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FAMILY AND FRIENDS
IN THE EARLY YEARS OF MARRIAGE:

RELATEDNESS, TEMPORALITY,
AND OVERLAPPING INTIMACIES

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ABSTRACT

In this doctoral dissertation, I examine relationships with friends and family amongst men and women who live in a specific setting: early years of their first (heterosexual) marriage. In recent decades, different ways of living in close relationships and in a variety of family forms have become more visible in public discourse. In sociological research on family and personal relationships, interest has grown in the personal experiences and understandings of family. However, little effort has gone into attempting to understand personal views on family amongst those who live in institutionally conventional settings: married heterosexual couples with or without children.

In this study, I look beyond the institutional setting of marriage, with or without children, and scrutinise personal understandings of family and experiences of friendship and sibling relationships. In doing so, I examine whether the institutional setting of marriage, with or without children, produces specific understandings of family and, furthermore, what kinds of variation in the views on family this setting allows. In addition, I examine how family and friends are part of people's lives during this specific life stage of family formation. I ask: How are friends and siblings involved in people's everyday lives, and how are relationships to them considered significant?

Recent studies on families and close relationships have often focused on lived relationships instead of institutional definitions, thereby highlighting individual choice as shaping personal relationships. At the same time, relationships amongst family and kin continue to be shaped by family traditions and the specific cultural context alongside a sense of responsibility that evolves over long periods of time. In this qualitative study, I examine how these two lines of thought intertwine in people's understandings of who makes up their family and how friends and family are a part of people's lives. People living in the setting of a married couple are often expected to cherish traditional views of family instead of more individualistic views. I examine empirically to what extent and how the specific institutional setting of a married couple, with or without children, shapes individuals' experiences of family and friendship relationships.

The theoretical framework of the study is provided by the (con)figurational approach (Castrén, 2001; Widmer et al., 2008) on personal relationships, based on Elias's (1970/1978) sociological thoughts on the figurations of interconnected relationships; the concept of relatedness; contemporary understanding of intimacy; and temporality as an approach to study relationships. The sociological

research problem concerns relatedness, defined by Carsten (2000) as being intrinsic to each other's lives, whether there is a genealogical connection or not. I investigate how relatedness amongst family and friends comes into being. I approach this research problem in sub-studies I, II, and III, respectively, from the perspectives of 1) personal understandings of family; 2) friendships as lived relationships; and 3) sibling relationships experienced specifically as part of a family figuration.

The research participants consist of 32 women and men from 16 married couples, aged 26 to 41. From these 16 couples, 12 have children. The couples live in Finland, primarily in the metropolitan area of Helsinki. Methodologically, I combine multiple datasets to analyse personal understandings of family and accounts of lived relationships. Firstly, the primary data consist of 32 individual research interviews. Secondly, Family Network Method was used to gather information on interviewees' personal understandings of family. Thirdly, questionnaire data mapping couples' shared networks of relationships provide information on each interviewee's particular figuration of relationships.

The study consists of three articles and a summary section. In the summary section, I draw from the results of the sub-studies and discuss them using a theoretical framework that combines figurations, intimacy, temporality, and relatedness. The results show that relationships with family and friends can be equally significant in people's everyday lives. However, I demonstrate that intimacy, as well as tensions within family and friendship relations, are differently connected both to other relationships and to temporality.

Finally, this study contributes to the contemporary understanding of relatedness—namely, how people form a significant part of each other's lives—as a result of intertwined genealogical connections, individual preferences, and collective memory. I suggest that, while the nucleus of family, spouse, and children remains uncontested amongst women and men during the early years of marriage, beyond that, understandings of family are flexible and follow multiple logics. The ways in which people relate to their closest ones vary and remain multidimensional beyond the institutional settings of marriage and the nuclear family.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tässä tutkimuksessa tarkastelen perhe- ja ystävyyssuhteita ensimmäisen (hetero)avioliiton alkuvuosina. Viime vuosikymmenten aikana julkisessa keskustelussa on enenevässä määrin tuotu esiin ydinperheestä poikkeavia perhemuotoja ja tapoja elää läheissuhteissa. Sosiologisen perhetutkimuksen piirissä kiinnostus ihmisten henkilökohtaisiin kokemuksiin ja käsityksiin perheestä on pitkään ollut kasvussa. Vähemmälle huomiolle ovat kuitenkin tällöin jääneet juuri niiden kokemukset, jotka elävät institutionaalisesta näkökulmasta konventionaalisessa, jopa normatiivisessa perhetilanteessa eli heteroseksuaalisessa avioliitossa.

