky behaviour. Deciding to 'forgo' men if he met a woman, and vice versa, might have been his way to decrease the perception of himself as a source of infection, and engaging in a monogamous relationship added to the image of a good sexual citizen, which was based on "heteronormative marriage and family values" (Richardson 2004, p. 406). William's coming out story also illustrated the social opinions about gay men in the UK at the time (Lyons et al. 2015), and the difficulties the LGBTI population might have faced when, and if, they decided to come out, as well as during the process of questioning and experimenting with one's sexuality. William's partner, Peter, was 36 years old at the time of our interview. He had come out during the early 2000s, in his early 20s. He explained he never experienced the things that William had, and was more open about his sexuality from an earlier age:

> So, I've been very, very, very lucky with friends and family, and even when I came out to my friends I made in the first few weeks of uni, they weren't bothered, so it's like, this is quite a good decade to be me, and I thought, compared to living life on much harder difficulties, as I know some people have previously.
> (Peter, 36, first interview)

Through his experiences, Peter illustrated how historical time, as well as cultural context, played an important role in the formation of his sexual identity, and in creating a collective relationship to people who shared similar experiences as he did, making him part of a culturally- and time-specific cohort (Pilcher 1995). He is aware of the differences in the coming out experiences between him and William, who was 29 years older and had experienced different, and possibly more difficult, struggles in his youth. While Peter and William were not members of the same birth cohort and should have had considerable generational differences (Plummer 2010) due to different historical times and contexts they grew up in, they shared a common understanding of the events surrounding the introduction and repeal of Section 28, which extended through both their lives. As Hockey and James (2003) point out, what William and Peter experienced was a period effect, i.e. having their lives impacted by the same historical event, albeit in different ways and to a varying extent:

> William: So, way back in history, cause I had come out just about the time we were fighting that [Section 28], its immediate history has this appalling language of pretend families. […] I think in our minds we both felt very strongly about the clause, I campaigned against it and Peter grew up under its shadow.
> Peter: Yes, I was in school when that was around, and the first time I came to [city], came to this house, I'd spotted, in a frame, in a hallway downstairs, the document that was basically the founder's declaration of [organisation], William was one of the founders of that campaign. That's why I thanked him over lunch the next day, and, in particular on behalf of me and all my generation, my gay friends for that. And it got me to where I am today.
> (William, 65, and Peter, 36, first interview)

The shared knowledge of Section 28's impact on education and lives of many LGBTI people suggested that age and birth year were not in themselves the most important factors in creating collective experiences, but rather the culturally and historically specific events that William and Peter faced in their formative years (Pilcher 1995). In this specific example, William was campaigning against Section 28 in his youth, while Peter experienced its impact in school. Peter's last sentence referred to his relationship with William, but it carried with it a deeper understanding of his own sexuality. Because of William's campaigning in the past, it was possible for Peter to come out and live in a more inclusive society and be in a same-sex relationship with William. By noticing the document on William's wall, Peter reframed his past to fit the present, imagining that his coming out and living an openly gay life were results of William's actions in the past. This once again reflected Mead's notion that the events in the present determined the past, rather than the other way around (Mead 1934). The above exchange also illustrated the importance of social change in examining not only individual lived experiences, but also those jointly created through interpersonal relationships. While William's knowledge was based on first-hand experience of campaigning against Section 28, Peter's understanding of it might have come from media portrayals and news stories about the campaign. However, in their conversations, and motivated by the declaration Peter saw on William's wall, they constructed a common experience around the impact of Section 28 on their lives, and the lives of a wider LGBTI community.

The following extract further illustrated Mead's (1934) ideas about identity formation and time, as Jeff recounted his first sexual experience with a man. Apart from retelling the details of that specific experience, Jeff reflected on what happened before and after,

building a temporal narrative about one of the most important moments in formation of his sexuality:

> I was living at home with my mother. I was 17-ish, I had not a clue about anything to do with sex, sexuality, or anything, I was totally naïve. And mum decided to get married again, I can say now that I was very jealous of that. So I decided to leave home, and got offered a job in [city]. And my first weekend in [city] I was raped by a man, and I absolutely enjoyed it. I didn't want it, but I enjoyed it. And I then had to spend a time discovering what on earth it was that was so fantastic. And…I was also very unhappy with the way I was leading my life, as a gay man. Went to the doctor and he said 'oh, you should have aversion therapy'. And I thought 'yes, all right, if that's going to make me *normal* [emphasis in the original interview], I'll do it'. So I went and had aversion therapy in a hospital. And it really had no effect whatsoever on me. [laughing]
> (Jeff, 70, first interview)

Jeff was 17 in 1963. At the time, lesbian, gay and bisexual people were considered to be mentally ill (D'Augelli and Grossman 2001), and it was not until 1973 that homosexuality was declassified from psychiatry as a mental illness (de Vries 2015). At the time when Jeff experienced what happened in the above extract, he might have perceived his sexuality and the attraction he felt towards same-sex sexual intercourse as something that could have been treated. The conflicting emotions of pleasure from the sexual act itself, and aversion from not wanting it possibly played a role in his decision to seek medical attention. What might have prompted this decision further could have been the perception of male rape victims, particularly gay men, as being responsible for the attack and enjoying it more than male heterosexual victims (Doherty and Anderson 2004), and Jeff's desire not to be perceived as such. Looking back on his experience in the hospital, Jeff recounted he had aversion therapy in order to become 'normal', i.e. heterosexual. 'Normal' was a term both Jeff and Alan used throughout the interviews, and for them it meant being the same as a heterosexual couple (van Lisdonk, Nencel and Keuzenkamp 2018), illustrating the acceptance and

normality of opposite-sex relationships, but also drawing on past experiences when it was believed that gay men could become straight through aversion therapy. The following exchange further illustrated how Alan and Jeff framed their relationship as an 'ordinary' one:

> Alan: Also in, you know, in within our family and outwith it. So much so we get a huge amount of support from the family. So, we are just seen as another couple within the family, and that, I mean I come from quite a big family, Jeff's different, I mean my mother had seven sisters and three brothers, so I have lots of cousins…and no one's ever said anything against us –
> Jeff: No.
> Alan: So, we have a very positive –
> Jeff: Yeah, I mean it's so positive for us that if I go to the doctor's the doctor will always ask me how's Alan, or –
> Alan: Yeah, we're well known around here [laughing].
> Jeff: Or Alan will go into the pharmacy and they'll say 'oh, have you come for Jeff's drugs'?
> (Alan, 63 and Jeff, 70, first interview)

This extract illustrated how Alan and Jeff perceived their relationship as any other, and how they imagined others perceived it as well. The above exchange portrayed how an action that might be taken for granted in a heterosexual relationship (Brook 2018), such as a short conversation about one's partner in a pharmacy, held more meaning for Alan and Jeff. The importance of being recognised as a couple in public was brought up by other couples as well, usually followed by comments from the couples themselves how this meant their relationship was equal to that of their heterosexual peers, and how being recognised by the legislation, as well as the community, was one of the most important elements in the construction of their identity as a couple. Jeff also recalled a time of his life when he visited his mother's friends in London who, as he later realised, were a same-sex couple. The description of their flat illustrates the heterosexualisation of spaces (Hubbard 2001), as they shared one flat but divided it

into two to “protect themselves in case they were raided by the police” (Jeff). The practice of the police entering private homes and arresting gay men during the 1960s and 1970s (Kimmel et al. 2006) illustrates the blurred line between the public and the private spheres, especially in the context of LGBTI sexualities. In their current living situation, Alan and Jeff do not need to heterosexualise their home, and, to further illustrate the changing times, they explained their Christmas lights are suspended partly on their own house, and partly on their heterosexual neighbours’, symbolically illustrating how time and social change can help in making the gaps between different groups smaller.

2.2. Coming Out as Lesbian: The Invisible Sexuality

While the male participants shared stories about hiding and persecution, the female ones talked about how their experiences were invisible during their youth, constructing collective relationships with the generation of older lesbian women who shared their experiences (Averett, Yoon and Jenkins 2011). The lack of role models, of lesbian women who were out in public, was one of the main reasons why the female participants did not come out earlier in life (Bird, Kuhns and Garofalo 2012). Adding to that, their narratives illustrated the heteronormative gender roles that framed their life and relationships in the past. The experiences of the female participants illustrated the way in which the public impacted the private even when the experiences of lesbian women were not included in the public narrative. This resonates with Weeks (1997), who explains that because male sexuality was, and still is, understood as the dominant one, the female sexual experiences are made invisible in the public sphere. Viewing sexuality through the male perspective also meant that same-sex female couples in this research faced invisibility in their youth, and feared facing it in the future, as the

following chapter will explore. Some participants, such as Rachel, framed their own coming out experiences through the lens of male (homo)sexuality as it was the only reference point they had:

> I was in my thirties before I came out, cause I lived in such fear of what would happen to me if I told people I was gay, I was doing a PhD like you, at [name] University, and at the back of my head, and I don't know how, I must have had blinkers on, I must have just been living in total fear, I thought 'if anybody finds out I have feelings for women, they'll throw me off my course, they'll throw me out of the university'. I mean [name] University had a gay society, and all that, but I couldn't see that, cause I was just living in fear, so it didn't matter that it wasn't criminal for women, I still had the same amount of fear as maybe the men had. […] I mean I don't want to go back to that.
> (Rachel, 58, second interview)

Rachel came out in the late 1980s and was at that time living in England. Even though homosexuality was decriminalised by then, she was aware that gay men still feared coming out and said she experienced the same fear about her own sexuality. During our second interview, Rachel mentioned seeing *Maurice*, a film about a young man discovering his sexuality and falling in love with another man. Even though the film was set in a pre-Edwardian era, Rachel explained she felt a similar amount of fear in the 1980s, and that this fear stopped her from seeking support. She told a similar story in our first interview, when I asked her to share her coming out experience:

> Interviewer: Can you tell me about your coming out experience?
> Rachel: Yes, mine was very late in my life. I lived in the closet for many, many years, scared to peek out, terrified that people would reject me, or I'd be rejected by my family, or whatever. So I only started to come out when I had a relationship, when I was overseas, with a fellow volunteer I was working with. Because of her I started to tentatively take steps to come out, which I intensified when I came back to Europe. She was from [city], we continued our relationship when we both returned home after volunteering, in [country], I was in [country] in Central America, where homosexuality wasn't talked about, or even acknowledged, we had to be very discreet. So that's when I started my journey and that was in my 30s. I'm still in process of coming out to various people, at different times, and places,

> and stuff like that. But it's been a journey late in my life, and I often wonder if I'd taken, if I'd come out earlier in my life, or, I mean I went to universities and there were gay organisations, societies and things, but I just, I was too blinkered to see them. I was too much in fear, I just couldn't, until I came to terms with it, I felt I couldn't acknowledge it to anybody else, and now I'm very comfortable, obviously, we're in a relationship.
>
> (Rachel, 58, first interview)

Rachel reiterated her fear of rejection after coming out in both our interviews and said that only when she was away from her family and community, she could start her coming out process. This was consistent with research on younger LGBT people and their coming out experiences, where they perceived the rejection from their parents as the primary risk in disclosing their sexual orientation (Ryan et al. 2015). The location where she volunteered did not make it easier for her to explore her sexuality, as she and her partner had to be discreet about their relationship, and she probably did not have any other support than the woman she was dating at the time. Coming back to the UK, she might have encountered a more open environment which allowed her to come out more publicly. Similarly to Fred's story, Rachel first needed to be comfortable with her sexuality on her own, and admit to herself what her feelings were, before coming out to others. Kathy, Rachel's partner, explained how she was still on her coming out journey and illustrated the idea that coming out, and (re)discovering one's sexuality, were not fixed processes, but rather that they depended on the socio-cultural context and social situations:

> Yes, I suppose my, I'm still on my journey, I think, of coming out, as well. Because I have various environments that I'm in, some of which I'm completely out, and others I don't advertise that I'm gay. Mainly, work is an interesting example, the company I worked with previously, I was out there, and that was fine, it was a small company, and we've all got on really well and that was fine. This new company is a bigger company, and in fact I've never discussed my sexuality in that company. Mainly because nobody seems to discuss anything about their lives, the company is there for work purposes, as

> opposed to socialising, or any sort of interaction about out of work things. So I just left the topic unsaid. Coming out in other contexts, I'm obviously out with my children, I have two children, a boy and a girl. They're actually grown up, one is, my son is a [military position], my daughter works in the city, in [public service]. I'm out, they have known about my sexuality and what I'm about, and stuff, now. I suppose my son is less accepting, but I suspect given his job, and sort of macho world that he lives in, any reference to LGBT probably doesn't go down too well in his world. I understand that. My daughter's much more accepting, she's fine.
> (Kathy, 57, first interview)

Kathy did not say when she began her coming out journey, but it was probably around the time she moved to Scotland from England, which was in 2004. She lived in a rural part of Scotland for a short time before realising that there were no support groups for LGBTI people, and, as she said, her sexuality was causing her grief in such a setting. Once she moved to a bigger city, she joined an LGBTI support group where she met Rachel. When she was talking about coming out and being out in various contexts, Kathy explained that it depended on how close she was to the people around her, once again pointing to the relational aspect of identity formation (Mead 1934). Like Alan and Jeff, who explained they did not promote their relationship, Kathy said she did not advertise her sexuality at her current workplace, but she was not hiding it either. This extract also illustrated how Kathy needed to find a reason why her son was not as accepting as her daughter was, and she explained it by telling me where her son worked and how his 'world' was 'macho'. She was happy her daughter was fine with her mother's sexuality, but she also wished her son would be more accepting. Kathy's wish for her son's acceptance was also visible in the amount of time she spent talking about her children, offering an explanation and rationale for her son's behaviour, but only mentioning her daughter's acceptance in one short sentence. This might point to Cooley's (1902) ideas about people's desire to be accepted by others, particularly because of the development of individual identities which is impacted by how people

imagine others perceive them. Kathy was content with her daughter's approval, but she required her son's acceptance in order to develop her own sexuality more fully.

Even though Kathy did not explicitly mention fear as one of the reasons she came out later in life, as Rachel did for example, her narrative reflected a feeling of loneliness she encountered during her life in a rural area in Scotland, where, as she explained "everything revolves around the pub, and if you don't like the pub, then it's tough. You can't really get to meet anybody" (Kathy, first interview). The lack of support she experienced was similar to Jane's, who did not know anyone she could turn to when she was discovering her sexuality:

> For me, it was complicated because I was married to a man at the time, and I was, I had two young children, so it just, as the dawning happened to me, I thought, I knew I was unhappy, and then started to think why that might be, and as I began to realise what was happening, I then thought 'well I can't do anything about this because I've got two small children', and I had no role models, nobody else that I knew was in a position like I was, and I just thought I will have to just forget it, because I can't do this and make my children unhappy. So, I didn't do anything about it for a little while, but then the kids kept seeing me unhappy, so I thought, you know, 'this is not good'. I can remember my little daughter putting her hands on my face and looking up at me and saying: 'mummy why are you always so sad?'. So I thought 'I can't do this', I went for some therapy, at that time it was actually a lesbian counselling service in [city], and for me that was a big thing, and I knew that going to the service was safe, and I knew that the counsellor would absolutely understand what my issues were, and for me that was very important. So that was transformational for me because I realised that both I had the strength and that my children would survive. And in fact probably thrive because it's much more important that children are supported by adults that are well, and happy.
> (Jane, 56, first interview)

In this extract Jane explained how, in the long run, her children's happiness was more important to her than her own. She also discussed how complicated it was for her to come out because she was in an opposite-sex marriage, which illustrated the impact of heteronormative gender roles on her life and relationship, suggesting that her coming out process would have meant deviating from the norms she probably followed her

entire life. For Jane, following such established norms implied that if she came out, she felt she could have suffered ridicule and rejection (Van Voorhis and McClain 1997), and the lack of role models enforced that perception. In the end, as she realised her unhappiness was being reflected on her children, she came out for their sake as much as hers, shifting the narrative from fear and rejection to acceptance. Once she decided to come out, she actively sought help in form of a counselling service in the city she lived in, taking control of her coming out process. Sarah, Jane's partner, was in a similar position when she was coming out, as she was also married to a man and had children. She recalled the beginnings of her coming out journey during our first interview:

> The first time I came out was to Lucy, my friend, who…I think my coming out was a process and led up to that point. Coming out to myself first of all was the biggest challenge because I was very, very religious. I was in a convent at one point, you know. And I was married, and because I was a good Catholic, there was no way I was ever going to challenge my sexuality. So, it kind of crept up on me really, and I remember seeing this film Desert Hearts[6] on TV, and my husband said 'turn that rubbish off'. And…and I remember thinking, 'no, I'm not actually, I'm watching this'.
> (Sarah, 61, first interview)

Sarah's story showed the dynamics of her marriage and the religious norms she followed, and how both framed her coming out narrative. The way she talked about her religious beliefs implied she no longer followed the same norms she might have in her youth. Being a "good Catholic" in the past, she did not even imagine challenging her sexuality, as there was no way she could have been anything else than heterosexual, at least according to the Catholic religion. There was no more mention of her religion after this instance, implying that she probably did not consider it relevant in her life anymore. The extract also illustrated the relationship she had with her husband. Based

[6] *Desert Hearts* is a 1985 film about two women who engage in a romantic relationship.

on her story, he was the one who decided what was on the TV, which might have reflected the power dynamics in their marriage as well (Jackson 2005), once again pointing to the impact heteronormativity had on her life. As an act of defiance, as Sarah said, she was thinking how she wanted to watch the film, but did not actually tell her husband this, pointing to a limited freedom she felt she had under established gendered norms. Along with breaking away from her religious beliefs and opposite-sex relationships, coming out to her children was one of the most important experiences for Sarah:

> So then I was coming out to children, big thing. But the oldest girl, when I came out to her, said 'mum, you've got short hair, you wear hillwalking boots, rucksacks, you play K. D. Lang in the car, you don't think I realised already?'. (Sarah, 61, first interview)

Apart from illustrating how her oldest daughter reacted to Sarah's coming out, this extract pointed to certain stereotypes that lesbian women were expected to fulfil, such as having a certain hairstyle, wearing clothes that might not have been considered feminine, and listening to particular music. In Sarah's case, her clothing and behaviour might have been considered 'butch', stereotypically presenting the "masculine end of the gender spectrum" (Walker et al. 2012, p. 91). Sarah agreed that the way she dressed and cut her hair meant that people would more often think of her as lesbian than they would of Jane:

> Sarah: So I don't think you come out once, I think, that's why I was hesitating. Every single day you have to come out. Jane gets into a taxi, they'll say 'what does your husband do?'. You know, and then you have to come out again, or can you be bothered?
> Jane: It doesn't happen to you so much, does it?
> Sarah: Doesn't happen to me, I think cause you kind of look girly. Your hair's very nice by the way.
> Jane: Thank you. [laughing]
> Sarah: So people, I think, because of the way I, well I'm kind of butchy dressed, you know, people don't have that same, and short hair.
> (Sarah, 61, and Jane, 56, first interview)

This exchange illustrated how both Sarah and Jane were aware of how their appearance shaped what people around them thought. While Jane was 'girly', Sarah considered herself to be more 'butchy', which in turn might have enforced the butch/femme relationship stereotype (Walker et al. 2012). Clothing and the way they dressed were important for Sarah and Jane, especially in relation to the future, as they expressed a fear of losing their independence through being dressed in clothes they did not like if they had to go to a care facility, narratives that will be further explored in the following chapter. Clothing and physical appearance were also a concern for Rachel, who changed the way she dressed once she came out and met Kathy:

> When I went for all my job interviews, when I was young, I used to wear a skirt, cause it was expected, you had to wear a skirt, if you turned up in trousers, the first thing they say 'right, we're not employing her', because you were wearing trousers. What was that about? Now, the kind of things that I, interviews I have for volunteer posts and things, I go to it smart but casual, and I wear trousers. And that's it. Kathy does wear skirts, but I never wear skirts, I haven't worn a dress, I mean I keep saying if I wore a dress and a skirt, I'd get arrested for cross-dressing. [laughing]
> (Rachel, 58, second interview)

Rachel's story about the way she was expected to dress for job interviews in her youth further emphasised the gendered expectations that women were supposed to adhere to. Combining her story with the ones told by Sarah and Jane created a narrative of heteronormativity that was experienced by all the participants in the research, especially in terms of expected gendered behaviour. Even though it might have been articulated differently by the male participants than it had been by the female ones (for example, experiencing legal and medical intervention because of their sexuality), as opposed to fearing losing their family and children because they were lesbian, heteronormativity had, and still has, a large impact on the couples' lives.