Tutkimuksessani tarkastelen, millaisia ovat avioliitossa elävien käsitykset perheestä sekä heidän kokemuksensa ystävyys- ja sisarussuhteista osana arkielämää ja läheissuhteiden verkostoa. Tarkastelen, tuottaako avioliitossa eläminen (tai ydinperheessä, sikäli kun pariskunnalla on lapsi) tietynlaisia käsityksiä perheestä sekä sitä, millaisen perhekäsitysten variaation avioliitossa eläminen mahdollistaa. Lisäksi analysoin, millaisin tavoin perhe, suku ja ystävät asettuvat osaksi ihmisten arkielämää perheenperustamisen vaiheessa.

Viimeaikainen perhe- ja läheissuhteisiin keskittyvät tutkimus on usein kohdistunut elettyihin suhteisiin institutionaalisten määritelmien sijaan, jolloin yksilöllisen valinnan merkitys on korostunut yhtenä henkilökohtaisten suhteiden määrittäjänä. Perhe- ja sukulaisuussuhteita kuitenkin edelleen muovaavat perhetraditiot, pitkän ajan kuluessa kehittyvä velvollisuudentunne sekä kulttuurinen konteksti. Tässä laadullisessa tutkimuksessa analysoin, miten yksilöllisyyttä korostava näkökulma ja toisaalta perheyhteyttä ja genealogista sukulaisuutta korostava näkökulma lomittuvat ihmisten perhekäsityksissä sekä siinä, miten ystävät ja sisarukset ovat osa heidän elämäänsä. Avioliiton ja ydinperheen ajatellaan usein tarkoittavan, että sellaisissa elävien ihmisten käsitykset perheestä ovat voimakkaasti sidoksissa juuri kyseiseen institutionaaliseen määritelmään, ei niinkään yksilöllisiin valintoihin. Pureudun tutkimuksessani siihen, missä määrin ja millä tavalla avioliittoinstituutiossa eläminen määrittää yksilöiden omia käsityksiä perhe- ja ystävyyssuhteista.

Tutkimuksen teoreettinen viitekehys nojaa yhtäältä Norbert Eliasin sosiologiseen ajatteluun pohjaavaan konfigurationaaliseen näkökulmaan ja toisaalta antropologian ja sosiologian piirissä käytyyn keskusteluun sukulaisuudesta ja yhteenkuulumisesta. Lisäksi hyödynnän temporaalisuuden näkökulmaa sekä läheisyyden tutkimusta. Keskeinen tutkimuskysymys käsittelee yhteenkuulumista, sitä, että ihmiset ovat tavalla tai toisella olennainen osa toistensa elämää. Toisinaan yhteenkuulumisen taustalla on genealoginen

sukulaisuussuhde, toisinaan ei. Tarkastelen tutkimusongelmaa kolmessa osatutkimuksessa keskittyen 1) henkilökohtaisiin käsityksiin siitä, keitä perheeseen kuuluu, 2) ystävyyteen elettyinä suhteina ja 3) sisarussuhteisiin osana laajempaa perhesuhteiden muodostelmaa.

Tutkimukseen osallistui 16 pääkaupunkiseudulla asuvaa avioparia, (32 naista ja miestä), joista 12 parilla oli lapsia. Iältään he olivat 26–41-vuotiaita. Tutkimuksen pääaineisto koostuu 32 tutkimushaastattelusta. Ensimmäisessä osatutkimuksessa hyödynnettiin Family Network Method - tutkimusmenetelmällä kerättyä aineistoa, jonka avulla saatiin tietoa haastateltavien perhekäsityksistä. Lisäksi tutkimuksen osallistujilta kerätyn sosiaalisia verkostoja koskevan lomakeaineiston avulla saatiin tietoa kunkin haastateltavan sosiaalisten suhteiden muodostelmasta.

Tutkimus koostuu kolmesta tutkimusartikkelista sekä yhteenvedosta. Yhteenvedossa tuon esiin osatutkimusten keskeiset tulokset ja pohdin niitä yhteenkuulumisen, temporaalisuuden, läheisyyden ja läheissuhteiden muodostelman eli figuraation näkökulmista. Tulokset osoittavat, että perheellistymisen vaihetta elävien elämään mahtuu useita läheisiä ihmissuhteita niin perhe- kuin ystäväpiiristäkin. Osoitan tutkimuksessa kuitenkin, että suhteet ystäviin ja sisaruksiin eroavat toisistaan ensinnäkin siinä, että sisarussuhteet ovat sidoksissa muihin perhe- ja sukulaisuussuhteisiin. Toiseksi niiden läheisyys rakentuu perheyhteisön kollektiiviseen muistin varaan. Nämä kytkökset tekevät niistä kestäviä ja sitkeitä. Ystävyyssuhteissa läheisyys sen sijaan muodostuu erilaisella mekanismilla ja voi olla kahden ystävyksen välistä.

Tutkimukseni osallistuu yhteenkuulumista käsittelevään tutkimuskeskusteluun tuomalla uudenlaista tietoa siitä, miten perhe- ja ystävyyssuhteet järjestyvät osaksi arkielämää temporaalisuuden avulla. Yhteenkuuluminen muodostuu monenlaisilla tavoilla, joissa toisiinsa kietoutuvat yksilölliset preferenssit ja valinnat, kollektiivinen muisti sekä toisinaan genealoginen sukulaisuussuhde. Tulokset osoittavat, että vaikka avioliitossa elävien perhekäsitykset muototuvat lähtökohtaisesti puolison ja mahdollisen lapsen varaan, sen lisäksi ymmärrys perheestä laajenee eri tavoin ja eri suuntiin. Perhekäsitykset muodostuvat monenlaisilla logiikoilla ja ne ovat joustavia. Väitän, että yhteenkuuluminen läheisten ihmisten kanssa rakentuu monimutkaisilla tavoilla, joissa avioliittoinstituutio ei välttämättä ole määrittävin tekijä.

LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

This thesis is based on the following publications:

I   Luotonen A and Castrén A-M (2018) Understandings of family among wives and husbands: Reconciling emotional closeness and cultural expectations. *European Societies* 20(5): 743–763.

II Luotonen A (2023) Temporalities of friendship: Adults' friends in everyday family life and beyond. *Sociology* 57(1): 20–35.

III Luotonen A (under review) Sibling relationships in adulthood: Changing family figurations, kinship, and temporal layers.

The publications are referred to in the text by their Roman numerals.

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CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 MOTIVATION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

When beginning this research, I was interested in how adults form their close relationships when they start their own families. Several years previously, I analysed (Luotonen, 2008) couples' plans for their weddings, finding that they aspired to involve family as well as friends, sometimes struggling to meet various expectations. It seemed that both friends and family were important in how this transition, including its rituals, was planned and lived. Later, I started to wonder what happens to friends when people become parents. Based on public discourse, it seemed that people encounter hardships or even ruptures in their friendships, and that couples and families socialised with others occupying similar life situations. It appeared, however, that this was not the whole story, and I wanted to learn more about what goes on within personal relationships when people form a family. This motivated me to study relationships with family and friends during this specific life stage.