Some participants, like Emily and Gloria, used political activism as a platform for coming out and promoting their sexuality, as well as for fighting heterosexist norms:

> Interviewer: Can you tell me about your coming out experience?
> Emily: You were always out.
> Gloria: [laughing] Yeah. I mean I wasn't always out, I'm from sort of a very religious family. My parents were Irish Catholics, so even though I knew I was gay from an early age, I kind of kept quiet about it until I left home. And then I came out, I had a little time in [city] before I came to [city], in the late 70s, so I just got really involved in the women's movement, and then the gay liberation movement, as soon as I could, and then when I came to [city] I just continued, really. A lot of my friends were in, were politically active around gender and sexuality. […] And because I was really politically active, and I saw coming out as a political thing, and they [parents] didn't really.
> (Emily 77, and Gloria 58, first interview)

Gloria's story shared some similar aspects to Sarah's, as she was also constrained by her family's religious norms in openly declaring her sexuality. Like Rachel, Gloria started her coming out journey once she was away from her family and in a more open environment. Gloria's experience resonates with one of the most prominent pieces of writing of the women's movement, *The Personal is Political* by Carol Hanisch (1969). This paper, and other political actions that happened at the time shared a message that, particularly in women's lives, the issues they faced, be that sexuality, contraception, or abortion, were not constrained to the personal and private, but were part of the political and public spheres as well. The fact that Gloria's parents did not perceive her coming out as a political act showed the generational difference and reflected Gloria's thoughts on their way of thinking, which, compared to her progressive and politically active viewpoint, might have been more conservative and ingrained in religious norms. Emily shared Gloria's political activism, both in her youth and in her older age. The following exchange is a story of Emily's coming out, which she used to tell younger

LGBT people to share her experience of being an older lesbian woman in the city where she lived:

> Gloria: So, it was, I think I was, it was easier than some, especially given the time, you know, when culturally and politically it was incredibly different, incredibly different from what it is now, so I think I was lucky, I had it easier than a lot of people coming out. And I think it was probably, you in fact probably had a harder time.
> Emily: I didn't have a harder time but what I did have was, I had a funny relationship with men. I wanted to have children, I only had one partner…but as I, as I said earlier, Nick was, he was almost like another one of my children, and I…blokes were pals, they weren't somebody I flirted with, they were pals. Anyway, I realised that, actually, I was gay, but I kept it very much under wraps, because, as I said earlier, Lisa was bullied, which was why I had moved to Scotland. […] But because of that, and because I didn't want Lisa going through, my daughter Lisa, going through anything where people could point fingers, I never came out. I never, I always lived this double life. Until Lisa moved back down to [city] and went to live with her sister, and went to college in [city]. The technical college. And I thought that's great, I'm out of here.
> (Emily 77, and Gloria 58, first interview)

Gloria started this conversation by comparing the time when she came out, the 1970s, to today's atmosphere in the UK. She was aware that because of her political engagement and the circles in which she moved, she had a more positive experience of coming out than other people might have had at the same time. She had also taken in consideration the different generational effects that she and Emily experienced, presuming Emily had a more difficult time coming out, probably because of her children and the time she grew up in, as she was born in 1940. The impact of her birth year was visible in the cultural and historical context Emily grew up in, arguing that she had a relationship with a man because she wanted to have children. Emily herself explained that women were expected to get married if they wanted children during the 1950s and 1960s, arguing that after the 1970s and the sexual revolution the situation changed. Even in a new cultural context, one that might have been more liberating for

women than the one Emily grew up in, she did not come out for the sake of her children. As Emily recalled, she moved to Scotland in 1990 to transfer her daughter to a new school. Like Jane, Emily had her children's wellbeing on her mind when she was discovering her sexuality, and she did not want to come out in case her daughter was bullied in school because of it. It was only when she was no longer living with her daughter that Emily decided to come out, and the first person she told was a friend of her children:

> So I started looking for a flat in [city], and actually told Scott. He was the best friend of my eldest son, eldest daughter, and middle son. Scott and I always got on, actually when Lisa was at the [school], I used to pay Scott to tutor her in Maths, cause he, like Gloria, he was a Maths person. So it was easy to tell Scott, and I thought 'I'll see how he reacts' before I tell my children. Anyway I told my eldest son, after I told Scott. Scott was very eager to hear how they have reacted to it, how his pals reacted to it. Anyway, I told my eldest son, and my children were very close, and are very close, and it went round like wildfire [laughing]. […] So, all of them were delighted actually, my eldest, my two sons who lived in America said 'oh, that's great!'. They couldn't see, and this was their words, they couldn't see a man being strong enough to walk beside me, so they would, they worried about me being a lonely old woman. And it's simply because I was the matriarch in the house, the head of the family, and very much the head of the family. And so, they said 'oh, that's great', cause they could see a woman strong enough to walk beside me, but they couldn't see a man, so they were really pleased.
> (Emily, 77, first interview)

Emily's decision to come out to Scott before she came out to her children might have been a good way to avoid rejection and negative responses from family members (Ryan et al. 2015). This was the case with Jane, who, as outlined above, came out to her friend, and then to her children, and was a common story among all the participants, as they all first disclosed their sexuality to their friends, and then to their family. This way they created a safety net in form of a chosen family (Weeks et al. 2001) in case their biological family rejected them or reacted negatively. The reaction of Emily's children was positive, and based on Emily's story, they all shared a strong

feminist image of their mother. However, her narrative also illustrated the different perception of older women in relation to older men. Using the words ‘a lonely old woman’ evoked a popular cultural image of older women who were not married or in a relationships and portrayed singlehood as a negative state (Baumbusch 2004). Even though Emily was happy in her relationship with Gloria, the fact that her children expected her to date someone portrayed the ingrained heteronormative expectations of coupledom (Brook 2018).

3. Institutions of Validation and Legitimacy

The previous section showed that in order to conform to heteronormative rules that most of their immediate society was following, the participants engaged in opposite-sex relationships. They got married and had children, because they either accepted their sexuality as heterosexual, or wanted to hide from it and appear ‘normal’ or ‘ordinary’, belonging “to a wider imagined community of citizens” (Richardson and Monro 2012, p. 79). Before civil partnership and equal marriage were introduced in Scotland, most of the couples decided to have blessing ceremonies. As Fred explained, “before there was any hints of civil partnerships, or marriage, or anything else, we just thought ‘well, we want some acknowledgements of our relationship’” (Fred, first interview). Fred and Robert’s relationship was blessed by a Metropolitan Community Church official, which also illustrated the importance of religion in the recognition of their relationship. Kathy and Rachel had their blessing ceremony in 2015 when it was possible for them to get married, but they decided it was not what they needed. Their account also reflects the importance of the religious side of the ceremony:

> We planned and took a short break to [place] in August 2015 and in our room we blessed each other and our relationship with each other and God. We exchanged gifts because this trip was also to celebrate our second anniversary. We thought it was important to show our commitment to each other as we both felt this was a relationship of love that neither of us had experienced before. We both now do not envisage having to have a civil partnership or marriage as we now feel truly bonded to each other and blessed.
> (Rachel 58, follow up)

Even though there was no official person at their ceremony, Rachel and Kathy included God in their commitment to each other. In the above extract, their blessing ceremony has the same value and weight as civil partnership or marriage, even without official documents and an audience that participated in their ceremony, as was the case with Alan and Jeff:

> But I think the first stage of that, and I think there have been three stages accidently, was that we've decided that we would have a commitment ceremony in front of my parents and his relatives. And they all came here, and seated around the room, and we committed to each other with vows, not Christian particularly, but we committed to each other. […] That was the first stage, and then the second stage was when civil partnerships came in, and we were the first couple in this area of Scotland, probably in Scotland, to have a civil partnership. We used virtually the same vows then as we had the first time in front of the family. And then of course the law changed, and we were able to get married with the same ceremony, the same everything else.
> (Jeff 70, first interview)

Jeff saw their commitment ceremony as the first step in making their relationship the "same" as others. As time went on and the legislation changed, they took the opportunity to have a civil partnership and then get married, arguing they were the first couple in Scotland to have a civil partnership. This narrative of being the first was shared among other married couples, as they explained how each of them was the first in Scotland, presenting their relationship as a milestone for other same-sex couples to follow. As Richardson and Monro (2012) explain, the fact that Alan and Jeff included their family in their commitment ceremony and were later asked about each other in

public settings, as illustrated in Section 2 in this chapter, gave their relationship legitimacy and provided ordinariness that would otherwise be restricted to a heterosexual relationship. During our interviews, both Alan and Jeff compared their relationship to a heterosexual one, further illustrating how heterosexual values were ingrained even in same-sex relationships:

> But I also think it is because we see our relationship very much like a heterosexual couple would see a relationship, then we have friends that are heterosexual, and so we can actually, though we come from a different background, same-sex, but we face the same problems. So we've actually gone quite well, because the same issues that we have, they have, and you suddenly realise that, you know, any relationship has fundamental issues that you have to deal with.
> (Alan, 63, first interview)

This extract reflects what Plummer (2003) argues is an assimilationist viewpoint. Alan equated their relationship to a heterosexual one, arguing him and Jeff came from a different background, but explaining they shared the same problems with opposite-sex couples. Apart from arguing that their relationship was the same as an opposite-sex one, Alan made an argument that it did not matter what kind of a relationship it was, as every kind, in his opinion, had the same issues all couples had to resolve.

Both extracts presented above illustrated the narratives of normality which were central to Alan and Jeff's perception of their relationship. From their personal point of view, the fact that they were married meant that their relationship was legitimate in the legal framework of Scotland, where they lived at the time of our interviews. However, in order to construct their relationship as valid and normal, Alan and Jeff required mechanisms of recognition that included other people and official confirmation, illustrating once again the importance of the generalised other in the process of identity formation. Only through interaction with others could they be certain that their

relationship was indeed accepted. Drawing on Cooley (1902) and Mead (1934), the way others perceive an individual, or a couple in this case, is as important as that individual or couple perceives themselves. For Alan and Jeff it was the combination of their commitment to each other as partners, the legislation which allowed them to get married and become a normal couple (Richardson and Monro 2012), and the reactions of people they interacted with, from their immediate family members to the pharmacist, that played a part in the construction of their relationship.

Even though married same-sex couples and those in civil partnerships were recognised by the Scottish legal system as equal to heterosexual married couples, Alan and Jeff's stories illustrated the still prevalent heteronormative ideas which dictated the rules framing the valid couple (Richardson and Monro 2012). Their stories also portrayed the power relations between the heterosexual and LGBTI identities and relationships, placing the heterosexual relationship as the dominant one and, consequently, one that should be strived for. While Alan and Jeff desired ordinariness and equality with heterosexual couples, Sarah and Jane used the opportunity to get married not to become equal to an opposite-sex married couple, but to encourage other female same-sex couples in their decision to marry, thus diversifying the marriage scene and moving it away from its patriarchal and heterosexist roots (Thomeer et al. 2017):

> Well we both conduct marriages for other people, and also civil partnership was never gonna have the same status in society as marriage. So we really felt that it was important for us to, to make that known. Because we're quite well known, and we thought 'well, it's important that', you know I remember I said I didn't have any role models when I was coming out, I think it's really important that other women see that other women are doing this, so we knew that we would get a bit of publicity because of the circles that we operate in, so we decided, yes, we should do this.
> (Jane, 56, first interview)

Public recognition was important for Jane and Sarah, as Jane explained in this extract, and her account further acknowledges the need of being recognised by others and the role this recognition plays in identity formation. While Jane explained that she and Sarah got married to serve as role models to other women, she was also aware that civil partnership would not have 'the same status in society as marriage', pointing once again to the norms of heterosexuality and monogamy that are required for being accepted as a full sexual citizen (Richardson and Monro 2012).

These examples do not argue that the pre-marriage or pre-civil partnership relationships were not valid, but rather that getting public recognition moved them closer to the heterosexual norms and therefore made them more acceptable, as they deviated less from what was dominant and familiar. Alan explained this in the following extract, in which he compared the public attitudes before and after a number of positive legal changes for the LGBTI population of Scotland in 2000:

> We came together in a point where there was changes going on. We are the fortunate generation that have seen both sides, so we've seen, I think it's quite good to say, pre-2000, where there was changes in the law, but basically, if you were gay you tend to keep it quiet and didn't get involved, whereas post-2000, you know, it's a totally different attitude. […] So we've been very fortunate that we've come from a very closed society, where there was lots of animosity, to where basically I have never ever met anyone who has been anti or antagonistic, you know everyone's been really quite positive.
> (Alan, 63, interview)

Some of the legal changes happening in the UK in 2000 were the abolition of Section 28 in Scotland, allowing openly LGBTI individuals to serve in the armed forces, and lowering the age of consent from 18 to 16 for LGBTI people. Alan said that both he and Jeff felt more comfortable with their sexuality after these changes, and were not hiding their relationship, implying that the people in their neighbourhood realised they were a couple as soon as they moved in together, which would have been around 2000.

Despite being open about their relationship, Alan explained they did not promote it, which might have been because of their experiences in the past, where, as he said, one would not get involved, let alone promote the fact they were gay. Despite Alan's claim about not promoting their relationship, he and Jeff did participate in a radio talk-show, and their wedding was filmed for a UK television network, which provided them with a certain amount of nation-wide recognition:

> Jeff: I think for both of us, the process of saying 'well, I'm going to go into a gay relationship', meant we had to face a number of things like being out to our families, which we've mentioned, and – [laughing]
> Alan: And the people of Scotland.
> Jeff: The people of Scotland.
> (Alan, 63 and Jeff, 70, first interview)

Coming out to 'the people of Scotland' was done through the radio and TV, and reflected what Alan said about people knowing and getting on with the fact the two of them were a couple. The fact that they wanted to share their relationship so publicly implied it was no longer required to keep it secret, mostly because of the legal regulations that allowed them to get married and have equal rights as heterosexual married couples. Enjoying the same rights as married heterosexual couples was only one of the benefits of equal marriage that the couples discussed. Another aspect of being married was that it made dealing with bureaucracy easier because of the established terms that were used in such settings:

> And also, it means you get absolutely full rights, the same as heterosexual married people. And it does actually, it helps people understand, people, you know, if you went into, if you were dealing with something, like for example, the other day I went into the bank and I had two cheques to pay in for Sarah, in her name, into her account, because she has her own account, I have my own account. So, I just handed them over and I said 'can I pay these into my wife's account?', and it was, you know, no questions, it was, you know, easy. Whereas if you say 'partner' they might go 'oh, is it business partner, is it', you know, so. Not that we call each other, we're kind of feminist, so we don't really use the word 'wife' very often but it's quite handy occasionally [laughing].
> (Jane, 56, first interview)

Jane explained that being married not only gave them certain legal rights, but also made it easier for other people to understand their relationship. However, this extract also illustrated how the terms usually used in formal settings, such as banks or other institutions, still followed the heteronormative denominations of 'husband' and 'wife', emphasising the normality of heterosexuality (Jackson 2005). The other female married couple was also avoiding using the term 'wife' when referring to each other, but, as they explained, they had different reasons to do so:

Sharon:	And for me, at my age, I still think it's quite difficult to say 'my wife'. I still want to say 'my partner', because that kind of almost makes it ok. And it's not –
Interviewer:	There's no reason [for it not to be ok].
Sharon:	Yeah, that's an age thing.
Anna:	I was filling out forms and I was like, 'shit, should I be putting wife?'. It's like I can cope with the question of 'are you married or single', cause that's quite straightforward, 'yeah I'm married' –
Sharon:	People still assume when you say married that you're married to a guy.
Anna:	So that automatic bit of, you're looking at a form, it's like 'oh, when somebody reads this, and they're actually gonna pick up that it's two women'.

(Sharon, 64 and Anna, 46, second interview)

Sharon explained that it was her age that impacted her behaviour towards Anna and the term 'wife' and that using the non-gendered term 'partner', in Sharon's opinion, made their relationship more legitimate. Her perception of the terms 'husband' and 'wife' as ascribed to a heterosexual marriage could have meant that they could not be used in a same-sex marriage. As Sharon said, it might have been that her age (she was 38 when she started her relationship with Anna, which would have been in 1992) and the generational effect she experienced growing up made these terms strictly embedded into the heteronormative idea of marriage, and the only way to describe their relationship would have been to use the term 'partner'. As Anna was 20 years old

when they met, she might not have shared the same lived experiences as Sharon, but still found it difficult to write down 'wife' on any of the forms she had to fill out. Anna's argument implied that she was wary of using 'wife' in case people noticed that both partners were female, which might have caused discomfort. Part of the reason for her being uncomfortable with this could have been the fact that neither of them came out nor labelled themselves as lesbian:

> Anna: I think from the point of view of, I've never seen myself as coming out. So, from that point it was just like –
> Sharon: It was just another relationship.
> Anna: Yeah.
> Sharon: And it was kind of like, I would talk about being in a same-sex relationship, but –
> Anna: But wouldn't refer to myself as a lesbian.
> Sharon: No, no. And we very seldom refer to ourselves as being gay.
> (Sharon, 64 and Anna, 46, second interview)

While other couples self-identified as lesbian or gay, Sharon and Anna did not, but they did acknowledge their relationship as a same-sex one. For them, their sexual identity did not necessarily align with their sexual practices, i.e. with being in a same-sex relationship. Not putting a label on their sexuality could have started as a strategy to keep their relationship secret in the beginning, partly because Sharon was Anna's manager when they first met, and because this was the first same-sex relationship for both of them:

> Anna: I suppose for the first six months or so, we were very much in a turmoil ourselves of 'should we be doing this, will we be together, what are we doing, why are we doing it', because it hadn't been around for either of us before. So, it was a lot of emotions in those early months, because, in a way it was our secret.
> Sharon: Because Anna was living in the house, we kind of portrayed it as friends. Anna had to give up her flat, she lived in a shared flat, so we used that as a kind of reason why she moved in. It just kind of went from there.

Anna: From the point of view that we never formally sat down and told people.

(Anna, 46 and Sharon, 64, first interview)

As the years went on, the practice of not labelling themselves as lesbian or gay made their relationships normal (van Lisdonk et al. 2018) and equal as any heterosexual relationship would be (Richardson and Monro 2012). What started as a secret eventually became a situation that neither Sharon nor Anna ever felt they needed to explain to their families. By not formally coming out they might have avoided potential disagreement or rejection from different family members, but they have also presented their relationship as one that did not require any special clarification or labelling. This way of relationship development was similar to heterosexual relationships which did not require the actions same-sex relationships did, such as coming out, defining the relationship or positioning it in a heteronormative society (Brook 2018).

4. Discussion and Conclusion: Interpersonal and Collective Relationships as Foundations for Imagined Futures

This chapter illustrated the effects of heteronormativity on the participants' lives through the stories about their youth, mostly focusing on the coming out experiences and different ways the couples legitimised their relationships. Apart from presenting the foundations for their future, as the past and the present play key roles in its imagination, the chapter reflected the couples' "biographical diversity and social context" (Cronin and King 2010, p. 6), illustrating two types of relationships that were constructed through these stories, the interpersonal relationship of coupledom and the collective relationship to other members of the LGBTI community. Following the points made in the introduction of this chapter, the narratives around coming out and

validating same-sex relationships were the most common ones that were shared in the first interview. Drawing on Mead's (1934) theory about the role of memories and narratives in identity formation, it can be argued that the stories the participants decided to share played a key role in the construction of their identity and presented them as members of a generation that shared experiences and knowledge (Plummer 2010) of opposite-sex relationships, coming out, blessing ceremonies, and marriage.

Through the narratives presented in this chapter, two relational aspects of the participants' lives emerged. One of them was in the form of a collective relationship to the LGBTI community. This relationship was constructed through the narratives about othering and being outside of the heterosexual majority, which were mostly told in relation to the past. The stories that were presented in this chapter illustrated how the participants experienced their lives in their youth, and how they experience it in their present. As was explored above, the norms informed by heteronormativity and chrononormativity impacted their sexual identity, often compelling the participants to hide their sexuality, both in private and in public. With the changing socio-political landscape in the UK in the last 30 years, the participants experienced positive changes which resulted in increased visibility and equality of LGBTI groups and impacted on the ways the participants presented themselves and their relationships. Even with the rise in visibility of the LGBTI population, most of the participants still considered themselves outside of the majority group, and some used their sexual identity to position themselves in relation to their heterosexual peers, reflecting Seidman's (1995) argument of queering the sense of belonging to the majority.

Sarah and Jane, for example, explained that they did not want to be part of the 'mainstream society', using their sexuality to differentiate themselves not only from

the heterosexual population, but from other LGBTI individuals as well. The idea that their sexual identity implies that they share the same characteristics with the rest of the LGBTI population was also dismissed by Alan and Jeff who, commenting on LGBTI-only care homes, which will be further explored in the next chapter, explained that they should not be expected to go to such facilities simply because of their sexual identity. On the one hand, these examples point to the importance of studying nuances in people's identities and argue against the assumption that a shared sexual identity means having the same interests, needs and lived experiences. On the other hand, the positioning of the participants against both the heterosexual majority, and other LGBTI people, creates a narrative of othering in which the participants consider themselves as the ones who have the agency to other those who do not fit into their imagined groups. The narratives about othering, as told by the participants, could have been a result of their lived experiences and the invisibility they faced in their youth, which were mostly visible in the marginalisation they received by their immediate society (Mereish and Poteat 2015).

The second relational aspect of the participants' lives was the interpersonal relationship they had with their partner. This was mostly visible in the narratives about the participants' current relationships, and about the short- and long-term futures, which will be explored in the following two chapters. Even though the participants talked about the relationships they had in the past, in most cases their current relationships were the ones that they imagined would be their last ones, and the ones in which they invested the most. The way the participants expressed their interpersonal relationships differed from couple to couple, but it was clear from the interviews and the written accounts that all of them placed a lot of importance on that part of their

lives. Alan and Jeff, for example, explained on several occasions that they were better as a couple than as two individuals, arguing that being in a relationship did not only make them more fulfilled and happy, but that being in a relationship with each other was the key to them having a better life. While the value the participants put on their relationships came from their personal understanding of those relationships, narratives about blessing ceremonies, civil partnerships and marriage were often used as a way to explain the legitimacy and visibility of their union as well.