For several decades now, both public discussions on families and sociological interest have highlighted changes in families and personal relationships. Family forms, such as blended families, one-parent families, same-sex couples, or families with adopted children or donor-conceived children, have received greater attention in research (Castrén et al., 2019; Högbacka, 2016; Nordqvist, 2017; Smart and Neale, 1998). The significance of friendship ties—at times, the most important sources of support, intimacy, and care—has been acknowledged and become an increasingly popular topic of research (Allan, 1996; Blatterer, 2015; Martinussen, 2019; Roseneil and Budgeon, 2004; Spencer and Pahl, 2006; Weston, 1991). However, while change in families and close relationships received acknowledgement, change was explored more often amongst people outside nuclear families than within them.

The nuclear family has often been thought of as typical, traditional, conventional; a normative model of a family form sometimes simply referred to as 'the family' (cf. Parsons, 1955). Based on its institutional form, it is still often thought of as a unit that draws it boundaries, thereby excluding others. The nuclear family thus resembles a 'black box' that needs to be opened and put under empirical scrutiny. Latour (1987: 2–3) notes that the concept of a black box refers

to a piece of machinery too complex to be understood, but which works and yields an output. The machinery can have a controversial history or complex inner logics; none of this matters, however, because what counts is the input and output. Moreover, a black box consists of many elements made to act as one (Latour, 1987: 131). Applying this metaphor to the context of a married couple and the nuclear family means that family—the nuclear family, in particular—can appear to act as one to a certain extent, but we do not really know what kinds of elements it contains nor what comprises its inner logic. It seems that research has not been too preoccupied with finding this out, particularly when it comes to family understandings, lived friendships, and sibling relationships.

In this study, I tackle the problem of the experiences of lived relationships amongst women and men in a specific institutional setting: during the first years of their first (heterosexual) marriage, with or without children. The 'conventional' path of family formation consists of specific steps taken in a specific order (Oinonen, 2001; see also Fry, 2003; see Settersten, 2003). The average age of entering the first marriage has increased in Finland in recent years, reaching 32.6 for women and 34.7 for men in 2020, amongst marriages between a woman and a man (Official Statistics Finland[a]). Marriage has also lost some of its popularity, replaced in favour of cohabitation. However, more than the specific timing of the steps, it is the fact of taking them and taking them in a particular order—cohabitation, marriage, child—that signals sticking to conventions regarding family formation. This order is, however, changing, such that now more than half of first-born children are born to unmarried mothers, often to cohabiting parents (Official Statistics Finland[b]). Despite these societal changes, the participants of this study have taken those steps and can be said to have followed this path of forming a family, which I call—in the absence of a more appropriate term—conventional. However, I want to stress that this is the institutional level of their family life, and, as such, it must be separated from the lived experiences of close relationships.

The institution of marriage, on the one hand, and the couple relationship, on the other hand, have been conceptualised by Maksimainen (2014), who notes that the change in the institution of marriage can represent a tension between its form and its content. Conceptually, the institution of marriage—the form—has lost some of its significance in favour of the couple relationship—the content. Thus, in professional and public discourse the objective has shifted from saving the unfunctional marriage towards taking care of the couple relationship. This shift from form towards content has not, however, lead to a radical change in the popularity of getting married (Maksimainen, 2014; see also Jallinoja, 2000). Marriage is a legal contract that has influence over people's lives. Also, it still

holds remarkable cultural significance, for example through public display such as the choice of a shared surname (see Castrén, 2019) or the use of wedding rings. Therefore, the institution of marriage needs to be considered within research.

Cultural scripts concerning heterosexual couples have become more individualised; however, this has not allowed more freedom for people (Eldén, 2012). Through the lens of hegemonic therapeutic discourse, individuals themselves are responsible for the quality of their couple relationship and of reaching the ideal of the 'good couple' (Eldén, 2012; see also Maksimainen, 2010). Cultural scripts regarding the heterosexual married couple continue to be strong, drawing a boundary between the couple, or the nuclear family formed by the couple and their children, and others. As long as a family seems to function, not so much interest is often paid in its inner logic; this is how nuclear family represents itself as the black box (cf. Latour, 1987). In this research, marriage is the setting, and therefore influences the lived relationships of people living in it. It is the personal experiences of lived relationships with family and friends, and, furthermore, personal understandings of family that are under scrutiny in this study.