As outlined in Section 3, the male couples explicitly argued that being married made them equal to heterosexual married couples, emphasising their right to be "the same as everyone else" (Alan). The female couples had mixed feelings towards marriage, and while some of them enjoyed both its practical and symbolic sides, others were against it because of its heteronormative and patriarchal practices (Smart 2007). Regardless of their marital status, and even living arrangements, the couples ultimately considered their relationships meaningful and valid. As Emily and Gloria will explain in the next chapter, the fact that they lived apart together did not mean their relationship was less serious than a cohabitating couple's one was. The same was true for Rachel and Kathy, and both couples mentioned the living apart aspect of their relationships as the reason why they worked well as a couple. Living in two different locations meant each partner could take time for themselves when they needed it, and it presented a way to maintain independence, while being involved in a relationship. While marital status played a role in the construction of their interpersonal relationships, it was not the main characteristic the couple used to describe their commitment to each other. Some of the more important things they mentioned while describing their relationship were love, mutual respect and understanding, and support they provided to each other.

While sexual intimacy was not mentioned explicitly, other forms of intimacy were visible, emotional intimacy and the ability to share the good and the bad with each other, echoing Jamieson's (1998) argument that intimacy in a couple relationship can be performed in a variety of ways.

The narratives about the performativity of same-sex couple relationships reflected how in most cases it was not possible for the participants to be open about their sexual identities and same-sex attractions in their late teens and early twenties, when they experienced the biggest amount of discrimination and marginalisation. Whether the participants did not know how to deal with the attraction they felt towards members of the same sex, like Jane and Sarah, or they wanted to hide it from themselves, like Robert and Jeff, their journey in (re)discovering their sexuality was not a linear one, as was illustrated by Sharon and Anna.

Identity development is an ongoing and relational process (May 2013), regardless of which aspect of identity is explored, and the development of sexual identity depends on institutions, historical context, and legal and identity practices (Weeks 2012), as well as the relationships the participants formed with their partners and other members of their immediate society. While the participants felt safe in discussing their sexuality and relationships in the present, some of them were still aware that this part of their identity might evoke negative comments from others. Adding to that, the increased heterosexist remarks some of the participants experienced in the present and feared in the future, meant that they would have to come out repeatedly, and this could put additional strain onto the identity work they were already employing in their daily lives (de Vries 2015).

The following chapter presents the participants' stories about the imagination of their short-term futures, focusing on choice, independence, and control as the main points of discussion which emerged from the data. The narratives that will be explored in the next chapter build upon the ideas presented in the current chapter, namely the impact of past and present lived experiences on each other and on the future, and further illustrate the role of relationships in the imagination of the future, focusing on the participants' collective relationships to a generation of older same-sex couples.

Chapter V: Short-Term Futures: Independence, Choice, and Control

1. Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on the couples' imagination of the short-term future. The chapter builds on the narratives of past and present lived experiences outlined in Chapter IV, illustrating how the participants' interpersonal and collective relationships formed foundations for imagining the future. Using the definition from Cook (2018), the short-term future in this research refers to the couples' "personal or biographical future that one expects to see and experience" (p. 3). The chapter begins by presenting the narratives about independence and ageing in place. It then explores choice in relation to retirement plans and options and ends with narratives that reflect the participants' desire to control their lives and, consequently, their deaths. Apart from the participants' wish to maintain all three as they get older, the imagination of their short-term futures carried fears of losing their independence, choice and control. While some of those fears were based on the fact that as the couples got older, they would need to rely more on other people, mostly each other and their family members, a large part of their anxiety was linked to formal care services they might need to seek out in the future (Putney et al. 2018).

The participants' imagination of the short-term future held a lot of similarities with previous research conducted on the ageing experience. Some of the most common topics of conversation which emerged during the data collection were concerns about health (Gabrielle, Jackson and Mannix 2008; Williams and Fredriksen-Goldsen 2014), formal care and health service providers (Hughes 2008; Kimmel 2014), housing and accommodation (Westwood 2017a), and death and bereavement (O'Brien, Forrest and

Austin 2002; Westwood 2017b). Through the stories about these issues, the concepts of choice and independence, and the arrangements for managing the loss of control, emerged as the couples' main goals for the short-term future. Whether it was staying in their own home, receiving care in a non-discriminatory setting, or planning the end of their lives on their own terms, the participants wanted to have a choice in deciding how to do those things, and they wanted to maintain their independence and agency until the very end of their lives. The chapter ends with a discussion of the collective relationships with older same-sex couples and LGBTI individuals as a third type of relationship that the couples formed, and that framed their imagination in the way that was outlined above.

2. Independence: Ageing in Place

Maintaining independence in later life and having the freedom to make one's own choices can improve wellbeing in older age (Mallers, Claver and Lares 2013). It can also improve the individual's probability of ageing successfully, as they might be able to control their illness, choose to continue working, and maintain their independence instead of depending on children or other family members, and becoming a burden in caring or financial aspects (Grossman, D'Augelli and Dragowski 2007; Pinquart and Sörensen 2011). The couples' narratives reflected these notions through the discussions on housing in the future. All of the couples imagined they would live in their own homes for as long as possible, maintaining their independent way of life, i.e. not relying on family or professional staff for care. Adding to that, being admitted to a formal care institution implied, for the participants at least, a loss of independence they felt they had in their current living situation. Combined with that fear was also

the fear of discrimination some couples imagined they would face in formal care settings. As there were still no specialised care homes or retirement communities for the older LGBTI population in the UK at the time of our interviews (Westwood 2016), the participants were concerned about being accepted in existing formal care institutions as same-sex couples, because of the past experiences of institutional homophobia. As Robert and Fred explained in our second interview, the possibility to maintain their independence was one of the things they would be looking for in future housing:

> Interviewer: So, would you like to stay, we talked a bit about this last time, so you would like to stay in your own home for as long as possible, right?
> Fred: Yes.
> Robert: Oh, yeah.
> Interviewer: If that's not possible, have you thought about alternatives?
> Fred: We're not in a financial situation to be able to afford private care, but in Scotland that shouldn't be a problem. Ideally, we could live in some sort of sheltered accommodation where we're still semi-independent. If we had to move into a sort of a care home, then we would want to move in together, in a double room. We wouldn't want to be separated.
> Robert: Being separated in care I regard almost as a fate worse than death.
> Fred: Yes.
> Robert: It could happen.
> Fred: These days, it's less likely to happen than in the past. But even so, it's certain we have to be wary. And then, of course, once you're in the hands of care workers, you rely on their attitudes, and their views.
> Interviewer: Are there any facilities that you know of, that would be ok for you? Have you done any practical thinking on it?
> Fred: Haven't really explored that, haven't really explored that at all.
> Robert: Hopefully that's away in the future.
> Fred: But the way it looks like, it might be a possibility, then we'd have to explore it. But at the moment we haven't done that.
> (Fred, 65 and Robert, 76, second interview)

Apart from illustrating Fred and Robert's wish not to be separated in a formal care setting, this exchange also emphasised one of the key points from Chapter IV regarding

the impacts of past experiences on the participants' present and future. Both Fred and Robert were concerned about being separated in a formal care setting, which could have happened in the past, when the attitudes of care workers in formal care institutions were more negative towards LGBTI people (Furlotte et al. 2016). Despite the fact that there is greater tolerance today in such settings towards same-sex couples and LGBTI individuals (Simpson et al. 2016), Fred and Robert felt they would need to be 'wary' of the conditions in care institutions. However, they did not explore the options of formal care accommodation they might require, hoping that it was 'away in the future'. The fact that they could get financial support to get private care in their own home could have been the reason why they did not put much thought into care in their future, as they imagined 'that shouldn't be a problem'. Adding to that, imagining their future in their own home meant they would be able to maintain their independence (Milligan 2016) which was also illustrated in Fred's idea of living in a formal setting that would allow them to be 'semi-independent'. For Rachel and Kathy, independence would be maintained in the clothing choices they would be allowed to make in future formal care settings:

> Rachel feels very strongly about this as she does not wear dresses or skirts nowadays. She was forced to wear them in her younger days and hated it. If in a care home she would want to be dressed in clothing which she feels normal for her, i.e. trousers and t-shirt type tops. There is a risk of being dressed as the care staff feel she should be dressed instead of how she wants to be dressed. Kathy also feels strongly about this as her normal dress code is jeans and plain tops. We also worry about being in the same home but not being able to live as a couple.
> (Rachel, 58 and Kathy, 57, follow-up)

This extract was part of a follow-up email the interviewer sent to the couple to clarify a part of Rachel and Kathy's written account, as the interview itself was constrained by time. The part of the written account this extract was referring to was the following:

> We want any intervention to recognise our status and preferences
> We don't want apprehension of becoming stateless with severances
> To suffer circumvention of our rights and heinous negligence's
> Those without comprehension putting us in shapeless dresses.
> (Kathy, 57, written account)

As Kathy wrote in her rap poem, and later clarified in the email, she and Rachel wanted to be recognised both as a same-sex couple, and individually as gay[7], in a formal care setting. For them, this meant being able to wear clothes they wanted to wear and being allowed to stay in the same room. As mentioned in the previous chapter, clothing was an important aspect of the female participants' identity, as it was an expression of their independence and a way of defying heteronormative gender norms they might have felt they needed to follow in their past. Jane, for example, recounted that Sarah used to wear skirts and dresses because she "thought she had to wear that to work to look smart" (Jane, first interview). Adding to that, the way Rachel and Kathy dressed was their choice, and through their style they expressed their identity and agency (Buse and Twigg 2015), so it was understandable that they could feel a loss of independence over these aspects of their lives if they had to wear 'shapeless dresses'. As Twigg (2010) argues, the clothes people wear play a part in "sustaining continuity of self" (p. 225), so having to wear something that was against their wishes could have led the participants to feel a sense of loss of identity. Adding to that, being told what to wear by care staff would invoke a feeling of dependence, impacting the participants' wellbeing. This was illustrated in Sarah and Jane's discussion about how they imagined they would be dressed if they were "kicked off into a care home" (Jane, first interview):

[7] Rachel and Kathy referred to themselves as being gay and as being in a gay relationship.

Jane: Maybe they'll give Sarah a perm and put her in a crippling dress when she's too demented to know, to be able to tell them that's not what she would do.
Sarah: Can you imagine? The stockings around my ankles.
(Jane, 56, and Sarah, 61, first interview)

This extract also portrayed how Sarah and Jane imagined older people looked like, and how they thought people in care homes were completely helpless to make decisions on their own regarding the way they dressed. While this might have been the case in some instances, Sarah and Jane's description suggested they imagined older people in a stereotypical way, as frail and demented, and old age as a time of infirmity and decline. They also both agreed on what they considered unacceptable in their future, a notion which might not have emerged if they were interviewed separately. Interviewing them together produced a joint understanding of their preferences and of the fears they shared in relation to their imagined short-term future, which were mostly linked to the loss of independence.

A similar point of agreement between Jane and Sarah was the imagination of their children in the short-term future. They said they had a good relationship with their children, and did not want to compromise that relationship by putting the caregiving burden on them:

Sarah: Well, they wouldn't be the caregivers I would choose. They are not natural caregivers, and maybe they'd be good, I don't know, I don't want to put any responsibility, or cost, or use up their life to be…to be, to be given care or certainly not to do personal care.
Jane: I think it compromises your relationships with family anyway. […] I think it compromises your relationship with family, if they have to do stuff like that, as well.
Sarah: It changes the relationship, you know, adds a different aspect to a relationship which I wouldn't necessarily want.
Jane: They might help us out with things, occasionally.
Sarah: Yeah, that's different, putting up a shelf or, but not personal care, or having to be there, or follow me about, or take me shopping, because,

> to get me out of the house, that kind of thing, you know…try just to have their own life.
>
> (Sarah, 61, & Jane, 56, second interview)

The above discussion illustrated the roles that Sarah and Jane expected their children to play in their future. Both of them agreed that they would not want to see their children become their caregivers. They also suggested they wished to avoid their children seeing them as dependent and vulnerable, because of their own perceptions of older age.

While six out of fourteen participants had biological children, all of them from previous heterosexual relationships, almost no one talked about them in relation to the short-term future. The exceptions were Sarah and Jane, and Sharon and Anna who thought some of their grandchildren would care for them if the need arises in the future. Other participants talked about their own children, and the imagined younger generations of LGBTI people in relation to the long-term future, as will be illustrated in Chapter VI. The absence of children in the imagination of the short-term future might have indicated that this future was a time that the couples imagined they would have for themselves, both in terms of wanting to spend time together, and needing to do so because of care needs. The long-term futures, the ones that the couples imagined will happen once they died, were free of their presence and were therefore available for their children to occupy it.

Another aspect of independence was shared by Emily, who described her ideal living situation, where she imagined maintaining her independence, but having help close by if she needed it:

> However a dream wish would be to live in a shared woman's housing complex – having our own rooms/flat/space where you can shut your door. Ideally with a common area where we can socialise, sharing board games, concerts, books,

> reading groups, conversation, sharing occasional but having our own space to retreat to, knowing in a crisis if you hurt yourself or needed help there were people to help or be helped by you.
> (Emily, 77, written account)

Emily's idea of a shared housing complex was something the other couples discussed as well, expressing the appeal of the option to maintain their privacy but still be surrounded by people they could turn to for help or anything else they might need. Alan and Jeff, following the same idea, explained they already "have that anyway" (Alan, second interview) in their current living situation where they had neighbours they could rely on but still lived independently of other people, so they could see sheltered housing as a potential option in case one of them required more professional care. Both Emily and Gloria agreed they would like to live in shared housing, a topic they had only discussed after writing down their thoughts:

> Gloria: So it got us talking about housing and the future, our future in living situation, really.
> Emily: Which we couldn't afford. I mean, the one down south, people bought flats which were in like a little gated community almost, which isn't what I was thinking of. Where men, they were never, they could live on their own, but they weren't alone because they would have a place where they would meet, which sounds ideal. I am not, in some ways I'm slightly different probably from Gloria, because I would be, I'm making an assumption, because I would be happy to have it mixed sex.
> Gloria: So would I!
> Emily: But would prefer –
> Gloria: We didn't talk about that.
> Emily: No, but I would prefer a gay community, rather than a straight and gay, you know.
> […]
> Gloria: Well, the idea of, I got quite excited about what you'd written about living in a community.
> (Emily, 77, and Gloria, 58, second interview)

Unlike Sarah, who did not want to live in a LGBTI only community because, as "just because you're gay doesn't mean to say that you've got everything in common either"

(Sarah, second interview), Emily and Gloria imagined they would be happy with such a community in the future, although they imagined it as accommodation which offered a degree of independence. Such accommodation would be available in purpose-built retirement communities, which often advocate independent living that can in turn contribute to a good quality of life (Grant 2006). These retirement communities are becoming more common across the UK (Bernard et al. 2007), but still do not offer specialised services for the LGBTI community (Westwood 2016). Emily and Gloria's exchange also illustrated how Emily assumed Gloria would not be happy with the housing ideas Emily imagined. Writing in the notebook instigated a dialogue about housing through which both Emily and Gloria realised they shared common ideas and wishes about future housing. They did not explain why they have not discussed this previously, but, as Emily wrote down, she tended 'not to talk about my plans'. She might have had this approach because she imagined she would be able to continue living independently, and planning for her future health or housing needs could have meant she would need to rely on someone else (Girling and Morgan 2014), and this was something she wanted to avoid.

Another aspect of their present living situation that accommodated their need for independence was the fact that Emily and Gloria were in a self-identified living apart together (LAT) relationship. Kathy and Rachel also lived apart, and both couples said that this was an ideal living situation for them:

Kathy:	So, I think it's, it works better as we are at the moment, but if I wasn't working, in a few years that's possible, we could get together.
Rachel:	It works very well for us at the moment, we're both very content. Other people have aspirations whereas to live together, and say 'oh it's a shame you can't live together, and would you

not like to live together', and we say 'no, we're very happy with our set up'.

(Kathy, 57, and Rachel, 58, second interview)

Both Emily and Gloria, and Rachel and Kathy explained that living apart allowed them to maintain their independence, while being long-term partners (Duncan and Phillips 2009). Emily and Gloria further explained how the fact that they did not live together did not mean their relationships was not as serious or legitimate as that of a married or cohabiting couple:

Gloria: So, I think it, the space suits us, certainly I like having my own space, but I consider we're very much a couple.

Emily: Yeah, there's nobody else.

(Gloria, 58, and Emily, 77, first interview)

The fact that Gloria felt she needed to explain their relationship status during our interview could point to instances when their relationship might have been questioned. If living apart together was positioned against the standards of (hetero)normative relationships which dictated that a couple was expected to live together, Emily and Gloria might have found themselves in a position that required defending not only their living situation, but their relationship as well. Rachel's extract above illustrated how she and Kathy also had to explain how their living situation suited them 'at the moment', and how they had no wish to live together in the present. However, both couples said that they would love to move in together in the future but did not know when that would happen. One of the concerns for Rachel regarding future living arrangements was the question of how they would keep 'the spark' alive:

Interviewer: And do you think it might be a challenge in the future, considering that you lived apart for four years?

Rachel: Oh, yeah, I think living together is a challenge for anybody. I think for anybody it's a challenge. I know couples that have been together, and the spark seems to go out sometimes, out of their relationship, and I wouldn't like that to happen with us,

> because I think it keeps the spark alive. Every time I meet up with Kathy and I see her for the first time, whether it's coming off the bus, my heart takes a little leap, and if we were together all the time, I mean although you wouldn't be together all the time even if you were living together, that might dissipate. And that's one of the things, it keeps it fresh. And I like that about it, and I think you feel that as well. It gives us something to look forward to.
>
> (Rachel, 58, second interview)

While Rachel was afraid that their relationship might become too routine for their liking (Funk and Kobayashi 2014), Emily explained that living together in the future would mean she would have to rely on Gloria for everyday help, something she was not yet ready to do:

> Emily: And, so, I would continue to try and live an independent lifestyle, but I'm realistic enough to know that, for instance getting in and out of the bath, to have a shower, I no longer take the bath, because it's not the getting down, it's getting back up, so I would only have a shower now.
> Gloria: Even though, even with assistance, you don't want –
> Emily: No!
> Gloria: You don't want the assistance to get in and out.
> Emily: I mean we sleep together, but I wouldn't want her having to try to haul my naked body out of something.
> (Gloria, 58, and Emily, 77, second interview)

Emily's current living situation allows her to be independent and live alone, but both she and Gloria said that it would be a challenge for both of them when they decided to move in together. As was illustrated above, the ideal living solution would include a semi-independent arrangement that would allow Emily and Gloria to maintain their privacy and current lifestyle and to have help around when and if they needed it. Alan and Jeff also thought of themselves as independent and imagined they would continue to be so in the future, expressing aversion towards formal care institutions:

> Alan: I think we tend to be more independent. You know, and we've set up the fact, you know, is we've got people around us. I don't know if you and I would like it in a place where you may get the belief that people are too close. Too interested in what you're doing.

Jeff: I wouldn't like to think that I had to go to a 60s concert or disco every Saturday night or something like that.
(Alan, 63 and Jeff, 70, second interview)

Jeff's unwillingness to go to a '60s concert or disco' illustrated how he did not think he would have much in common with people his own age, and that it did not mean he and Alan would need to participate in the activities for older people just because of their age. His account reflected the misconception that both older and LGBTI people were a homogeneous group (Gott, Hinchliff and Galena 2004; Hughes and King 2018) and that every older person would enjoy age-appropriate activities. It also portrayed how Alan and Jeff felt about formal care settings, as places without much independence and with people who might be 'too interested' in what they were doing. Once again drawing on Chapter IV, the interpersonal relationship that Alan and Jeff formed with each other was clearly visible in this extract, as Alan made an argument that neither of them would enjoy housing where people would be too close. By sharing their past and present, Alan and Jeff constructed the future based on the knowledge of each other's likes and dislikes. Their imagination of formal care settings was also a reflection of their current lifestyle, as they explained that they set up their lives to have 'people around' that they could turn to for support, while living independently.

The fears surrounding formal care settings were not only limited to a lack of choice in the future, but also touched upon the question of the (in)visibility of sexual identities. On the one hand, the male participants expressed concerns about their sexuality and relationship presenting potential problems for formal caregivers, and there were a couple of instances where an explicit link between past experiences with service providers and potential future accommodation emerged. Fred and Robert explained that they were not too optimistic about being together in care because of the knowledge

of the events that had happened in the past, when same-sex male couples' relationships were not acknowledged, resulting in separation in formal care settings. While Fred and Robert believed the situation was better in the present, and would further improve in the future, they were aware of potential discrimination they could face because of their sexual identity.