When I proceeded with my research and interviewed people, I began paying attention to how they talked about friends, on the one hand, and siblings, on the other hand. For many, friends and siblings seemed to hold a similar position in the sphere of close people. They provided company, support, help, and opportunities for disclosure. Siblings were often considered friends, and, at first glance, it seemed that there was little difference between close sibling relations and close friendship relations. However, empirical research analysing the experiences of sibling relationships during the family formation years seemed scant at best. I thus decided to investigate friendship relations and sibling relations in sub-studies II and III, respectively.

Public discourse, as well as sociological research, have acknowledged new ways of living in close relationships including, for example, the idea of choosing friends as the closest relationships—that is, forming 'families of choice' (Weeks et al., 2001; Weston, 1991). Families of choice were formed amongst non-heterosexual individuals, usually not living as a couple, with the aim of providing the support, intimacy, and care not provided by one's genealogical family and kin. This phenomenon is often assumed to not apply to those living in traditional family settings, such as married couples. It is also important to note that whilst families of choice differ from a more conventional family community because of their voluntary character and in many cases because of the non-heterosexual orientation (Weeks et al., 2001; Weston, 1991), they may borrow the repertoire of family and kin categories (Budgeon, 2006). Despite differences in contexts, this

indicates that it is not useful to cling to a dichotomy between the 'conventional' nuclear family and one's 'chosen' family, but, instead, it is fruitful to capture more nuanced expressions of lived relationships. In fact, in my research, the reality of lived relationships turned out to be rich, multidimensional, and, at least from a conceptual perspective, messy.

The research participants of this study were 32 women and men from 16 couples who form, from the perspective of the institutional family setting, a rather homogenous group.[1] They had all been in their first marriage for some years to a partner of a different sex. Whether they had a child, were planning or hoping to have a(nother) child, or were voluntarily childless, they were nevertheless at an age and life stage during which decisions about family and children are considered and made. Their social network and close relationships had already been shaped by establishing a life with a spouse. What then happens to other family relationships with their families of origin? What happens to friendships? Do they continue as before, shift, or come to an end? Who becomes closest during this life stage? Who do people spend time with? Who is considered family? These are the questions I aim to answer in this study. The sphere of family and friends cannot be taken for granted amongst those who live in a couple; instead, it is a problem that requires empirical examination.

It has been argued that the (heterosexual) couple remains a strong organising principle in people's social lives (Cronin, 2015a; Ketokivi, 2012). This dynamic becomes more concrete if we consider a couple's dissolution; after a breakup, personal relationships are reorganised, and friendships might experience tensions or be forced into choosing sides (Aeby and van Hooff, 2019; see also Eve, 2002). In this study, the couple, with or without children, forms a setting that shapes people's lived relationships as well as their experiences of what these relationships mean to them. I treat the couple as the setting defined by Layder (2006: 272–282), that is, as distinguished from context, whereby *setting* is the environment of situated activity, whilst *context* refers to wider societal circumstances. To conclude, while contemporary Finnish society provides the context of this study the couple with or without children forms the setting.

As I noted above, I am interested in how close relationships are lived and made sense of as part of the everyday lives of people. But what is everyday life? No universal definition of the everyday is available and, in fact, it is often taken for granted. The everyday refers to our ordinary lives, pointing to the mundane and the habitual; but, when it is examined, it tends to escape (Felski, 2000: 78;

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[1] The participants of this research were originally recruited for a study concerning marrying couples, conducted a few years earlier at the University of Helsinki and led by Anna-Maija Castrén. I provide a detailed account of the research design in Chapter 4.1.

Jokinen, 2005: 10–11). Everyday life is also strongly connected to intimacy; flesh-and-blood human beings living in the material world (Highmore, 2010: 15). Investigating everyday life requires being attuned to what is often considered insignificant (Back, 2015; Brownlie, 2019). People's everyday lives happen in a time and a place (Adam, 1990; Ingold, 2011; Mason, 2018). As a consequence, close relationships as well as patterns of family life involve dimensions of temporality.