On the other hand, most of the female participants feared their sexual identity will be erased in formal care settings, which, in their opinion, would result in the above concerns about the way they would be dressed (Buse and Twigg 2015), but also in furthering their invisibility (Traies 2016). According to Butler (2018), older lesbian women face invisibility because of ageism, sexism and heterosexism, and Sarah and Jane expressed their thoughts about this in their notebook with the following illustration which reflected their concerns about the road in the future getting 'narrower' and leading to more heterosexist comments and the erasure of their sexual identities:

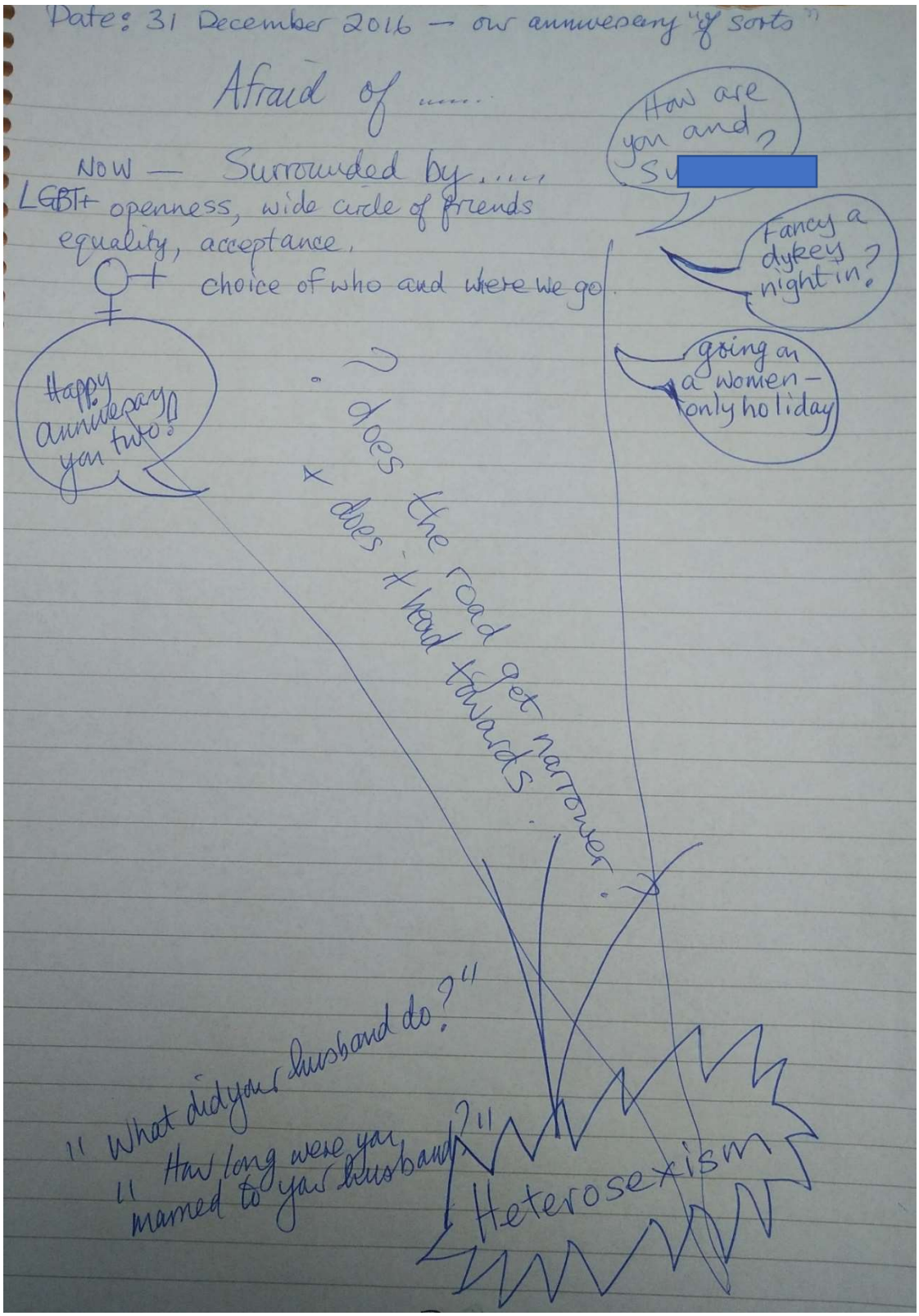

Figure 4: Entry from Sara and Jane's notebook, "Afraid of…"

This entry portrayed some common comments and questions Sarah and Jane received in the present, mostly from other members of the LGBTI community, such as 'Happy anniversary you two!' and 'Fancy a dykey night in?'. As Sarah explained during our second interview, the comments at the bottom of the page are the ones they heard more often in their daily interactions with people. As was explored in Chapter IV, Section 2, Jane encountered questions like 'What does your husband do?' more often than Sarah because, as they explained, of her physical appearance. However, both of them shared the fear that these kinds of comments will become more prevalent in the future. This was illustrated in their drawing by making the road towards the future narrower and ending in a spiky bubble of heterosexism where there was no room for the openness and equality Sarah and Jane experienced in the present. As the title of this entry suggested, a heterosexist future was something both of them were afraid of, and writing this entry on their second marriage anniversary, as indicated by the date at the top of the page, might have been a cause for reflection on their relationship and what to expect from it in the future. Another key aspect of the above entry is Sarah and Jane's note on choice of who they socialise with and where they go. While the idea of choosing one's group of friends is common in literature on LGBTI families and support networks (Weeks et al. 2001), as the next section explores, when it comes to ageing and later life, choice also includes retirement plans and negotiating the transition between work and leisure.

3. Choice: How and When do We Retire?

Choice was part of the narratives on retirement, and it was considered as relevant as independence by all couples. Exploring the couples' experiences of retirement and

their imagination of it, this section argues that the decision to retire needs to be examined from an individual perspective, instead of through policy regulations. The discussion of extending working lives is an important one in economic and policy domains around Europe and in the UK (Loretto and Vickerstaff 2015). With an increasing number of older people, many governments and employers are exploring the possibilities of keeping older workers in the workplace past pension age. This is reflected in the development of new policies surrounding extending working lives, such as the possibility to transfer to part-time work or have more flexibility in their working hours, and in the steady rise of pension age throughout Europe (Loretto and Vickerstaff 2015). However, despite these initiatives aimed at making working conditions for older workers more appealing, and the desire to invest in the ageing population, the couples' experiences in work and retirement were extremely varied, and often included narratives of choosing when and how to retire, and an evaluation of what they would gain and lose from retirement.

The most attractive aspect of retirement was having more time to spend on leisure and holidays. As Sarah and Jane discussed, they looked forward to freeing up their schedule but were concerned about their financial situation:

> Interviewer: So the last time you said that you're not looking forward to retirement.
> What would be the challenge?
> Sarah: Money.
> Jane: Financially.
> Sarah: I do want more time, and more quality time, and for us to be able to have more time together. But I also want to have, not to be constrained financially. Normally we could say 'let's go out for lunch', and we went out for lunch, or we can, let's go for whatever.
> Jane: Or just booked a holiday. We've got four holidays planned this year. You're not able to do that if you have no money.
> (Sarah, 61, and Jane, 56, second interview)

Sarah and Jane both agreed that finances were the main concern for their future, at least in terms of retirement. They feared losing the freedom they had in the present where they could go out for lunch when they wanted, or book multiple holidays in one year, illustrating how important it was for them to maintain their lifestyle in the long run. This extract also portrayed the difficulty in deciding whether more free time was worth a lower income. The prospect of having more time was juxtaposed to having less money, and it came down to what was more important for Sarah and Jane as a couple, illustrating how they took each other's opinions into consideration and planned for retirement together (Mock and Cornelius 2007). This was also visible in Jane's written account about retirement as a joint process:

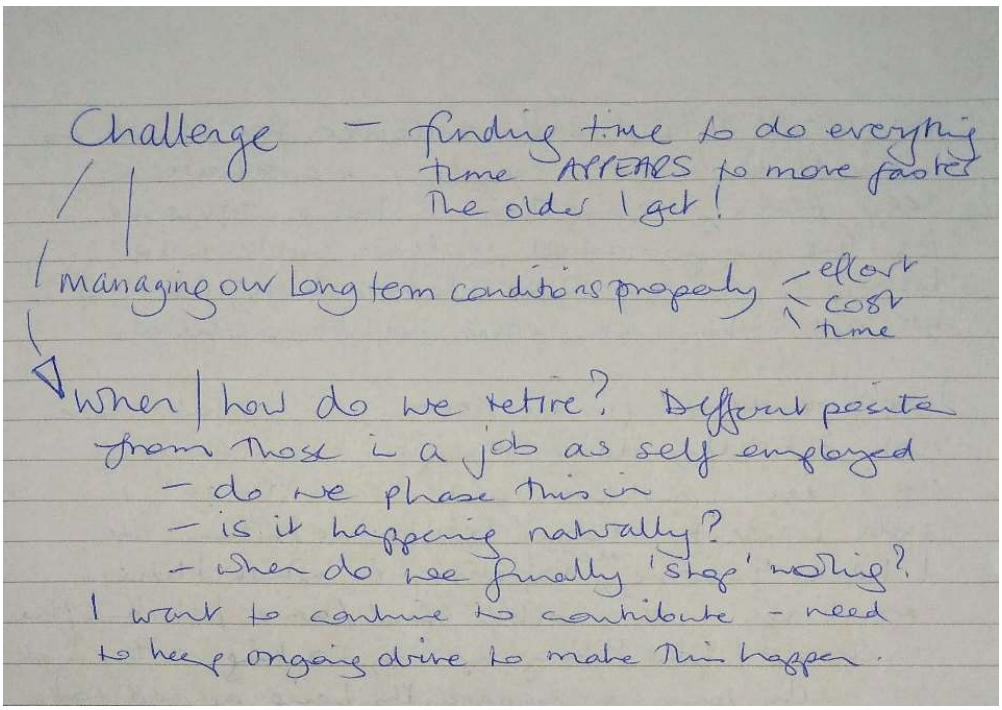

Figure 5: Entry from Sarah and Jane's notebook

Challenge finding time to do everything
Time APPEARS to move faster the older I get!

Managing our long term conditions properly
Effort
Cost
Time

When/how do we retire? Different position from those in a job as self employed
Do we phase this in
Is it happening naturally?
When do we finally 'stop' working?
I want to continue to contribute – need to keep ongoing drive to make this happen.

In this extract, Jane was concerned about having less and less time to do the things she needed and wanted to do and wrote that time 'appears to move faster' as she got older. The questions she asked in the notebook reflected how difficult it was for both her and Sarah to imagine retirement, because it did not only mean stopping working, but included arrangements around their position as self-employed, which meant they were probably not involved in the second-pillar retirement support, i.e. did not have an employer who would pay into their pension fund (Hershey et al. 2017). Adding to that, entering retirement often included a redefinition of the person's identity, from a full-time employed individual who was financially contributing to their family, to having

to manage the extra free time and to deal with a potential lack of resources, while wanting to 'continue to contribute' after retirement. According to Loe and Johnston (2016), and illustrated by Sarah and Jane, professional women needed to rebalance different aspects of their lives once they entered retirement. For Sarah and Jane this would mean 'managing [their] long term conditions properly', for example, while getting used to living on a more limited income. It would also include exchanging their working time with the free time they would gain and making sense of this shift in their lives (Loe and Johnston 2016), as well as redefining their identities in relation to their clients as the ones who defined them as working individuals. Rachel, who was retired but had not reached pension age at the time of our interview in 2017, said that she would like to take up some part-time work in the future to "earn some sort of income" (Rachel, second interview). While Jane's wish to contribute might have been driven by her current job which revolved around a personal approach to her clients, Rachel explained she would need to work for purely financial reasons:

> I never really had money, and I'll probably never have much money, and I do worry about my future, I do worry about my finances in the future, because when I reach pension age, I'm not gonna get much, and I'll probably have less than I've got at the moment, and I don't have a lot at the moment. But then I'm hoping I might go into some sort of employment in the future, there's always a possibility with [NGO] that I might get some sessional work or a position with them, or something like that. I certainly couldn't hold down a full-time job. So, our roles might reverse in that Kathy will be winding down, and I'll be maybe taking something on, but it won't be full-time work.
> (Rachel, 58, second interview)

Rachel was already involved with the NGO; she volunteered for them and participated in the social events they organised. The reasons why she felt she could not hold down a full-time job could have been her mental health, as she explained she was "diagnosed as bipolar" (Rachel, first interview), so that made it difficult for her to make plans far

in advance, which could have impacted her future employment prospects. As Rachel explained, she had bad days and good days when she could "see the future and it looks bright" (Rachel, second interview), presenting an explicit link between her mental health in the present to how she imagined her future. Rachel further pointed out that she could not make plans far in advance as she might be "lying in bed, depressed" (Rachel, second interview) in two weeks' time. Rachel's mental health was impacted by her coming out, when she realised how "repressed" (Rachel, second interview) she had been when she felt she needed to hide her sexuality (Bialer and McIntosh 2016), but it permeated other aspects of her life as well.

Apart from illustrating the concerns many older people had when thinking about retirement (Nuttman-Shwartz 2004), especially in financial terms, Rachel's argument pointed to an important aspect of extending working lives and its impact on mental health. While there is research arguing that extending working lives and allowing people to work past retirement age is beneficial to their mental health and overall wellbeing (e.g. Maimaris, Hogan and Lock 2010; Di Gessa et al. 2018), Rachel's example could point to a gap in institutional support for people who suffer from mental health issues and want to participate in the labour market after state pension age. Her wish to continue working is also indicative of the uncertainty she might face in her future because she and Kathy were not married, and therefore had no guarantee of shared retirement benefits (Lannutti 2011). For Sharon and Anna, retirement carried a different meaning than that as a time of financial insecurity:

> Anna: Yeah. I suppose I just see myself as working and working till whenever that happens where I can no longer work or something happens to me, but I suppose in my mind I see me having a period of time before what would be my official retirement, that's about time with Sharon, and then going back

to work. Because that would be my routine, that would be the bit of getting up and going out and doing –

Sharon: And that would probably be really, I actually never thought it like that, that drive, that would be really important for you, whereas I can get up and go have coffees with people and have lunches, and go swimming –

Anna: Yeah, and go to classes and things, whereas that's not me, it's like actually my social connection will actually be going back to work, so even if that's in a volunteering capacity, or whatever, it will be something, I think it will be, that'll be what I'll have to do to actually keep myself sane if Sharon's not around. Because, yeah, I would end up just a couch potato.

(Sharon, 64, and Anna, 46, second interview)

Unlike Sharon, who maintained her social connections by participating in different activities, such as going for lunches or classes, Anna's friends were "very much people that have been work colleagues" (Anna, second interview). Price (2002) argued that women who worked consistently, as Anna did, for example, established strong relationships with their work colleagues. Having been in the same company for 18 years created a close circle of people whom Anna considered one of her main sources of support. However, based on Grossman et al.'s (2000) research, co-workers were not usually mentioned as a source of support for older LGBTI people, because they were not openly out in their workplace. For Anna, however, it was different, because she "got a new job[8], and it was at my new job that I was quite open" (Anna, second interview) and she felt she could talk about Sharon and their relationship. However, despite possibly keeping more to herself in her old company, she still considered her former work colleagues as close friends. In both Anna's, and Sarah and Jane's narratives, retirement was perceived as a choice. Anna wanted to choose whether to retire when she reached retirement age and said that she would rather take time off

[8] Anna did not make it clear when she got the new job, but it might have been recently because she said she was working in the old company for 18 years.

work prior to her retirement and spend it with Sharon, and then continue working for as long as she wanted and was able to. This would have ensured she maintained her routine and social connections which she considered an important source of support. Likewise, Sarah and Jane wanted to choose how and when to retire, and rather than leaving their job completely, they wanted to "continue to contribute" (Jane, written account). Peter believed the same was true of William, and that William would not want to stop working in the near future:

> Interviewer: When you hear the word 'future', what is the first thing that comes to mind?
> Peter: For me, a hope that William will eventually choose to retire and stop working. I'm not aware that he has any plans in this direction, so, I get a sense from William that he feels that he is not done fixing the world yet, for as long as he feels he's not done fixing the world, I think I wish to be there to assist him any time there's technology questions, or fix his computer, as I've been doing for the last couple of weeks now.
> (Peter, 36, first interview)

The narrative of continuing to contribute after retirement, or not retiring in order to keep contributing, could have reflected the participants' fear about the unfamiliarity of what retirement might bring (Goodwin and O'Connor 2014), which was similar to their general fears about the uncertainty of the future. By continuing to contribute to their community, the participants used the familiarity and stability of their professional behaviour and extended it into the future, as a means of "taming the future" (Groves 2014, p. 99). Whatever the reason for avoiding retirement or fearing it might be, the narratives so far illustrated how the couples imagined they would need to find a new meaning for their lives once they stopped working. This was consistent with research by Sargent et al. (2011), who argued that for individuals who constructed retirement narratives as "searching for meaning", work presented "a compass, dictating the

purpose of their lives and, consequently, their identities" (p. 320). Even though the couples did not know what to expect from retirement in terms of how their daily lives would be organised, they used their present routine as something familiar and imagined they would continue pursuing similar paths in their future.

Alan, who has been retired for five years at the time of our interview in 2016, explained how he felt before and after retiring. At the time of his retirement, he shared similar sentiments to those explored above, and he felt like he was "giving up" and did not know "whether the future is going to be fine" (Alan, first interview). However, once he retired his point of view changed, and he wrote about retirement as positive experience in his and Jeff's life:

> If I have learnt anything in the last few years it is that life goes on and there is always a future. In 2011/12 when my professional career came to an end in stressful circumstances I felt I had been cheated/pushed out/lost something and didn't know where or how the future may develop. However, I hadn't retired that long before new opportunities/challenges came along.
>
> - My health improved,
> - I got a new job opportunity, which lasted 3 years,
> - my perception of my professional/personal standing was greatly improved and raised to a realistic level,
> - The additional income from the job allowed us to have a wonderful 9-week holiday in 2013
> - We have improved aspects of our home – buildings and contents
> - I'm far more content with life – less stressed and more patient with events
> - I have been asked to write a book based on my professional experience
> - I've picked up a part time job 2 days a week (Sat/Sunday).
> - We are planning a 4 week holiday in Sept 2017
>
> I have a positive outlook to the future though measured by the realization that events in life happen and we may not be able to do the same level of activity/adventures as we have done in the past and now.
> (Alan, 63, written account)

The beginning of Alan's account could be read as the "searching for meaning" (Sargent et al. 2011, p. 320) narrative which was explored earlier. However, as

illustrated in this extract, his perspective on retirement changed over time, and shifted to a narrative that Sargent et al. (2011) termed "exploring new horizons" (p. 320), which was described as a renaissance and as filled with ideas of exploration and engagement. Alan described feeling 'pushed out' which could have meant that leaving employment at that point in his life was not his choice. It could have also implied that, having had a choice, Alan would have continued working, even though he realised that his retirement brought a lot of good things to his and Jeff's lives, such as more free time and new opportunities. Adding to that, Alan used retirement as a metaphor for the future, in which, as he explained, he accepted the 'events in life' that came his way and learned to go along with them instead of fighting or trying to change them. This way of thinking was also visible in his and Jeff's written account:

> Although we are retired it seems like opportunities to extend our experiences in life keep flowing. Rather than become recluses we will watch the world and see what is there to be embraced and supported. We have a great love for one another and there is plenty of love to share with others who wish to share our life together or perhaps take a little support in any way that they require.
> (Alan, 63, and Jeff, 70, written account)

This entry was a jointly constructed one, written down by Alan. As he and Jeff explained, prior to writing down their ideas on the computer, they discussed the topics they felt were relevant for their future, and then each of them wrote an entry below each topic. This extract presented two aspects of retirement. The first one, illustrated by the phrase 'although we are retired' and the word 'recluses', implied that it was expected of them to draw back from their social life in retirement, and portrayed retirement as a time of "uncertainty and crisis" (Nuttman-Shwartz 2004, p. 231). The second idea, contrary to the initial negative opinion of retirement, which was also visible in Alan's previous entry, was that retirement was a time to "live in the moment"

(Alan, written account) and that instead of drawing away from the world, they chose to grab opportunities "with both hands" (Jeff, written account). This was also consistent with Nuttman-Shwartz's (2004) research, in which he argued that the participants he had interviewed were bewildered about the anxiety they felt before retirement, and "had attained a sense of acceptance, accommodation, and new options" (p. 235) once they have been retired for a couple of years. However, his research participants were heterosexual men, and the article does not take possible differences in gender or sexuality, as well as the financial aspect of retirement, into consideration. Ultimately, the concerns the female participants expressed at the beginning of this section also needed to be taken into account when discussing retirement planning. Rowe and Kahn (2015), for example, argue that workplaces need to invest more in older workers in terms of training and education. However, by focusing on the institutions rather than on the individuals, the authors failed to address the problems of not being able to continue working in later life, and the consequences this might have on the financial situation and wellbeing in people's older age. While the narratives on retirement varied from couple to couple, they all shared a desire to make it their choice of how and when they retire. As some participants wanted to contribute to society, and others wanted to use their workplace as a source of support, it was important to them to have the option to manage their employment and retirement as they wanted. The choice of whether to retire or continue working could play an important role in maintaining the support networks and interpersonal relationships the participants developed through their professional lives (Barnes and Parry 2004), and it might make their imagined futures clearer and less pessimistic.

4. Control: Death, Bereavement, and End of Life

The discussions about death and mortality mostly focused on either avoiding the subject or discussing it in relation to bereavement. When the couples did discuss it, they expressed fear and concern about the partner who would be left if the other one died. There was also an underlying narrative of control and lack of it when it came to death. Some couples felt death was out of their control and therefore was not worth thinking about in the present, and others included suicide and euthanasia in their narratives as a way of controlling the way they died. Fred and Robert, and Rachel and Kathy, for example, explained they did not discuss death, as they wanted to focus on more positive things in life. As Fred and Robert wrote in their notebook, they were aware they needed to face their mortality, no matter how difficult that might be:

> Fred
>
> > One final thing we need to address is our mortality. It is highly likely that one of us will be left here after the other dies (unless we die together in an accident).
> > That will lead to practical issues (paying for a funeral, living on a lower income) and emotional issues: grief, loneliness, fear, etc.
> > Like all couples we need to face this.
>
> Robert
>
> > Yes, we have to face our mortality – it is almost the only certainty in life. But, apart from making the most of whatever time may be left, I find this exceedingly hard to do.
>
> (Fred, 65, and Robert, 76, written account)

This extract also reflected how Fred and Robert wrote their accounts, as a dialogue between the two of them. Fred explained how discussing death and dying was important in terms of practical and emotional issues, and by thinking and talking about it in the present it made the future more real and familiar (Nielsen and Skotnicki 2018). Fred and Robert's avoidance of the discussion about dying could have had two different purposes. The first one would have implied that talking about death makes it

real and makes Fred and Robert aware it would happen, creating a sense of anxiety for the future (Nielsen and Skotnicki 2018). The second one could have served a more positive aim. By talking about death, familiarising themselves with the prospect of it in the future, and making it more real, they could have imagined they had more control over it (Fong 2017). After asking Fred and Robert why they thought it was difficult to talk about death and dying, Robert explained that "you know it's going to happen" and "no one chooses to do it" (Robert, second interview) so he did not see a point in discussing it. Fred agreed with him and added that he would rather focus on the "things we have got control of" like maintaining a healthy lifestyle and spending time together (Fred, second interview). For them, control was centred around the present and their daily lives. The uncertainty of the future was incompatible with the idea of controlling it, and so death was left for tomorrow. Rachel had a similar opinion on death as Fred and Robert, and said she and Kathy did not talk much about it:

> But I don't dwell on that, it's just a fear I have, and one day it will happen, one of us will predecease the other, and we've never really much talked about that, we just talk about going on, and on, and on, and on, and being old, helping each other in and out of bed, in and out of chairs, and all we have to do.
> (Rachel, 58, second interview)

Rachel compared death to fear in this extract. However, it was not only a fear of dying, but the fear of bereavement. Being left alone, or leaving their partner alone, was one of the biggest concerns the couples talked about in relation to death. As Burton, Haley and Small (2006) argue, losing a partner is one of the most stressful events in a person's life. Thinking about and discussing the possibility of one of the partners being alone would have added, in Rachel's opinion, unnecessary stress to their relationship. The above extract also illustrated how Rachel imagined old age, as a time when she and Kathy would need help with physical activities, and as a time that would continue for

a while. Distancing themselves from dying was also a means for the couples to avoid thinking about the finiteness of their lives, which could have increased as they got older (Baars 2017). Even if they avoided discussing the topic of death, some couples, like Alan and Jeff, and William and Peter, had written their wills to make life easier for the surviving partner or any other family members that might be included in the will. Rachel and Kathy appointed power of attorney to each other, to make sure they oversaw the decisions around illness and death, and to manage their concerns about loss of control and independence in the future, which were also visible in narratives shared by Alan and Jeff, for example. As Alan explained, he and Jeff prepared for the practical issues surrounding their deaths:

> We have our funerals planned, so that's the future. So we've taken control, that's one of the things that, in retirement, you certainly, when you're working you just go on, go on, and go. Now, once you've paid the mortgage off and all that thing, and you've got your retirement to look forward to, you start to say 'well I'm just gonna get these things sorted', so in fact I can enjoy my retirement. So that's my logical side to, we get that sorted, put that in place, put that in place, put that in place, so in fact that the point you were asking, who do we have to step in, you know one of the reasons we went to [country] in 2013 was we took the wills with us. So that in fact the assets will be split up between various members of family, so they all know. So we're taking care of that and, you know, the person who'll be our executor has the will and knows exactly what's happening and, you know, a portion of the house will go to our godchild, all right?
> (Alan, 63, first interview)

This extract illustrated how Alan felt they were taking control over their future by writing their wills and sorting out their mortgage payments. This allowed them to enjoy their retirement and the present moment, without having to worry what would happen if one of them died, at least in terms of logistics. They have also created an accountability between themselves and their family members by sharing their wills with them, so they could be more confident the future would be organised, in terms of

their funerals and asset division. A similar, practical, way of thinking was shared by William and Peter, who had written their wills as well:

> Peter: The only thing that would worry me we took care of before, which was in William's case updating, in my case writing our wills, so it's, at a very simple point of in the event that William were to drop dead from a massive heart attack next time he's at the gym, or when he's at the gym in ten years' time, I don't have to go, I don't have to worry about the practicalities, I can get on with the emotional grieving things, and that which has to be taken care of, or sort of the groundwork that needs to be done now has been, can't write the will once you're in the middle of dying of a heart attack, you need to think that one ahead. But everything else, and everything more specific, and 'oh what it is', that's in the next week, next month, next year.
>
> William: For whatever reason we did write, we did our wills under Scottish law.
>
> (Peter, 36, and William, 65, second interview)

Sorting out the practicalities of dying, such as writing their wills or organising their funerals, in the present, allowed Peter to create a time in the future in which he could focus on his 'emotional grieving'. Adding to that, because William was 29 years older than Peter, Peter was slightly concerned about the prospect of William dying unexpectedly 'next time he's at the gym'. In this sense their wills served as a point of certainty in the present which could be extended into the future, acting as a means of taming the uncertainty that time would bring (Groves 2014). As William explained in the end, their wills were written under the Scottish law, even though they lived in England at the time of our interview. Legal differences aside, both William and Peter put more hopes in Scotland with regards to possible political outcomes of Brexit and imagined they would move there and make it their "primary homeland" (William, first interview) in the future, an idea that will be further explored in Chapter VI.

While William was 29 years older than Peter, he did not discuss the potential of him dying first, unlike Emily and Sharon, who were both 18 and 19 years older than their partners. Emily expressed her concerns for Gloria if she was the one who died first:

> I get concerned about Gloria in the future, but actually she's very resilient, and she's got a good circle of friends, so there's nothing to worry about. Except, I know how hard she took it when Philip died, and I wouldn't like her going through that over me.
> (Emily, 77, first interview)

Philip was Emily's son, who died in 2014. His death impacted both Emily and Gloria and served as a portrayal of the impact of past events on the present and future. As Emily explained, she did not "sleep very well, at the moment, for the past three years" (Emily, first interview), and Gloria recounted that Philip's death "altered suddenly and dramatically the fabric of the future I had envisaged" and she tended not to "look ahead as much as I did" (Gloria, written account) after his death. Death of a child, apart from resulting in intense grief (Lee et al. 2014), enforces the feeling of uncertainty and unexpectedness of the future, because it is considered asynchronous with the "family life cycle and violates the perceived order of natural living" (Keesee, Currier and Neimeyer 2008, p. 1146). Such a disruption in the expected chronological order of life impacted Gloria's imagination of the future, and framed Emily's expectations of how Gloria would cope with her death. Despite this, Emily did not want Gloria to go through the same grieving process for her as she did for Philip, illustrating a concern for Gloria's wellbeing in the future. However, based on the extract, Gloria was 'resilient' and had 'a good circle of friends' she could turn to for support, and this could have given Emily some peace of mind for the future. High social support a person has during the grieving process can help them go through the process more easily (Broderick, Birbilis and Steger 2007), and Emily believed Gloria had the

necessary support in case of future bereavement. This was similar to Sharon and Anna, as Sharon was certain she would predecease Anna, and Anna believed she would have a support network in the form of her work colleagues that would help her if that happened. Adding to that, as illustrated in the previous section in this chapter, Anna saw her work as a source of stability and familiarity that would also help her in her grieving process. Thinking about what would happen if Anna died before her, Sharon explained how her age and life experience would make her grieving process easier:

> My situation would be, and again I think there's a bit of an age thing there, that if, if, God forbid, anything was to happen to Anna, before me, I'm old enough to know that life goes on and as much, and I think from my mum dying as well, that was a real big learning curve for me because it was like…realising that the pain and the hurt does go away, it never disappears, it's never ever not there, but you just realise that, cause I used to often think, I remember having nightmares when I was wee, thinking that, I would wake up screaming because my mum had died, and how to cope with life. And then as I gone on to become a single parent, it was like 'oh my God', my mum was diagnosed with cancer many years ago, which they caught, but I remember at the time just being so selfish and just thinking 'oh hold on a minute, you cannae be doing this, I need you'. But then realising that in actual fact she went, and you keep continuing life, and I suppose just through life you learn that.
> (Sharon, 64, second interview)

Sharon explained that she learned how to cope with bereavement because she lived through it before and developed a sort of resilience towards death. As she explained, the pain never disappeared, but she was aware that life continued, and the surviving person needed to keep on living. Sharon's experiences with bereavement illustrated the continuous interplay of the past, present and future, as she drew on her past experiences to imagine how she would cope with Anna's death, creating a resilience towards bereavement from her relationship with it in the past (Brownlie 2014). As Anna explained above, she would seek support in her workplace, and would keep herself occupied to help with the grieving process, arguing that her way of dealing

with bereavement would be different from Sharon's and pointing to the importance of maintaining relationships and taking up different activities to help with death in the future.

Having separate interests was a key concern for Alan, who believed Jeff would need to take up some activities to keep him occupied when he was alone while Alan was working, but also to make potential bereavement in the future easier:

> Alan: But when she [his aunt] died and he [his uncle] was alone, his life came to an end in a sense, you know, cause he had nothing to do. And that's my concern, is the fact that we shouldn't rely totally on each other, I think we do, but there has to be scope for existing –
> Jeff: Interests, and so forth.
> Alan: Yes, and that's why, that was the funny thing, when you read it yesterday and had a laugh. So, I think that is important, cause you have to be aware, you know, they put, have to put up until the end, you know, living in the moment, and that the moments continue for a while, but you know that that will come to an end. And it's that ending point which will be the most challenging, that's where I want you to be aware.
> (Alan, 63, and Jeff, 70, second interview)

The point of having separate interests was a source of debate for Alan and Jeff, as they had differing views on it. Alan explained he had activities he did himself, such as his part-time job over the weekends, or "friends I go to meet for meals" (Alan, second interview), all of which created support networks that would help him if Jeff was the one to predecease him. Adding to that, the extract showed how Alan and Jeff considered this topic differently. While Alan was serious in planning for future bereavement, Jeff 'had a laugh' when he read Alan's entry on his concern that they would become "overly reliant on each other" (Alan, written account). Jeff could have thought that he would predecease Alan, as he was older, so he might have felt there was no need to find new activities at this point in his life. He also said that he would

want to make a choice about ending his life, another issue he and Alan did not agree on:

> Jeff: Well you never know, euthanasia might be legal by then.
> Alan: Right, ok, fine. So I think it's about –
> Jeff: Now you see that's the difference between you and me.
> Alan: Yeah, ok.
> Jeff: I'm serious. You know, I, suffering hurts me, seeing my mother starving herself to death hurts me. Can't do anything to change it, can't do anything about it. And I do think that if we make the choice in our right mind we should be able to choose to terminate our lives. I've got nothing to fear as far as when I'm dead, I'm dead. I know that disturbs you.
> Alan: It's not, I don't think it's your choice. I think it's a choice, and if there's two or three people in a relationship, then it has to be an agreed choice.
> (Jeff, 70, and Alan, 63, second interview)

Jeff's argument for ending his own life was based on the experience he had with his mother, who was mentally ill and refused any kind of help. He explained that he wanted Alan to "put a pillow over my face" (Jeff, second interview) if he went on to become like his mother. While Alan explained that the way Jeff's mother was living her life should not "cover how you look to the future" (Alan, second interview), Jeff believed that the decision on ending one's life was entirely on that individual. Through assistive suicide, Jeff felt like he was taking control over his death (Westwood 2017b), and, consequently, over his life, as he imagined he would be able to die before he got into a state his mother was in. While Jeff was considering euthanasia for mostly personal reasons, imagining his mother's life and mental health as his own future, Sarah and Jane explained they had a plan to end their lives together if they felt unsupported by the society they lived in:

> Sarah: So we have a particular day, which we think is, it's not going to be on anybody's birthday, it's not going to be, you know, of any particular significance. And, if…our living circumstances, if we're very unhappy, or, if we're separated, or, you know, if we're going to be separated, or if we can't get the care and the

healthcare that we need, then we will choose to end together. So, just need to find the blue pill.

Interviewer: Yeah, that might be, I'm not familiar with how it goes, but it might be quite difficult.

Sarah: Oh, it's not.

Interviewer: No?

Sarah: I've got a medical background.

(Sarah, 61, first interview)

Sarah not only explained how she and Jane would end their lives together but outlined how easy it would be for them to do that. The reasons for that decision came down to the question of whether or not they would have the independence and choice they wanted in their future. Once again, like Jeff, ending their lives before they got "so unbearable, and the support is not there" (Sarah, second interview) would signify the "ultimate expression of autonomy" (Westwood 2017b, p. 5), as they would be taking control over when and how they died. In our second interview Sarah explained that the "blue pill day" was not something they thought about on a daily basis, but it was a way for them to have a sense of control and choice over their life and death. The fact that they have planned to do it together further illustrated the points raised at the beginning of this chapter about the two of them imagining themselves as different from 'mainstream society' and creating a narrative of them against the world.

5. Discussion and Conclusion: Generational Identity and Collective Relationships

The narratives presented in this chapter illustrated the importance of independence, choice and control in the imagination of the couples' short-term futures. Apart from framing their imagination, these three aspects of the short-term future also played a role in developing a third relational aspect of their lives, that of forming a collective

relationship with the generation of older same-sex couples and LGBTI individuals. As the ages of the participants ranged from 36 to 77, not all of them considered themselves as being older, but all of them shared the knowledge of the experiences the older LGBTI population went through in the last 40 years, creating a collective relationship with each other (Gilleard and Higgs 2002). Being of a certain age meant that some of the participants were aware of how it impacted the way they behaved and thought about certain things. As was illustrated in Chapter IV, the older male participants explained how they did not exhibit certain behaviour in public because of their age, i.e. because their youth was surrounded by discrimination and possible prosecution (Plummer 2010).

In discussions about control, the age and experiences of some participants impacted their decision to make arrangements that would make their partners the primary decision makers in case of illness and death. Age also played a role in making the participants more aware of their health, both physical and mental, as they argued it was more difficult to recuperate after an illness in the present and imagined it would be even more difficult to do so in the future. While some considered themselves as belonging to the older population, they strongly vocalised that they would not want to spend time with other older people, often including people their own age in this classification.

The unwillingness to socialise with older people was mostly visible in the stories around care homes and retirement accommodation and was closely linked to the couples' desire to age in place, i.e. to stay in their own homes for as long as possible (Callahan 1992; Coleman et al. 2016). When it came to formal care or housing settings in the future, some of the participants emphasised the importance of an

intergenerational aspect of such spaces, because, as Emily explained, being surrounded only by older people would be "detrimental to your health" (second interview). Spending time with younger people in their present and future could have a positive impact on the participants' wellbeing, and it would bridge the intergenerational gap, which could result in combating negative attitudes towards older people (Ory et al. 2003). The narratives around older age also reflected the participants' ideas about doing age, and what was expected of them as they got older. One of the dominant narratives was that of not wanting to be put in a homogeneous category with other older people simply because they were of the same age. This was visible in Jeff's concern that he would be forced to participate in age-appropriate activities if he lived in a care home, pointing to chrononormative expectations and how he wished to avoid them. Sarah and Jane's discussion about 'blue pill day' could be interpreted as their desire to avoid ageing altogether by taking control over ending their lives on their own terms (Westwood 2017b). Identifying as an older individual included some contradictions as well, as some participants said they would not consider themselves older, but then discussed how they enjoyed free public transport passes because of their age.

Through the three different sections presented above, the chapter illustrated how the participants imagined maintaining and losing their independence, choice and control in the future. By continuing to live in their own home, and not having to rely on professional care services, the couples hoped to stay independent until they died, or at least until it was absolutely necessary for one or both partners to move into a care facility. The mechanisms of maintaining independence in such places were expressed through the participants' wishes to wear the clothes they wanted (Twigg 2014) and

participate in activities they chose. The conversations about retirement reflected how the participants sometimes felt they had no choice in deciding whether or not they wanted to continue working, pointing to a wider discussion of what extending working lives meant for older people in terms of mental and physical health, free time, and income (Gould 2006; Loretto and Vickerstaff 2012; Loe and Johnston 2016). Finally, discussing death and bereavement made the couples aware they had no control over the end of their lives apart from securing their wills and putting in place plans regarding funeral arrangements. Some of the participants discussed assisted suicide and disclosed they had plans to end their own lives in an attempt to take control over their deaths.

This chapter argued that the concerns around independence, choice, and control were present in the participants' narratives because of their age, and because of the past experiences in which they often felt they had no choice, as was illustrated in the previous chapter. The shared experiences presented in this chapter build into the participants' collective relationship with older LGBTI individuals and same-sex couples, and the imagination of their short-term futures reflects the generational effects they shared (Plummer 2010). Regardless of their age, all of the couples had specific arrangements in place, which might not have been necessary in the case of opposite-sex couples, and these arrangements were motivated both by the participants' age and by their experiences as members of a generation that went through a number of social changes, outlined in Chapter I. The following chapter explores the narratives around the imagined long-term futures, focusing on fear, hope, and trust, and presenting the final relational aspect of the participants' identities, that of an imagined relationship with the Scottish society. The chapter also illustrates how the intersection of the four

relationships plays a role in the couples' imagination, and construction, of Scotland as a utopia.

Chapter VI: Long-Term Future: Hope, Fear, and Trust

1. Introduction

This chapter explores the couples' imagination of the long-term future, building on the narratives about the past, present, and short-term futures presented so far. Taking the definition from Cook (2018), the long-term future signifies a future that will occur after one's death, and does not refer to "immediate, personal concerns", but rather addresses "an experience of time that may be socially shared" (p. 3). As will be illustrated in this chapter, the participants did not only share experiences in the past and present, but also in the future, imagining shared possibilities for the times to come. The narratives about the long-term future focused on hope, fear, and a responsibility for future generations, as well as on trust in Scotland and the Scottish government to continue making progress in equality and human rights.

The chapter explores these topics through the couples' stories about children and younger generations of LGBTI people, the political situation in the United Kingdom, and their imagination of Scotland in the future. Furthermore, the chapter argues that while death might be considered as an end of the biological body, it is not the end of thinking about and imagining the future. Following Cook's (2018) argument about a socially shared future, the chapter presents an idea that the participants were able to imagine a common future because they experienced similar events and participated in political movements in their past. The chapter further explores the interplay of the past, present and the future through the couples' imaginings, and highlights the importance of interpersonal, collective and imagined relationships in constructing the long-term future. Finally, the chapter ends by introducing the fourth relational aspect of the

participants' identity, that of an imagined relationship to the Scottish society. The chapter links this relationship to the three previous ones and argues that these relationships create the foundations for imagining Scotland as a utopia and for providing these couples the agency to imagine and construct the future.

2. Fear and Hope: The Kids are Alright

The stories the couples told about children and younger generations embodied their fears about the uncertainty of the future, especially in terms of equality and inclusivity of younger LGBTI populations. This section explores these narratives, beginning with the couples who had children of their own from previous relationships, moving on to the couples who either did not have children or did not include them explicitly in their imagination of the long-term future. Among the couples where one or both partners had children from a previous relationship, both partners considered the other partner's children, and sometimes grandchildren, as their own. Through this acceptance the couples created their own, non-biological, families, or families of choice (Weeks et al. 2001), which challenged the heteronormative rules around what constituted a family. For example, Gloria had no children of her own but considered Emily's children and grandchildren as her family, and positioned them in her imagined future as well:

> The presence of children and young people in my life (mostly Emily's grandchildren) somehow makes the future seem a more real place and, for all I said earlier about not looking ahead, I can't help but hope for their complete happiness. I imagine them always being a part of my life. Now Emily's youngest daughter and her wife are about to adopt two children and they clearly figure in my imagined future.
> (Gloria, 58, written account)

In this extract, Gloria imagined her future through children and younger people that surrounded her. The use of the term 'imagined future' in Gloria's writing was a

reflection of our conversation during the first interview, when we discussed how she and Emily imagined their future. Even though Gloria might have not used the term as carrying Adam and Groves' (2007) meaning, she did present it in a way that reflected this concept by using children to not only serve as physical vessels of her imagination, and as tangible extensions of her future, but as agents in framing the future as a 'more real place', colonising it with their presence (Adam and Groves 2007). Even the children who were not yet there, as was the case with the adoption she mentioned, 'clearly figured' in Gloria's future. Gloria said she did not look ahead as much as she used to since Emily's son died three years ago, as was illustrated in the previous chapter, but she could not help but hope for an optimistic future for the other children and grandchildren in their family, and to use them to domesticate the uncertainty that the future might bring (Groves 2014). As she imagined the future for their grandchildren would be positive, Gloria was also certain that the future of younger LGBTI generations in Scotland was safe, because, as she wrote, "the majority of young Scots now seem to find the idea of discrimination on the grounds of sexuality ludicrous" (Gloria, 58, written account).