Back (2015) notes that studying everyday life allows us to link micro-level accounts to societal issues and changes. I do this by conceptualising the sociological thread of this study as consisting of three interconnected levels. Firstly, the institutional level of marriage and nuclear family refers to the institution of marriage, as well as the institutionalised connection between parents and their joint biological children. Secondly, the level of personal experiences refers to interviewees' lived relationships and their understandings of family. Thirdly, the level of the relational dynamic of relationships refers to the interconnectedness of relationships to their dynamics. Connections between the three levels are tense, and these tensions serve as a fruitful focus for my analysis. Keeping in mind Mills's (1959) notion of the sociological imagination, I thus open the black box of the nuclear family and critically examine how personal understandings of family, as well as the lived experiences of sibling and friendship relations, can be multidimensional and connected to societal institutions such as marriage and the nuclear family.

1.2 THE CONTEXT OF FINNISH SOCIETY

Each society has its own peculiarities, shaping how the couple and the family are lived and understood as well as formed by public policy. What family means is connected on a macro-level not only to welfare regimes, but also country-specific developments regarding, for example, marriage, participation in the labour market, and parenthood (Widmer and Ganjour, 2016). In Finland, early independence is culturally valued; the estimated average age at which an individual moves out from the childhood home was 21.2 in 2021, compared to 26.5 years for the whole of the European Union (Eurostat, 2022). The Finnish state provides financial support for living and housing expenses for students, the latter also available to people with a low income (Jauhiainen et al., 2019). The standard life course entails moving out from the childhood home and becoming

financially independent from one's parents during young adulthood (Forsberg, 2005).

The Nordic welfare state with its policies enhances gender equality and supports shared parenthood and a work–life balance, drawing upon fundamental ideas of equality connected to a strong society and individual freedom (Forsberg and Kröger, 2009, see Julkunen, 2010). As such, the family leave system aims to encourage parents to share in caring for young children. Mothers take the majority of family leave months, whereby an ideology considering the mother as the primary caregiver for a baby persists (Närvi, 2012; Repo, 2010; Yesilova, 2009). However, women's employment rate is relatively high, including amongst mothers (Eydal and Kröger, 2009). A cultural understanding of involved fatherhood has come to include caring, being sensitive, and showing one's emotions (Eerola, 2015; Eerola et al., 2021). In childcare, Finnish parents lean heavily upon the services provided by the state (Forsberg, 2005). All children enjoy a universal right to subsidised public day care and early childhood education services, services used by most families; this supports the dual-earner model (Närvi et al., 2020). Parents' participation in the labour market is also supported by policies such as the right of the parents of young children to work 80% and the right to stay at home with a child who falls ill.

Generally, practices intended to balance employment and childcare are not based on daily help from family and kin, but on childcare and other services provided by the public sector (Forsberg, 2005; Forsberg and Kröger, 2009). This affects close relationships in multiple ways: informal help from family and friends is not usually a necessary means to making daily life work, but instead voluntarily offered help allows life to run more smoothly, creates a stronger bond, and results in cherishing togetherness and intimacy. However, research shows that in a Nordic context, practices of care for children often involve a number of people outside nuclear family (Eldén, 2016). While some argue that cultural pluralism exists within the Nordic countries regarding family norms (Marckmann, 2017), in general, contemporary Finnish society can be seen as a context in which relationships to family and friends—at least amongst individuals with access to a reasonable level of resources—are shaped more by affinity and choice than economic or practical necessity.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research problem concerns the family and friendship relationships amongst people during their early years of marriage. I aim to examine how family is understood, and how relationships with friends, on the one hand, and siblings, on the other hand, are made sense of. I am interested in how relationships are lived and sustained, and how they suffer or endure fractures. How does the experience of intimacy and meaningfulness come into being, rendering some relationships stronger?

Each of the three sub-studies in this dissertation has its specific research question. In sub-study I, I investigate personal understandings of who belongs to the family and the logics via which research participants draw the boundaries for their own family. In sub-study II, I analyse friendship relations, focusing on how they are lived in everyday life and made sense of using different dimensions of temporality. In sub-study II, I examine the experiences of sibling relationships, specifically those embedded within the figuration of family relationships.

Sub-study I provides a clear picture regarding the ways in which individuals participating in this research understand their own families. As such, it functions as the starting point for sub-studies I and II, which both focus on lived relationships. In bringing these three sub-studies together, I attempt to answer the question of how intimacies in various relationships are lived and made sense of, specifically through the use of different temporalities. Finally, I aim to understand how relatedness, through lived relationships amongst family and friends, comes into being.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent decades, there have been various developments within the research on family, opening up new lines of inquiry and allowing for a focus on the personal experiences of relationships.

Within research on family from the 1940s onwards, Parsons (1943; 1955) as a leading figure focused on the nuclear family as a unit with specific functions. The idea of the nuclear family was connected to broader differentiation within society such that specific societal tasks were viewed as important responsibilities of the family, the most important being the socialisation of children (Parsons, 1943; 1955; see Jallinoja, 2014). In the 1980s and 1990s, the individualisation thesis as a major explanation for social change and increasing individual works on intimacy (Giddens, 1992; see Beck, 1992; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; see Jamieson, 2005) became influential, yet, criticised, within sociological studies of personal relationships. This line of thinking highlighted individuals' own freedom and responsibilities to shape their personal relationships and, simultaneously, the self (see Giddens, 1991; 1992). In the 2000s, however, criticism increased, casting doubt towards the omnipotence of the individualisation thesis (Eve, 2002; Jallinoja and Widmer, 2011; Smart, 2007; Smart and Neale, 1998). In recent decades, the focus of sociological qualitative research on family and close relationships has moved towards a relational perspective, or, as some researchers suggest, returned to relationality (Jallinoja and Widmer, 2011; Roseneil and Ketokivi, 2015).

In British sociological thought, Smart's (2007) notion of personal life was influential in pointing out the variety of relationships that should be considered alongside family ties. The focus shifted on the subjective experiences and meanings people attach to personal relationships (Becker and Charles, 2006; Davies, 2011; Mason, 2004; Mason and Tipper, 2008; Smart, 2007) instead of institutional definitions that set rigid boundaries and hierarchies between relationship categories. Furthermore, by introducing the concept of *family practices*, Morgan (1996; 2020) stated that families are constituted through various practices, thus, people are 'doing family'. A wide range of empirical studies have relied on this perspective, analysing, for instance, practices of exchanging material objects to enhance close relationships amongst family and friends (Lewis, 2018), practices of passing on objects to enhance kinship (Holmes, 2019), or caring practices amongst nannies and au pairs in Sweden (Eldén and Anving, 2019).

Finch (2007; 2011) states that in order to understand an individual's family it is insufficient to simply ask who is considered family; more specifically, we should examine which of an individual's relationships have a family-like character. This family likeness is displayed within families as well as for others. It is of importance how displays are noticed and understood by others, such as in the display of family photographs (Gomila, 2011) or in the case of the obituaries for a deceased family member (Jallinoja, 2011). Forming one's own family, the life stage during which the participants of this study live, can be considered a turning point in their lives, possibly creating a greater need for display. This may become a significant characteristic for understanding family and for making this understanding visible to oneself and to others.

Simultaneously with sociological discussions on family and personal relationships developing in Britain, an important line of thinking arose in continental Europe as well as in Finland: the development of the configurational approach (Castrén, 2001; Widmer et al., 2008, see also Eve, 2002). This approach is tied to network analysis (e.g., Bott, 1957/1971; Granovetter, 1973; Gribaudi, 1998; Milardo and Allan, 2000) and discussions within relational sociology (e.g., Emirbayer, 1997), with the primary aim of examining actualised relationships and their interconnectedness. Studies using this approach have examined, for example, how people define their own family or the group of their closest relations within various empirical contexts such as in a step-family setting (Aeby et al., 2014; Castrén and Widmer, 2015), amongst old people (Girardin et al., 2018), in relation to Christmas celebrations (Hauri, 2011), and amongst aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews (Milardo, 2008). Furthermore, Helin et al. (2022) analysed mothers' understandings of who belongs to their newborn baby's family. Within this body of research, the focus is not only on an individual's experiences and personal understanding of who is an intimate or a part of a family, but extends to the structure of the network of relationships (Castrén, 2001; Widmer et al., 2008).