Based on another entry from their notebook, the first thing that came to mind when Gloria thought about the future was "an infinite dark cloth" and the only thing she was sure of about the future was "that it is uncertain" (Gloria, written account). This way of imaging the future as a time of uncertainty was shared among all the participants. The image of the dark cloth added an element of obscurity to Gloria's future, and presented it in quite a negative way, as something that cannot be permeated, possibly reflecting Gloria's inability or unwillingness to look ahead in the future. However, as illustrated above, Emily's grandchildren made the future a more hopeful place, as

Gloria focused on their happiness, and not on the uncertainties of the future. Groves (2014) argues that attachments to one's children, other people, or objects that a person finds significant, help them "clarify what he or she can do in the world, and thus who s/he is, in the face of an uncertain future" (p. 125). By creating new families and imaginary ties with future generations, the future has the potential to be tamer.

Emily shared similar ideas as Gloria, even though she did not write about her children or grandchildren in the notebook, but believed her grandchildren would continue doing what she and Gloria were doing in terms of campaigning and fighting for human rights:

> So, we've both always been involved in civil liberty and human rights, and we'll continue to. And thank God my grandchildren are the same.
> (Emily, 77, second interview)

Emily loved spending time with her grandchildren which might have impacted their involvement in "civil liberty and human rights" activism. This notion, and Gloria's argument that the grandchildren were in her imagined future, created a jointly constructed future, one which both Emily and Gloria could create by projecting their beliefs and imagination on their grandchildren (Cook 2018).

The extension of the family to a non-biological parent or grandparent, and in Emily and Gloria's case a non-married partner, illustrated a queering of the family, and a new way of "doing family" (Perlesz et al. 2006, p. 176). Perlesz et al. (2006) further argue that while such new forms of families might be developed as an answer to the heteronormative standards of the nuclear family, they are not necessarily deliberate, but were brought on by late modernity and the shifting of established social and cultural norms. This new family no longer needs to be defined by marriage, heterosexuality or biology, and the couples in this research represented the change that has been happening in the family structure. During their youth and young adulthood,

the participants were constrained by social and temporal norms of heterosexuality and marriage as prerequisites for starting a family, which was particularly visible in the stories by the female participants explored in Chapter IV, and summarised by Emily: "if you wanted to have children you got married" (first interview). Coming from such a background and creating new family structures illustrated the fluidity of family relations, emphasising the presence of families of choice (Weeks et al. 2001). The families of choice created by these couples combined the biological and non-biological family members, as some participants had children of their own, while others accepted their partner's children. Biological family members, such as siblings or parents, were included in the family narratives as well, and the participants often talked about different family members with no distinction between the biological and non-biological ones. Adding to that, it was not only the parents and their partners who actively constructed the family, but the children as well. Sarah and Jane both had children from previous marriages, and when they decided to start dating and eventually get married, the children accepted it as their new family:

> Cause she [the youngest daughter] was only four when I met Sarah, so she doesn't really remember Sarah not being in her life. So, yeah, they're [the children] all very, they're very lucky, and they very much see each other as brothers and sisters.
> (Jane, 56, first interview)

For Sarah and Jane, the creation of their new family allowed for a development of a more inclusive and open environment. Most of their children identified as LGBTI, possibly reflecting the new family and sexual norms they have seen with their mothers. In Sarah and Jane's case, the fact that they were in a same-sex marriage impacted their children in a positive way, as the two of them had a stable relationship and their children could construct their own sexual identities and relationships on their example.

A similar sense of stability and ordinariness was also visible in Sharon and Anna's story, when they discussed teaching younger generations about inclusivity and diversity, remembering an anecdote with their granddaughter:

> Sharon: But then about two months ago, we got married in February so it would have been in April, Anna was gonna be out, cause on a Saturday she's [granddaughter] usually with us because he [father] plays football, and Anna will probably be visiting her mum and dad, and she goes like 'Anna? What have you got to do?', and Anna is going 'I don't know?', 'before you leave, what have you got to do? You have to kiss your wife', and we were like, 'ok'. So now she's got this thing, when anyone of us leave the house it's like 'granny Sharon, where are you going? What do you have to do before you go?'. And so I've got to kiss Anna, and then all three have to get into a hug, a group hug. And then we've got to kiss her, and she's just 'you have to kiss your wife'.
>
> Anna: She's really obsessed with our relationship.
>
> Sharon: I look at it, it's, for her it's always been a very stable thing, coming to our house has always been very stable, and I think almost she sees that as kind of almost the standard, this is really stable.
>
> (Sharon, 64, and Anna, 46, second interview)

It could be argued that the family formations described above are queer family formations, as they exist against, but also alongside, the heterosexual norms. The examples above also illustrate different ways of doing family, which have consequences on all members of those families. While there is little difference in children's well-being regarding having same-sex or opposite-sex parents (Few-Demo et al. 2016), belonging to a queer family possibly teaches children, and grandchildren, about diversity and equality on a different level, as they are experiencing it first-hand. On the one hand, Sharon and Anna's exchange illustrated this, as they explained how their granddaughter considered their relationship as 'the standard'. On the other hand, Anna's idea that their granddaughter was 'obsessed' with their relationship might point to a different perception. Because her grandmothers' relationship is same-sex, and

therefore different from her parents', their granddaughter might have been fascinated by it, as it was not what she experienced at home. As the granddaughter was 4 years old at the time of our interview, her obsession could have just been a demonstration of her curiosity, rather than trying to fit the same-sex relationship in the heterosexual norms she might have seen enacted with her parents.

The underlying message queer family formations sent to other members of that family was that it was possible and acceptable to have a family that defied heteronormative standards. Sharon explained this more explicitly, arguing that educating the younger generations and showing them examples of these new ways of doing family was a way in which there would be more inclusivity and diversity in the future. Sharon's argument about stability was also consistent with research on children in families with LGBTI parents, which claims that the sexual orientation of the parent, or, in Sharon's case the grandparent, was not a factor in the child's social or psychological development (Johnson 2012). Rather, the stability of the relationship and a loving and caring environment contributed more to the child's wellbeing (Farr, Forssell and Patterson 2010). Similar to Jane's extract above, Sharon's granddaughter grew up with Sharon and Anna's relationship as one of the 'standard' relationships in their family and was more concerned that Sharon and Anna did not forget to kiss and hug each other when they left the house, than with their sexuality. Anna explained that in order to create a more inclusive future where relationships such as her and Sharon's would be 'the standard', there needed to be more emphasis on educating the younger generations:

> So, from the point of view of how do you change the future? It's gotta be the kids. It's actually gotta be what we teach at schools that actually changes the future.

(Anna, 46, second interview)

In this extract Anna expressed her belief that the future would need changing, because, as she explained, there was still a lot of "-isms" and "hate crime" (Anna, second interview) among both younger and older people in Scotland. This perception was different from what Gloria believed, that there is less discrimination on the basis of sexual identity among the younger people in Scotland. The difference in their opinions might have stemmed from different coming out experiences and social contexts they were familiar with. As was illustrated in Chapter IV, Gloria was engaged in political activism around gay rights and the women's movement since she was a teenager, and she saw her coming out as a political move as well. Anna, however, never came out publicly and while she and Sharon had a couple of LGBTI friends, their social circles were not predominantly LGBTI, and this might have made them aware of more discrimination than Gloria experienced. Despite their upbringing and openness about their sexual identities, Sharon and Anna believed that the future needed to be more inclusive and open, and Anna believed that educating the children was one of the ways forward. Educating younger generations might be easier in Scotland than in other places as well, due to the plans to implement the inclusive education curriculum in 2018[9] across all state schools in Scotland. While these policies were not discussed in any of our interviews, a number of participants were certain that education would be the best way to change public opinion, and, ultimately, the future for the younger generations, and for the couples as well.

[9] In 2018, the Scottish Government announced that LGBT-inclusive education would be implemented across all state schools, after fully accepting 33 recommendations proposed by the TIE campaign (source: https://www.tiecampaign.co.uk/about).

The couples who did not have children of their own discussed younger family members, such as nephews and nieces, and younger people in general, as the ones who would occupy their imagined futures. One of the ways in which the couples imagined the role of younger family members in their own future was through memories these family members would have of the couples once they passed away. Alan and Jeff, for example, put a lot of effort in maintaining good relationships with their nieces and nephews, offering help and tutoring, to secure their memory in the future, once they were gone:

> I think it is essential to keep these links [with family] going into the future. I remember my mother often saying, 'If you're minded in a memory, you're kept alive'.
> (Alan, 63, written account)

Alan's wish to be remembered was an investment in the long-term future which could be perceived as empty (Adam and Groves 2007) after the death of the person imagining it. As Adam and Groves (2007) argue, "the meaningfulness of our lives as such is bound up with things, people, institutions and ideals" (p. 157), and once a person dies, in this example Alan, the younger members of their family will continue to live on and remember them. This not only meant that it was important for Alan and Jeff to maintain those relationships, but it also made both the short-term and the long-term futures more real for them (Adam and Groves 2007), because they knew their family would remember them. Jeff extended the term family in his written account, including people who might not be directly related to him and Alan:

> But there are many people who identify as "gay", "transgender", or whatever, they have the right to a safe society, to be recognised as "family" and they are my family!
> (Jeff, 70, written account)

Jeff's extract served as a direct link between the past and the present, as in the entry before this one he explained how it had been "illegal", "immoral" and "totally unacceptable" (Jeff, written account) to be gay in British culture at the time he was growing up. Looking back at those times and being aware of the positive changes in legal and social aspects during his lifetime, Jeff chose to include people who might have shared the same hardships as he did in the past. By doing so he created an imagined family of choice, arguing that sexual minorities should be accepted by their own families, and offered to accept them as his own family, in an attempt to illustrate how shared experiences brought people together.

Apart from the emotional bonds they had with their family members, Alan and Jeff also had material objects that would become a memory of them in the future, and that would extend their "selves beyond their deaths" (Belk 1988, p. 148). Material objects also played a role in Alan and Jeff's identity construction (Chapman 2006), as both of them gave meaning to those objects and were aware of how the objects gave meaning to them. Alan told a story about his nephew and his children, and how the act of explaining their relationship to the children led to creating memories and materialities that would outlive Alan and Jeff. He mentioned an example that illustrated how his nephew's wife explained Alan and Jeff's marriage to her child by comparing them to a gay couple known as the 'Guncles', from an American reality show. The show, called *Tori and Dean: Home Sweet Hollywood*, followed the lives of American actress Tori Spelling, and her husband, also an actor, Dean McDermott. The Guncles, their close friends, were a male same-sex couple who appeared on the show:

> Alan: And so yeah, we're known as the guncles. So, I often send cards, you know, 'Happy birthday from the guncles', or, you know, 'Merry Christmas from the guncles', so we are actually quite pleased, quite

proud of that, you know. And it was a way in which they explained it to their kids.

Jeff: We even have t-shirts. We even got t-shirts and caps.

Alan: Guncle Alan and guncle Jeff. [laughing]

(Alan, 63, and Jeff, 70, first interview)

This extract illustrated the pride Alan felt by being recognised as "just another couple within the family" (Alan, first interview). By being given a name he and Jeff could use as a means of identifying their relationship and standing out, they made their relationship equal but different to the opposite-sex ones in their families. As Alan and Jeff explained during our interviews, they were not "stereotypically gay" and they were "in many respects…just like another couple who are heterosexual" (Jeff, first interview). Perceiving themselves in this manner was a way to view their relationship as normal, as was illustrated in Chapter IV, and to frame it within the realm of "normality and respectability" (Ingraham 2005, p. 59). The 'Guncles' was a way to be different from other couples in the family, but to still be within the boundaries of normality. It was also a term that would continue into the future and would be used to describe Alan and Jeff's relationship after they were gone. Fred and Robert shared a similar narrative about Fred's nephews. Even though Robert had children from his first marriage, he was not in contact with them very often, and did not talk about them in the context of continuing his legacy. Instead, more emphasis was put on Fred's nephews and his side of the family, with whom he was "getting on very well" (Fred, first interview).

Even with good relations with his family, Fred said that the only regret he had about being 'a gay man' was not having children, possibly framing his sexuality as the main cause for it. His comment could be viewed as an impact from his past, and the heteronormative rules he grew up with, where one was expected to be in a heterosexual

relationship, preferably married, in order to have children (Hadley 2018). As we did not discuss why he and Robert never decided to have a child, either through adoption or surrogacy, there could have been a variety of reasons for it, from homophobia and lack of information, to job flexibility or lack of financial means (Mezey 2015), not all of them directly linked to their sexuality.

The participants' children, and the younger generations in general, did not only portray their personal long-term futures, but they also served as a foundation for a more equal future of Scotland. There was a consensus among the participants that the younger generations are becoming more involved in human rights, and, as Peter said, societal and legal opinions would need to keep up with these changes in the future as more and more people came out:

> The more people come out, the more everyone else stops having gays and lesbians be an unknown other, they become so-and-so's nephew, so-and-so's niece, oh, now it's so-and-so, now it's, it's much more possible for kids to know themselves and be comfortable in themselves and come out while they are still at school age. But we've gotten to where we are now because of the bravery and the stubbornness in equal measure of people who came before, and came out when it was far less easy, but the more people do, the easier it is and the less other it is.
> (Peter, 36, first interview)

In this extract, Peter explained that it was already easier for 'kids' to come out and be aware of their sexual identity than it was in the past, emphasizing the impact of the actions that the older generations of LGBTI people carried out. The main point of Peter's argument was that as coming out becomes more common, there will be less othering of sexual and gender minorities, and they will be referred to as someone's family members, as opposed to 'an unknown other'. Peter's narrative flowed from the past, to the present and the future, and it reflected what most of the couples discussed as well, the inability to think about the future without considering the events that

happened in the past and are happening now. On a similar note, Rachel and Kathy discussed the long-term future reflecting on the possible negative experiences that the younger generations might face if the political situation continues as it is at the moment:

> Rachel: I don't think as a community, LGBT community, we can sit back on our laurels and think we've won, I think we've won some battles but we haven't won the war yet, and if we sit back on our laurels and just think 'well that's what we've achieved, we've got everything now, so we can just sit back and enjoy it', and we're doing a service to those who are coming behind us, cause we've got to fight for their rights, and for something for them to inherit, and that's definitely the way I see it.
>
> Kathy: Can't take your eye off the ball, I think it's very important that there's still all the various organisations there.
>
> (Rachel, 58 and Kathy, 57, second interview)

Rachel explicitly explained how the 'battles' that have been won so far should not mean that the fight for equality was over. Even though the political and social situation might be favourable for her and Kathy, and for the other couples in this research, in terms of equal marriage and increasing inclusivity and visibility, Rachel was aware that more needed to be done for the generations coming after them. Kathy also mentioned the importance of various organisations, mostly those working with the LGBTI population, as institutions that would help younger generations in the future. As she and Rachel were volunteering and socialising in the same NGO, they had experienced the work of such organisations, and while they agreed that this specific NGO helped them in their own lives, there was an issue of too much centralisation of its work. The NGO in question had centres in Glasgow and Edinburgh, and almost no physical centres in other parts of Scotland. Another potential problem with NGOs doing work around the LGBTI population is their reliance on government funding. As Kathy explained, the current financial situation with their NGO was good, but there

was a possibility of budget cuts if a potential new government had different views on such organisations:

> The small impacts, like the [NGO], is funded from, presumably some government funds as well, I don't know how it gets all its funding, but certainly [NGO] now is getting funding from the government, so again, if that government changed, then that funding might be withdrawn from the sector, and that again would have a big impact on availability.
> (Kathy, 57, second interview)

Kathy's fears about the changes in the political system in Scotland were a common narrative among all couples, particularly in relation to the long-term future and the impact of such changes on younger generations. Most of the couples specifically expressed their approval of the current Scottish government, and the extract above reflects this as well, as Kathy explains that relevant NGOs would continue to receive funding with the current government in place. The availability of such funding, and the lack thereof, would not only impact the lives of current service users but would possibly bear negative consequences for future generations who would not be able to access key services. However, as the next section illustrates, the couples did not think it was possible that Scotland would allow the victories that have been won for the LGBTI population be taken back any time soon.

3. Trust: Scotland as Utopia

A lot of couples expressed their fears about the future of equality, mostly prompted by the rise of right-wing politics around Europe, the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States, and the possible consequences of Brexit on the legal status of immigrants and LGBTI people. The fears linked to the political situation in

Scotland and the United Kingdom were mostly reflected in narratives on younger generations of LGBTI people and the possibility of their freedoms being taken away:

> I think there's a big danger that some of the legislation, especially with Theresa May in number ten, I think she's not an LGBT supporter, I think she's quite anti, and I can see that this Brexit bill could be used to actually delegitimise some aspects of the LGBT community.
> (Kathy, 57, first interview)

Even though there was no mention of the LGBTI population as part of the Brexit campaign, the UK leaving the European Union could mean abolishing the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000), which could impact the lives of LGBTI people across the UK. The abolition of the EU Charter (2000) could lead to "a reduction in the level of substantive and procedural protection available to individuals living in the UK" (Lock 2017, p. 16), in such areas as the right to physical and mental integrity, a right to marry that is not restricted to different-sex couples, and strong anti-discrimination provisions (Lock 2017), among others. Fred also said that, following Brexit and other political events that have happened in the UK and around the world, he had some new concerns about the long-term future:

> Fred: So it's that sort of personal future, which…you have to face up to basically. But for as long as we can, we'll do, we'll continue doing what we can, you with the gardening and everything else, and me with my writing and a bit of voluntary work…but even after we have gone, there's going to be a future, and I do have some worries there. I didn't at one stage, but what's happened over the past eighteen months, past year, I do. […] And…throughout Western Europe and North America, there now seems to be the right, not just the right, but the extreme right appears to be gaining more and more popularity, we saw it with Brexit, we saw it with Trump, but also there's an election in France coming up, and at the moment in the opinion polls, the Front National is neck and neck with the Republicans, the Conservatives. In Holland, the so-called freedom party is neck and neck with the current administration, they're actually coming there next year. In Austria the Fascists are also neck and

neck with the Green Party, and they have people for the presidential elections next year.

Robert: That's all very frightening.

(Fred, 65, and Robert, 76, first interview)

This extract illustrated the two ways of imagining the future, the short-term, explored in the previous chapter, and the long-term one. Fred was talking about the things he and Robert enjoyed doing in the present and how he hoped these would continue to be part of their daily lives in the future as well. He then went on to discuss the long-term future, and quite explicitly expressed the idea that the world would not end once he and Robert died. He was aware that there would be a future they might not be a part of, and he based his imagination of it on the political events happening around the world in the present. The extract also further portrayed the interplay between the past, present and future, as Fred recounted that his fears have developed after witnessing the political changes in Europe that framed the way he was imagining the long-term future. Alan and Jeff expressed similar fears for the long-term future, arguing that Scotland might be excluded from the possible negative political changes:

> I have a concern that, and it may not happen in Scotland, right, but it's part of the UK, it might happen. I think there is a danger with this right-wing sway that the rights and privileges which we have are going to be attacked, reduced, and so the very positive attitude which we've described, and I would expect will continue in Scotland, there is a danger from this, I think this right-wing, xenophobic, that you know, the Trump thing, you know, it's just another example where you have this. So that's my big, my biggest concern for the future.
>
> (Alan, 63, second interview)

Alan believed that Scotland would not follow the potential right-wing movement that the rest of the UK might participate in. The 'positive attitude' he refers to is described in more detail in Chapter IV, where he and Jeff discuss how different people recognise them as a couple. While he feared future political changes, he had trust in Scotland

and the Scottish society which he believed was “open and inclusive” (Alan, second interview). He also put a lot of trust in the Scottish government, as he believed it was working for more inclusivity and equality:

> But I also think is that, part of it in our psyche is that we know that the rule of law, society will not turn against us. Which is not necessarily the case, others, you know, I think Scotland is particular, you know that the fact is that the rule of law, we have in parliament leaders of the political parties whether it’s just, society is not going to turn against minorities, cause we are, we have a, you know, we have two LBGT leaders, right, and two parties, so I think…as a gay couple we feel safe, so our future here in this country, we know it’s nobody be turning against, and that’s not necessarily the case elsewhere, right?
> (Alan, 63, second interview)

Alan’s trust in the Scottish government was based on his experiences in the past, and on the notion that the government would continue to serve them, the citizens of Scotland, in a way that supports their lifestyle or some broader public good (Hardin 2002). Hardin (2002) further argues that it is more important for a government to be trustworthy than to be trusted. This implies that not all citizens share the same amount of trust in a specific government, but that they see the government acting in a way that they find acceptable, for example through delivering on promises it has made, or making changes in legislation that the people perceive as positive. As a gay man, Alan saw a number of political changes in the UK that have impacted his life in a positive way. Changes in legislation brought by the Scottish government, such as the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1980, the revoking of Section 28 in 2000, and the introduction of equal marriage in 2014, among others, enforced a feeling of protection by the government, a notion that was previously reserved for the heterosexual population (Ghaziani 2011).

As Adam and Groves (2007) argue, the knowledge and experience of customs, traditions, laws and moral codes make the future more predictable, as they are familiar

to the people who imagine it. Even though the participants' past experiences with institutions and moral codes have not always been positive, the changes they witnessed and experienced during their lifetime offered them hope that the positive movement would continue into the future. On a similar note, Emily was hopeful of the future political situation in Scotland because of the current government and the trust she put into the first minister, who she described as "our little, fearless leader" (Emily, first interview), placing her trust in an actual person. Building on Hardin's (2002) argument, an individual might trust another individual because of a mutual understanding that each individual has their "own interests in taking [other's] interests into account" (p. 1). Applying this analogy to the first minister, it is in her interest that the citizens of Scotland find her trustworthy in order to get re-elected, and the way she builds trust with her constituents is through making changes that benefit a certain group of individuals, in this case sexual minorities. Adding to that, Emily said the situation for older people in Scotland was better than elsewhere in the UK:

> We are very lucky living in Scotland we never have to worry about health care or social care, the bus pass allows me a lot of freedom of movement the length and breadth of Scotland and the winter heating allowance eases any winter worries.
> (Emily, 77, written account)

Having lived in England in her youth and having "run care homes for old people" (Emily, second interview) there, Emily had experience in the care system and the policies surrounding it. Based on her experiences, she explained that the policies protecting older people in Scotland were better than the ones in England, and that things were "a lot easier in Scotland than in England, as far as healthcare goes" (Emily, second interview). With the devolution of the parliament in 1997, Scotland gained authority over health and social services, housing, and the local government, among

others (Robertson et al. 2016). This meant it could bring laws and policies different to those in the rest of the UK, particularly England, which was considered less progressive in healthcare and housing provisions by the participants. As almost half of the participants either lived in England at some point in their lives, or were born there, they compared Scotland, as their present and future home, to their past experiences, and said they could never go back. For example, when discussing future accommodation, Sarah and Jane talked about the possibility of selling their house and moving somewhere more accessible, arguing it would need to be in Scotland:

Interviewer: In Scotland?
Sarah: Yeah.
Jane: Definitely.
Interviewer: So no planning on moving.
Sarah: That's a, I'd never move out of Scotland.
Jane: It's too complicated, especially for older people, well, especially for anybody, but, community care arrangements are completely different in Scotland, to England and Wales. So…
Jane: This is our home, Scotland's our home.
Sarah: Scotland's very important to us.
[…]
Jane: To have a, to have, you know there are obviously people who are not supported, but to have leadership around it, and to have, the first minister, you know, prepared to stand up and say 'not on my watch will anybody be treated who's different, treated badly'.
Sarah: That's incredible.
Jane: That is so supportive, it's been amazing.
(Sarah, 61, and Jane, 56, first interview)

This extract illustrated the various reasons why Sarah and Jane would not move from Scotland in the future. As Jane explained, the community care arrangements were different in Scotland, which was mostly visible in the free provision of care to people in their own homes, funded by the local authorities, which was not in place in England. One of the policies in place in Scotland was the prohibition for charging for personal care for older people living in their own homes (Bowes and Bell 2007), and, going

back to the points raised in Chapter V, it made the couples more hopeful about maintaining their lifestyle and independence in the future. Furthermore, as Jane said, the political leadership of Scotland was working on increasing equality and inclusivity of various minority groups, and in this case the focus was on the LGBTI population. Sarah and Jane's use of such words as 'incredible' and 'amazing' further illustrated their support of the current political leadership in Scotland, but it also framed that leadership as something out of the ordinary and unexpected in its actions.

The positive imagination of the present and future in Scotland was predominant in the couples' narratives, and Scotland was often compared to England in terms of acceptance and inclusivity of the LGBTI population. Emily and Gloria discussed living somewhere else in the future, but agreed that the circumstances in Scotland would need to be "quite exceptional" (Gloria, first interview) for them to consider moving somewhere else:

> Gloria: Yeah, but I…the only reason I would contemplate living somewhere else would be for very negative reasons, possibly…if things politically here were so terrible…no, I don't envisage living anywhere else. No, no.
> Emily: I couldn't live under a UK…I couldn't live in the UK –
> Gloria: I sometimes think of living somewhere elsewhere in Scotland.
> Emily: I couldn't live in England. Definitely couldn't live in England.
> (Emily, 77, and Gloria, 58, first interview)

Emily's argument about how she could not live in England illustrated how she, and other participants as well, felt about England. While the question was not about where they would not want to live, the predominant answer was that England was not an option. Even if the future turned out to be more negative than they have anticipated, the couples would either stay in Scotland or move to Germany, Spain, and other European countries. Their trust in Scotland did not only illustrate how strongly the

couples felt that the future would be positive, but it also made their relationship to the Scottish society stronger. By othering England, the couples could position themselves as citizens of Scotland (Simonsen 2016) and strengthen their belief in the community they felt they belonged to. The fact that all of the couples voted for Scottish independence and against Brexit further illustrated their strong relationship to the Scottish society. Along with being LGBTI, being older, and being a part of a couple, being Scottish in the sense that the participants described provided tools for imagining a Scottish utopia.

Imagining the future as utopian reflects both the socio-historical contexts of the places and times they were produced in (Bloch 1995) and uses the shared knowledge and experiences of individuals and groups imagining it. The participants in this research were not only situated in the same time at the time of our interviews, i.e. the present, but have also lived similar pasts, as was illustrated in Chapter IV. The shared experiences from their youth created an image of Scotland as utopia in the present, as well as in the future, as Rachel illustrated in the following extract:

> You see, that's where I think that's where Scotland and independence is different, because Scotland in outward-looking, the government is outward-looking, it's internationalist, it wants to welcome migrants, whereas this small Britain idea, isolationist like Trump and all that, 'we're British, we want to be British'.
> (Rachel, 58, second interview)

Returning to Bloch (1995), utopias are created by imagining a better version of the society that surrounds us, as shown in Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), in which he presented an imagined island society and its religious, social, and political customs. The inspiration for this island came from More's knowledge and observations of the society he lived in, i.e. 16th century England (Jovchelovitch and Hawlina 2018). In

addition to utilising the present in imaging the future, Jovchelovitch and Hawlina (2018) argue that "the foundations for building collective futures are mined from the collective past" (p. 136), emphasising the role of collective memories, traditions and mythologies in the construction of utopias. While this chapter explored the narratives about long-term futures, the stories that were presented here also show how utopias exist in the present as well. The future allows for more freedom in imagining it, as it contains possibilities that have not yet been realised in the present, but that seem possible because of the foundations that have been set in the past and the present (Adam 2010). The collective past, in the context of this research, produced the different ways in which the couples constructed their identities in relation to different social contexts they occupied. However, it was not only the temporal aspect that allowed for shared experiences to emerge, as was illustrated in Chapter IV. It was also the location where these experiences and identities were created, and, in the lives of these couples, it was Scotland that acted as a unifying entity of their different relationships.

4. Discussion and Conclusion: Construction of Utopia through Relational Belongings

This chapter presented the couples' narratives on the long-term futures. The main themes that emerged from the data included trust, fear and hope and these were illustrated through the narratives on children and younger generations, and the future of Scotland. The role of children in the couples' imagination of the long-term future was that of physical extensions of themselves through which they could imagine the future as a more real time and place. Even if they were not discussing their own

children, the couples expressed hope for the younger generations that would continue living in Scotland once the couples passed away. Another important aspect of using children and younger people in their imagination of the future was that the couples felt an obligation to work towards a better future, and not become complacent with the rights they were enjoying in the present. Living in Scotland allowed the couples to imagine an open and inclusive future that would be realised in the form of an imagined Scottish utopia. In this utopia, the younger people that would occupy the future would face greater equality and would not need to suffer discrimination as the couples might have had in the past. Apart from being a site of utopian imagination, Scotland also played a part in the construction of the participants' imagined relationship to the country and its citizens, which, along with the relationships mentioned so far, gave the participants the agency to create their own future.

The last relationship that all couples shared was that to the Scottish society. While this was not explicitly linked to nationality, the couples shared an idea of belonging to the Scottish society more than they did to the place they have lived in before and to the place where they were born, which was in most cases England. Being part of the society was expressed by sharing narratives of their wish to stay in Scotland for the rest of their lives and by framing their belonging through an 'us vs. them' narrative, once again based on othering England as a place where they could never imagine living. For some participants, living in Scotland presented not only a more optimistic prospect in light of present and future political events, but also placed them, at least in their imagination, in a superior position to those individuals living in other countries. This was mostly visible through stories about politics, and the idea that Scotland was both different from other countries' right-wing political movements, and that the

political leadership was more competent than in other places. Emily's argument that "we've got our little, fearless leader" encompassed both the feeling of belonging to the Scottish society (Emily was born in England), and the trust she and Gloria put into the Scottish political leadership, which was emphasised by using the pronoun 'we' to denote Emily's identification as Scottish. The narratives about being part of the Scottish society illustrate the fluidity of national identity and its construction not only from the point of view of the individuals claiming it, but also from the nation these individuals identify with and its acceptance of them as its citizens (McCrone and Bechhofer 2008).

Scotland also presented a bridge between the past, present and the future, as the participants experienced a number of political changes and witnessed the positive ways in which Scotland was advocating for its minorities. Even though there have been times when the fight for equality seemed to be going the wrong way, particularly with the rise of right-wing political parties around Europe, the couples were positive about the future of Scotland and of its citizens. This was mostly visible in the stories about the short- and long-term futures, which were explored in chapters V and VI. The narratives about the long-term future portrayed the participants' hopes for Scotland and illustrated the relational aspects of the participants' identities outlined so far. By constructing their interpersonal, collective, and imagined relationships, the participants created a collective knowledge (Sutton 2008) about the past and present, using this knowledge as building blocks for their imagined futures. The narratives explored in chapters IV, V and VI also illustrate the impact of Scotland's specific cultural and historical context on the participants' imagination of the future. Because of the events they witnessed during their lives, the couples felt that Scotland was a

good place for them, their children, and future generations to live, but this would not have been possible if they did not feel welcome in Scotland (McCrone & Bechhofer 2008).

Finally, Scotland allows for all four types of relationships to exist along each other. By ensuring equality through legal acts and institutional efforts, the LGBTI population feels protected and safe. While there are individuals and groups who still experience discrimination, the participants in this research believed that "society is not going to turn against minorities" (Alan, first interview), and this provided hope and trust for the present and the future. Belonging to a generation of older same-sex couples and LGBTI individuals in Scotland was, according to the narratives explored so far, better than sharing this generational effect in other places. Health services and medical prescriptions were free, winter fuel payment made it easier for older people to heat their homes, and the legal framework allowed people to stay in their own homes for longer. Likewise, the legal protection of married same-sex couples and those who were in civil partnerships, as well as adoption and anti-discrimination laws, made the same-sex couples in this research feel safe and protected from losing their rights. Even in cases where the couples were not married or in a civil partnership, they still felt confident in expressing their relationship publicly. In the end, for these couples, being Scottish incorporated all the benefits outlined above, even though they rarely focused on the bad sides. The lack of criticism towards Scotland was replaced by comparing it to different countries where they imagined they would not be treated as nicely. The only instances of distrust and fear were aimed at health institutions, the loss of independence, and retirement planning, as outlined in Chapter V, but there was still

hope in those narratives as well, as the couples' imagined that everything would be fine in the end.

Chapter VII: Conclusion

1. Introduction

The aim of this research was to explore how older same-sex couples, living in Scotland, imagined their future. The research question central to this thesis is *How do older same-sex couples navigate the intersections of sexuality and ageing in imagining their futures?* To explore this question, further questions were raised in relation to the reviewed literature and theoretical focus of the thesis: (1.1) What is the connection between the past, present, and future in the couples' accounts of their imagined future?; (1.2) How do interpersonal, collective and imagined relationships feature in the couples' narratives and what is their role in imagining the future?; (1.3) How do themes of historical time, generation and sexuality appear and intersect in their accounts? This chapter discusses how the research questions were addressed throughout the thesis and expands on the main findings of the research by presenting the conceptual and empirical contributions. The chapter then presents the limitations of the research, ending with recommendations for future research and practical implications of the thesis.

Chapter I introduced the research topic and outlined the importance of exploring the lived experiences of older same-sex couples in the contexts of both LGBTI studies and futures studies. The chapter then presented the historical and cultural contexts which framed the lives of the research participants. Contextualising the couples' lives within the legal, cultural and societal frameworks of the United Kingdom in the last 60 years presented a basis for generational belonging (Plummer 2010) which was explored in Chapter V through the collective relationship with older LGBTI individuals and same-

sex couples. By offering a review of relevant literature, Chapter II identified gaps in existing research that this thesis aimed to fill, further narrowing the focus on the intersection of sexuality and ageing in studying imagined futures. Chapter II also inspired the questions that were asked in the interviews, by focusing on existing research on LGBTI ageing and potential new avenues that would be addressed in this thesis, such as the roles of relationships in the couples' imagination of the future. Chapter III outlined the theoretical and practical processes which guided the data collection, and which, consequently, produced the narratives that were presented in this thesis. The data collection methods, semi-structured joint interviews and written accounts played a role in the construction of these narratives and in getting the nuances of the participants' lives that were key in the exploration of their past, present and future.

Chapters IV, V, and VI presented the research findings which emerged from the interviews and the participants' written accounts. The narratives in Chapter IV focused mostly on past events the participants emphasised as having an impact on their lives in the present, and on the visibility and legitimacy of their relationships, which were often reflected in the couples' narratives on same-sex marriage and civil partnerships. This chapter illustrated the connection between the past and the present, and the interpersonal and collective relationships the participants constructed with their partners and with the wider LGBTI community, respectfully. Chapter V, which explored narratives about choice, independence, and control in relation to the couples' short-term future, presented a collective relationship with other older individuals, specifically LGBTI people, who shared similar past experiences with the research participants. Finally, Chapter VI focused on fear, hope, and trust, and explored these

concepts through long-term future imaginations and, more specifically, through stories about children and younger generations and the future of Scotland. The chapter presented the couples' imagined relationship to the citizens of Scotland, and their self-identification as being part of the Scottish society. The narratives presented in all three data chapters addressed the research questions by presenting the link between the past, present and the future, illustrating the relationships the participants formed throughout their lives, and by exploring the impact of sexuality and older age on the imagination of the future.

2. Contributions

2.1. Conceptual

This thesis offers three conceptual contributions. The first contribution addresses research questions 1, *How do older same-sex couples navigate the intersections of sexuality and ageing in imagining their futures?* and 1.2, *How do interpersonal, collective, and imagined relationships feature in the couples' narratives and what is their role in imagining the future?* The second section focuses on research question 1.1, *What is the connection between the past, present, and future in the couples' narratives of their imagined future?* Finally, the third section addresses research question 1.3, *How do themes of historical time, generation, and sexuality appear and intersect in their accounts?*, through a critique of the successful ageing concept (Rowe and Kahn 1997; 2015).

2.1.1. Intersection of Sexuality and Ageing in Imagining the Futures

Challenging the idea that both older and LGBTI people have no future (Edelman 2004), this thesis offered narratives that illustrated the opposite. As Chapters V and VI argued, the future is as real to the couples in this research as are the present and the past. The narratives that were presented in relation to the couples' imagination of the short- and long-term futures offer an insight into how they construct their futures and why they do so in particular ways. Returning to the point made in Chapter II, Section 4.3., studying the way in which people imagine their future also requires an exploration of the social changes they experienced in their past and present (Adam and Groves 2007). The political campaigns, legal advances, and other events which revolved around LGBTI rights the couples participated in, read about, or had knowledge of, impacted the way they imagined their future. Because they experienced oppression and stigmatisation in their youth as members of the LGBTI community (de Vries 2015), they did not want to see it happen again, and they actively participated in creating a better future for younger generations. The fact that the world will go on after the couples' death was the reason to use their agency in the present and hopefully help in preventing history repeating itself. Their motivation to actively participate in the construction of their own, and other people's, futures, emerged from an intersection of interpersonal, collective, and imagined relationships the couples formed throughout their lives.

Chapter IV outlined the interpersonal relationships of the participants as couples and the collective relationship to the LGBTI community. The couple relationships illustrated the connections between the past, present and future as the participants shared stories of how they met, how they live in the present, and how they imagined

their future together. The joint construction of the future was a result of the relationship practices the couple shared so far, considering each other as a point of stability and a lasting venture (Gabb and Fink 2015) that made the future less uncertain. The participants also formed collective relationships to the LGBTI community by imagining a group that shared knowledge available only to those individuals who participated in specific political, cultural and social movements, sharing a temporal belonging (May 2017) – living through social change of the last 60 years – as well as a spatial one (Fromby 2017) – living in Scotland and the United Kingdom. The relationship the participants formed with older people, as outlined in Chapter V, was also established through shared experiences of ageing and social change (May and Muir 2015), and it narrowed down their sense of belonging to a specific community, positioning them within a generation of older LGBTI individuals and same-sex couples. Finally, Chapter VI presented the imagined relationship the participants built with Scotland and the Scottish citizens (Anderson 1991). All the relationships mentioned above intersect with each other throughout the participants' lives, creating a distinct experience of the past and the present, and providing the participants with the tools to imagine the future as utopian (Bloch 1995), and to be active agents in its construction (Adam and Groves 2007; Adam 2010).

2.1.2. Studying the Past, Present and Future in the Context of LGBTI Ageing

The second conceptual contribution draws on the findings presented in chapters V and VI, offering a critique of Edelman's (2004) argument that thinking about and imagining the future almost always includes the notion that the children are the future. This way of thinking about the future was visible in the narratives shared by the participants who had children, as they imagined their future through them. Even the

participants who did not have children of their own imagined the future as occupied by younger generations. While this imagination of the future through children is in favour of Edelman's (2004) argument, it goes against his idea that the queer individual cannot occupy the future because of their lack of reproductive drive. What allows this group of participants to occupy the temporal and spatial aspects of the future are their experiences from the past. Because of heteronormativity and chrononormativity, some of the participants were pressured into conforming to societal norms, such as getting married, starting a family, and having children. Their experiences place the participants between the two worlds, framing the future through their own children and committing to it because of their LGBTI identity.

Conceptually then, it is key to think about older individuals as part of the future, and to change the grand narrative of the future being a young person's domain (Sandberg 2015). In order to do so, studying the future should involve an exploration of the past, the present, and the different relationships individuals form with each other, with different groups, and with imagined communities throughout their lives, as outlined in the previous section. Through the presentation of narratives in Chapters IV, V and VI, this thesis demonstrated how past and present lived experiences constructed hopes and fears for the future. The narratives also illustrated the fluidity and subjective perception of the flow of time by the participants' reconceptualization of the past to fit into the present (Jackson 2010). The way the couples imagined the future, particularly in the form of a Scottish utopia, reflected a hope that the younger generations would not have to go through the same hardships as they did, directly linking the past to the future. As

the number of older same-sex couples who have children increases[10], new ways of imagining the future will develop, further emphasising the need for studying present social changes, and opening avenues for new research.

2.1.3. The Subjective Experience of Later Life

The third conceptual contribution of this thesis offers a critique to the successful ageing concept as proposed by Rowe and Kahn (1997; 2015). As was explained in Chapter II, Section 2.1, successful ageing is a model of ageing developed by Rowe and Kahn in 1997. Some of the main critiques of the model argue that it is exclusionary and does not take the subjective ageing experience into consideration (Martinson and Berridge 2015). In short, the successful ageing model stipulates that, in order to age successfully, an individual is expected to be healthy, have a high physical and cognitive functional capacity, and to be actively engaged with life (Rowe and Kahn 1997). Failure to follow these 'guidelines' leads to unsuccessful ageing, implying, on the one hand, that individuals have complete autonomy over their physical and mental health, and, on the other, that a certain trajectory, preferably a hetero- and chrononormative one, needs to be followed throughout the life course in order to create a successful older age. Not following such a life path should, at least in theory, result in an isolated and lonely older age, with an abundance of both physical and mental illnesses. However, as the findings show, there are other ways of doing age which do not necessarily conform to the successful ageing concept but are nevertheless positively experienced by the ageing individual.

[10] As well as LGBTI older people, the number of same-sex couples who are getting married and having children of their own in the present will rise in the future (Gates 2015; Fredriksen-Goldsen 2016).

Exploring the lives of the couples in this research has produced insight into the ways they do age and the ways they manage their relationships and day-to-day activities, as well as how they imagine these aspects of their lives will continue in the future. While successful ageing (Rowe and Kahn 1997) can be applied to certain aspects of the participants' lives, such as engaging in social activities, or having a wide circle of friends and family in their older age, it is by no means an adequate model for studying the ageing LGBTI population (Fabbre 2015). In light of the findings of this research and the identified issues with the successful ageing model, this thesis argues that there is a need for a new approach to studying LGBTI ageing, which, as Caceres and Frank (2016, p. 190) explain, should be "a subjective and multifactorial concept that is characterised by support from families of origin/families of choice, access to LGB-friendly services and the development of crisis competence skills". This research presented the narratives of older same-sex couples to illustrate the importance of understanding the subjective perceptions of LGBTI lived experiences and their implications for later life (Stowe and Cooney 2015), instead of prescribing the 'correct' way to age successfully. Through the exploration of lived experiences of older same-sex couples, this research supports the argument for a different approach to studying LGBTI ageing by presenting the importance of the intersection of historical time, generation, and sexuality in building a subjective ageing experience around them, rather than using their narratives to determine how successful or unsuccessful they were in the ageing process.

2.2. Empirical

The thesis offers two empirical contributions that emerged from the data and that reflect two different aspects of the lives of the research participants. The first

contribution illustrates the process of the joint construction of the couples' lives in the present and future. The second contribution reflects the extent to which older same-sex couples are a still invisible population in empirical and theoretical studies on ageing.

2.2.1. Joint Constructions of the Future

Placing the focus on the couple instead of the individual offered an insight into how close relationships and a joint construction of the couples' daily lives impact the imagination of their future. As Valentine (1999) explains, members of the same household "mutually define themselves" (p. 68) through their everyday interactions, and the couples in this research demonstrated this by telling stories about their shared experiences, and by challenging and complementing each other's narratives. The joint construction of past events and present experiences created a reality in which both partners participated with their own knowledge, and it allowed them to imagine the future as a couple instead of two individuals, and to share that jointly constructed imagination with the researcher. Imagining their future as a couple was often followed by discussions on issues they might face later in life, such as retirement, care, and death, but because both partners were participating in these discussions, more options were brought forward and each partner's ideas were taken into account (Osamor and Grady 2018). As was mentioned in Section 2.1.1 above, the interpersonal relationship of each couple was a basis for their jointly constructed future. The couples imagined their current relationships extending into the future, and, as well as through joint interviews, they presented this relational aspect of their imagination in their written accounts, by sharing their ideas with each other and using them as a tool for reflexivity (Gabb 2008).

2.2.2. The Invisible Population

This thesis further problematised the invisibility of the older LGBTI population. As was outlined in Chapter II, existing research on LGBTI ageing explores potential issues in approaching the older members of that community (Westwood 2013b; McCormack 2014), most of which were encountered and challenged in this research as well. Due to the experiences from their youth, many older same-sex couples might not be out in public, resulting in lower engagement with NGOs or other groups, both online and offline. Apart from having a direct consequence on this research in a participant sample of seven couples, the invisibility of older same-sex couples and LGBTI individuals might result in the negation of their experiences in formal care settings (Westwood 2016), lack of support in more remote areas (Levin and Leyland 2006; Lee and Quam 2013), and further development of negative stereotypes and discrimination aimed at that population (Sargeant 2009; Fredriksen-Goldsen et al. 2015). Despite the inclusive environment of Scotland today, there are still groups who do not feel comfortable, safe, or included, and the differences in sexual identity, gender and age might make them wary of participating in different research. This thesis emphasised the need to focus on past experiences when approaching the older LGBTI population in order to better understand their present and future, and hopefully to serve as a basis for developing methods and approaches that would help in reaching this population by understanding the entirety of their lived experiences.

3. Limitations

One of the limitations of this research was the relatively low number of participants. As was explored in Chapter I, there are theoretical limitations to studying the ageing

LGBTI population, such as an assumption of heterosexuality in older age (Calasanti and Slevin 2001), and empirical ones, which mostly revolve around access to the population, and the discrepancy between the researcher and the research participants (Westwood 2013b). The couples who participated in this research are technologically educated, have access to a computer, the Internet and social media, are out in public, and, in some cases, have already broadcast their relationship via television, radio, or written media, as was the case with Alan and Jeff. Because of such a specific sample, the experiences of older same-sex couples who are not out in public, not engaged with NGOs or support groups, who might have lower income and live in disadvantaged areas are not presented in this research. However, the narratives presented in this research point to a specific generation of older same-sex couples whose imagination of the future was impacted not only by their sexuality and age, but by their socio-economic status, education, and public engagement. While this thesis attempted to give a voice to an invisible population, it only succeeded in this endeavour partially, not presenting the experiences of those who might have needed it more.

Another potential limitation is linked to the thesis focusing on the couple, instead of the individual. While the aim of this thesis was to explore how couples jointly constructed their futures and told stories about their lives, including individuals who were not in relationships could have presented different experiences and offered a comparative dimension to the thesis. Reaching out to older LGBTI individuals might have pointed to different concerns and hopes about their future, particularly in relation to isolation, loneliness and other issues couples might not experience. Furthermore, as Braybrook et al. (2017) argue, offering the couples a choice between being interviewed together or separately might aid recruitment, as it might be easier to get one person,

instead of both partners, to agree to an interview. Nevertheless, the conceptual and empirical contributions of this thesis strongly relied on joint interviews as this method revealed how the past, present and future are jointly constructed by the couple. These considerations could be further developed in future research projects.

4. Areas of Future Research and Practical Implications of the Thesis

As this research did, any future research into LGBTI ageing will have to grapple with the difficulties in recruiting older same-sex couples, and work towards creating a safe environment in which these participants will not feel threatened or in danger of their sexual identity being disclosed without their consent. As discussed in the empirical contributions, this thesis provides several novelties in its approach to the older LGBTI population. Further work should build on lessons learnt and aim to develop recruitment and research methods that would further aid in recruiting older same-sex couples. As McCormack (2014) explains in his research on bisexual men, researchers should use innovative methods to access populations which might be difficult to reach. While he and his colleagues approached bisexual men in public places, and had success in recruiting a good-size sample, applying the same recruitment strategy to this research would not yield the same results, as most of the couples said they did not go out as much, but rather spent their time at home, on holiday, and in work-related settings. One avenue of future research is therefore to develop recruitment strategies that would reach a wider audience of older same-sex couples.

Another avenue for future research could consider different national contexts in studies of LGBTI ageing. As this thesis explored the Scottish context, future research could investigate imagined futures in other countries, both those with similar cultural and

historical backgrounds, and those where being LGBTI, and especially a gay man, might still be illegal or where same-sex couples and LGBTI individuals are at more risk of stigmatisation and discrimination. Exploring different national contexts could also illuminate the intersection of other aspects of individuals' identity, such as ethnicity, religion, political beliefs, with gender, sexuality and ageing. Explorations of different cultural and historical contexts during the life course could present new discussions on relationships, identity construction and the ageing process. Finally, it might be useful to compare the imagined futures of younger and older LGBTI people to get a more in-depth account of the experiences of sexual minorities, and to hopefully start a conversation between different generations, which would bridge the intergenerational gap and provide a better understanding of the sources of ageism, both towards the older and the younger populations.

4.1. Practical Implications

While this thesis did not aim to make empirical generalisations about older same-sex couples in Scotland, due to its qualitative and small-scale nature (Lewis and Ritchie 2003), some practical implications can nevertheless be drawn from the data. The concerns expressed by the participants about their short-term futures were directly linked to their sexuality. Whether these concerns stemmed from past experiences, or were based in the present context, they all translated into fear of a heterosexist future. As a consequence, the couples might imagine their future lived experiences being obscured by heteronormativity, and, as a potential final resort, some of the participants might go back into the closet (de Vries and Gutman 2016). Their experiences and concerns can be used to inform current and future development of care homes, and to

place more attention on the variety of lived experiences of the ageing LGBTI population in Scotland.

Other dimensions of the participants' identities played a part in the imagination of the short-term future as well. For example, the fact that the participants lived in Scotland, and imagined staying here for the rest of their lives, gave them comfort in knowing that they would be able to access health and care services for free. The couples' decision not to move out of Scotland in the future reflected their positive experiences with the Scottish government, its citizens, and the overall political climate. The feeling of security the participants felt for their future in Scotland was often compared to the political and legislative situation in England, and, as explored in Chapter VI, Scotland presented a country in which the political leadership revolved around ensuring a better quality of life for its citizens. The positive legal changes and policies developing in the Scottish context could serve as a blueprint for other parts of the United Kingdom, with an aim of furthering inclusivity and diversity of the ageing population.

This thesis offered a glimpse into the lives of older-same sex couples in Scotland. Through the exploration of the stories about their past, present and future, the thesis illustrated the imagination and construction of the couples' futures, offering a holistic approach to studying LGBTI ageing. Even though the sample was small, it does not make the couples' stories any less relevant. By hearing and analysing these stories from a sociological perspective, the thesis provided insight into the needs, hopes, concerns, and fears of the older same-sex couples of Scotland. Returning to the quote at the very beginning of Chapter I, the thesis also emphasised the need to explore the past in the construction of the present and the future, and to think about the fluidity and subjectivity of time when studying imagined futures.

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Appendix I – Couples' Biographies

Fred (65) and Robert (76)

At the time of our first interview in 2016, Fred and Robert have been together for 26 years. They met in a gay club in England in 1990 and have been together ever since. They have lived in Scotland since 2000 and moved to their current apartment a little less than two years ago. Fred and Robert had a blessing ceremony conducted by a priest from the Metropolitan Community Church, before civil partnership and same-sex marriage were possible in both England and Scotland. They registered for civil partnership in 2005, and, as Fred recalls, "that happened on the first day we could to it, which was the 21st December 2005". As soon as the equal marriage law came to Scotland, they converted their civil partnership into a marriage, which, as they explained, is important in terms of the legal protection they get from being married. Fred and Robert live in the North of Scotland, and while they enjoy their home, they expressed some concerns about the location which mostly included large distances, the inability to travel and see their family as often as they would like, and a dispersed network of other LGBTI people. Fred enjoys reading and writing, and regularly publishes his short stories in various outlets. Robert described himself as the main cook and gardener, and both hoped to continue doing these things for as long as possible, while staying in their own home in their later life.

Alan (70) and Jeff (63)

Alan and Jeff have been together for 16 years at the time of our interview. They met online in 2000 and chatted for a while before meeting in person. Jeff was living in

England when he and Alan, who was living in Scotland, decided to meet for the first time. When Jeff arrived in Scotland, he had a feeling that this relationship "was gonna be right" for them. As Robert and Fred, before civil partnership was available, Alan and Jeff wanted their relationship to be recognised by their family and friends. They had a commitment ceremony in their home, with their family and friends present. Even though there was no official person to sign any formal documents, the commitment ceremony was of great importance to them, because they wanted to dedicate their lives to each other. Jeff referred to the ceremony as the first of three stages in their relationship, the second one being civil partnership, and the third marriage. When civil partnership became an option in 2005, Alan and Jeff argue they were the first couple "in this area of Scotland, probably in Scotland, to have a civil partnership". Alan argued that Jeff is better with money and budgeting, as well as cooking, and they both explained that being in a relationship made them attuned to the other person's needs to the extent that they can agree on things without talking.

Sarah (61) and Jane (56)

Sarah and Jane met at an event in the lesbian and gay centre and have been together for 19 years at the time of the interviews. They were both in heterosexual marriages before they came out, and they have children from those marriages (Jane has two, and Sarah three). They registered for civil partnership and got married as soon as it was possible in Scotland. They are both self-employed, and mostly work from their home. As part of their wedding vows they decided to spend one night a month away from home, creating time for themselves as a couple. In the future, they would like to stay in their own home for as long as possible, but they also considered an option of selling

their house and buying something smaller if they needed it. Sarah and Jane take care of each other's chronical illnesses by living a healthy lifestyle and taking time off work when they need it. They enjoy eating out, going on holiday to less known places, doing craftwork and spending time with their dog and children.

Emily (77) and Gloria (58)

Emily and Gloria have been together for 17 years. They met during a quiz night in an LGBT centre, and before they became a couple, they were both members of a non-governmental organisation for human rights. They have participated in various political events, such as repealing Section 28, and advocating for immigrant rights. They live apart together and are not married or in a civil partnership. They value their independence most of all, and having separate apartments suits them both. Gloria usually spends her weekends in Emily's flat, as Gloria's flat is smaller. Emily has six children, and Gloria considers them as her own. Gloria enjoys running and has participated in several marathons and races around Scotland, and Emily likes walking to the Botanical Gardens and advocating for human rights. They both hope to live together in the future, in a mixed-sex, LGBTI accommodation that would allow them to maintain their independence, but to have someone to ask for help if they needed it.

Rachel (58) and Kathy (57)

Rachel and Kathy have been together for four years at the time of our interviews. They met in an NGO they both visited, and at first did not think of each other as potential partners, even though, as they explained, they were both looking to start dating again.

Like Emily and Gloria, Rachel and Kathy live apart together in two different cities and argue that the distance is good for their relationship as they have a limited amount of time when they see each other so they try to make the best of it. When they are not together, they support each other by sending text messages and talking on the phone. They enjoy visiting museum and galleries, and going to concerts, as well as performing their poetry on open mic nights in different venues. They do not plan to get married or get civil partnership, but they have appointed each other power of attorney to make them the primary decision-makers in case of illness or death. Kathy has two children, a daughter and a son, who is not very supportive of her sexual identity and relationship with Rachel. Despite this, Kathy and Rachel both believe that having each other for support is the best thing that has happened to them.

William (65) and Peter (36)

William and Peter have been together for six years and have met through an online dating service. As Peter explains, what began as a purely physical relationship quickly evolved into something more, and two year later they decided to get married. They spent six weeks on their honeymoon, which was also a time for them to get to know each other and have some time off from work. The age difference has never been an issue, and they never experienced any negative comments because of it. Peter's parents are very welcoming of William, and they often go on holidays together. William enjoys going to the gym and spending time outdoors, while Peter is content with staying in and watching movies. Both of them are open to new experiences, and they often encourage each other to try new things. Peter hopes William will retire soon so he can slow down and enjoy life, but William has no plans to do that in the near future.

When they are not travelling around the country, or participating in adventurous sports, they like to watch movies and talk about their next holidays.

Sharon (64) and Anna (46)

Sharon and Anna met in their workplace and have been together for 25 years. At the time when they began their relationship, Anna moved in with Sharon as a friend, and over time they became a couple. Neither of them ever came out, and they do not label themselves in any way. They explained that their relationship organically developed, and nobody was concerned about it. They got married a couple of months before our first interview and realised that was the first time some family members have seen them kiss. Sharon has one child, and several grandchildren, and they often spend the weekends with their grandmothers. The age difference played a part when they thought about the future, as Sharon believed she would predecease Anna. However, she was also aware that if Anna died first, she would look for another partner because she knew life went on. Sharon likes working around the garden and going on holidays in Scotland, and Anna is more inclined to spend time indoors. They both plan to live in Scotland for the rest of their lives, and to stay in their own home for as long as possible.

Appendix II – Participant Information

Personal information (to be filled out while obtaining informed consent, prior to the first interview, by each partner individually):

- Age: _____
- Gender: _____
- Occupation: _____
- Nationality: _____
- Level of education: _____
- How long have you been living in Scotland? _____
- What is your relationship status? _____
    - (civil union; married; cohabiting; living apart together)
- How long have you been in your current relationship? _____
- Do you have any children? _____

Appendix III – Interview Guide 1

INTERVIEW 1

Life (past and present):

- How long have you lived here (house; neighbourhood; town)? What is it like?
- Can you tell me a little bit about your relationship?
    - For example, when and where did you meet?
    - How long have you been together?
    - Are you married/in a civil partnership? What are the reasons for that?
- What do you like to do together?
- Can you tell me a little bit about who is around for you, both as individuals and as a couple? Friends? Family?
    - Can you tell me what kind of relationship you have with your biological family?
    - Is your local community supportive to same-sex couples? (e.g. do you encounter discrimination anywhere, are local policies tailored in favour of same-sex couples?)
- What was your experience of "coming out"? Do people other than your partner know about your sexual orientation?

Future:

- When you hear the word "future", what's the first thing that comes to your mind?
- How do you imagine your future?
    - Are there any things you look forward to in the future (e.g. leisure, hobbies, travelling)?
    - What about things that worry you (e.g. discrimination, finance, care)?
- Are there any reasons why you imagine your future the way you do?

End

- Do you have anything you'd like to add, any questions or comments?

Appendix IV – Interview Guide 2

INTERVIEW 2

Thank you for meeting me again. To start, I'd like to ask you about the exercise you did during this time between the interviews:

- How did you find it? Were there any difficulties or some questions that were unclear? Did the questions make you think about some new thing concerning your future? If so, which ones?
- How similar or different were your and your partner's answers? Why?

Let's talk about the ideas of your imagined future:

- When you thought about your future, did you think about particular things, or was it more general? If you thought about particular things what were they?
    - Prompt: like health, housing, retirement, etc.,
- Can you tell me why you chose this way to present your future?
- Can you explain what this text/drawing/picture/poem/etc. means to you?

Now I'll ask you about some concepts that might be connected to the future:

- What does the word retirement mean to you?
    - **If not yet retired**: How do you imagine your retirement? Have you already made some plans about when or where to retire? Are you making these decisions individually or as a couple? Why?
    - **If already retired**: Did you imagine your life in retirement the way it is now or was it different when you thought about it? In what way? Who made the decisions on when and where to retire?
- If you or your partner couldn't look after each other in the future, who would you first turn to? Would you prefer to have a friend or family member look after you or would you be happy with a formal care institution? (Such as sheltered housing; residential homes; long term care centres) Why?
    - **If living in a care centre/retirement community**: Did you imagine your life here would be like it is now? What did you imagine differently?

- Thinking about your life in a same-sex couple, can you tell me if there is anything you would like to see change in the future on the policy level? For example, the availability of information about health and housing services, or some changes in the legal system?
- Did you know that Britain's first LGBT friendly retirement community is planned to open in 2019? Would you consider living there? Why/why not?
- Scotland's been voted the best country for LGBT equality for the second year in a row. Do you agree with that? Would your experiences support this or not? Can you tell me more about those experiences?

Great, thank you for participating in my research. Is there anything you would like to add, any comments or questions?

Appendix V – Information Sheet

Research on Imagined Futures of Same-sex Couples

Information sheet for research participants

I would like to invite you and your partner to participate in my research, in which I will explore how same-sex couples imagine their life in the future. I am doing this research as part of a PhD programme in Sociology, at the Universtiy of Edinburgh. Your participation will help me in developing the research, but before you and your partner decide to take part, it is important that both of you understand what the research is about and what taking part involves. Please take time to read the following information carefully and do ask questions if anything you read is unclear or if you would like more information.

1. What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of the research is to explore how same-sex couples in Scotland imagine their future and it is also an opportunity to learn more about same-sex relationships after the 2014 legalization of same-sex marriage in Scotland.

2. Who will participate?

The participants are same-sex couples who live in Scotland at the time of the interview. At least one of the partners has to be over 55. over I will be interviewing both partners together.

3. Do I have to take part?

You can decide on this after you and your partner read this information sheet and ask any questions you might have. If you decide not to participate, just let me know. You can change your mind at any time.

4. What will happen if I participate?

If you chose to participate in this research, I will ask you and your partner to meet me for two interviews, three of four weeks apart, in a place you choose. I expect the interviews to last around one hour. Between the interviews I will also ask both of you note down some thoughts on how you imagine your future.

5. What will the interviews be about?

The interviews will be informal – they are a chance for me to hear about your experiences, so there are no right or wrong answers. The first interview will be about

your life and current relationship. We will also talk a little bit about your future, so you and your partner get an idea of what the project is about. The second interview will be more focused on your future. Both of the interviews will include questions about your sexual orientation and relationship, but if any questions cause discomfort, you don't have to answer them.

6. What will I have to do between the interviews?

I would like you and your partner to note down some ideas about your imagined future in a notebook I will give you. This way, both of you will know what the other person put down and you can discuss the notebook together. You can write about your imagined future, draw, paint, make a collage, or take photos and videos with your phone or camera - the way in which you imagine your future and present it to me is completely up to you.

7. Who will see or listen to what we will be talking about in the interviews?

I will record the interviews so I can transcribe them and use them in my research. I will be the only one who will listen to the audio recordings and read the transrcripts. As part of the PhD dissertation and any other presentation of results, I may use something you said and quote it in the research. Anything you say will be anonymised – this means that no one will be able to identify you. Everything you tell me will only be used by me, and all our interviews will be stored in a secure location that only I can access.

8. What if I change my mind in the middle of the interviews?

I don't anticipate that the questions will cause you or your partner any difficulty or emotional distress, but if any of them does, please just let me know. You don't need to answer any of the questions you don't want to. If you decide that you don't want to participate in the research anymore, that's fine too. You or your partner can decide to stop participating at any time. If that should happen, you will no longer be involved in the research because I need to interview both partners together.

Contact information

You will be interviewed by **Dora Jandric**. The information I collect during the interviews and from your personal representations will be used as a part of my doctoral thesis under the supervision of **Professor Lynn Jamieson**. The results of the study could be used for academic publications, in public presentations, and in other media.

If you have any further questions about the research, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor:

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Appendix VI – Consent Form

Consent form

Research on Imagined Futures of Same-sex Couples

Please read this form carefully and tick all the boxes you agree with. Write your name in capitals and sign at the bottom of the page. Thank you.

1. I confirm that I have read the information sheet and understood what the research is about, and I had a chance to ask questions about the research. ☐
2. I agree to be interviewed. ☐
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason. ☐

4. I give my permission for the interview to be recorded and transcribed for the purpose of conducting this research. ☐
5. I am willing for anonymised summaries of this interview to be used as part of the research. ☐
6. I understand that anonymised extracts from this interview may appear in publications relevant to this area of research. ☐
7. I give my permission to archive the interview data, which will be anonymised, for secondary use. ☐

You have received a copy of the information sheet to keep. By signing this form, you agree to participate in the study described in the information sheet.

…… ……..

(Name of person giving consent) **(Signature)**

……...

(Date)

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