British discussions (e.g., Finch, 2007; Morgan, 1996; Smart, 2007; Smart and Neale, 1998) focusing on personal life (instead of 'family') and family practices, on the one hand, and continental European and Finnish discussions (Castrén, 2001, Castrén and Ketokivi 2015; Jallinoja and Widmer, 2011; Ketokivi, 2010, Wall and Gouveia, 2014; Widmer et al., 2008) highlighting the configurational perspective, on the other hand, share many similarities. Relationships with family and other significant individuals are understood as personally experienced, processual, interconnected to other relationships, and also shaped by individuals' aspirations. However, in addition to exploring personal experiences and views, as well as processes of negotiation (cf. Finch and Mason, 1993), the configurational

perspective focuses on circumstances and constraints that shape individuals' relationships in their configurations of close relationships (cf. Castrén and Maillochon, 2009; see Widmer et al., 2008).

In recent decades, changes concerning the possibilities of family formation, such as through international adoption (Howell, 2001; Högbacka, 2016, Ruohio, 2016) or using a donor during fertility treatment (Nordqvist, 2014), have broadened understandings of what families are and how they can be formed. This has challenged the exclusivity shaping definitions of family (Castrén and Högbacka, 2014; Högbacka, 2011; Young, 1998). Such questions also concern our own understanding of personal relationships in general. In fact, definitions of family appear to be shifting and layered depending upon the context (Becker and Charles, 2006; McCarthy, 2012; see also Pirskanen et al., 2020). It is thus important to examine how developments in understanding family and personal relationships as complex, elective, and layered, whilst simultaneously bound to legal systems and genetic connectedness, are lived amongst people whose family formation followed a rather conventional path.

There is no universal definition of friendship in contemporary society; instead, a complex variety of meanings are attached to the term (cf. Fischer, 1982). Most contemporary meanings are rooted in a process of individualisation, such that friendship is seen as based on a mutual understanding as well as affinity, trust, equality, and a deep knowledge of the other (Allan, 1996; 2008; Jamieson, 1998; Silver, 1990). In a study amongst Portuguese individuals, Policarpo (2015) noted that two main ideas emerged in how people understood what a friend is: firstly, a tradition-oriented view highlighting family and kinship ties in defining family; and, secondly, a more individualised view that underlined self-disclosure, support, and presence.

In people's everyday lives, friendship can entangle family life and daily practices, or it can remain a rather separate sphere from family life (see Allan, 1996; Castrén and Lonkila, 2004; Oliker, 1989; Parks, 2007; Rumens, 2017). Friendship is usually positioned as lying beyond the core elements around which the most important decisions of one's personal life are made (Heinonen, 2022; Martinussen, 2019). Studies among women have often highlighted family and children as the foundation of friendships, and as friendships providing opportunities for self-disclosure in a way not provided by one's relationship with their spouse (Cronin, 2015a, Harrison, 1998; Oliker, 1989). Men's friendships are seen as less connected to the private sphere and family (Allan, 1998; Goedecke, 2018). Moreover, friendships between men and women can be considered problematic (Blatterer, 2015). Research has also emphasised critical, difficult, or even toxic characteristics of friendships (Heaphy and Davies, 2012; Lahad and

van Hooff, 2022; Pellandini-Simányi, 2017; Smart et al., 2012). These examples demonstrate that the context as well as cultural expectations set the framework for friendships.

Previous research on sibling relationships described the various ways in which these bonds are lived in adulthood, including as emotionally close bonds providing support and care (Cicirelli, 1995; Connidis, 1992; 2020; Tanskanen and Danielsbacka, 2020; Tanskanen and Rotkirch, 2019) especially amongst sisters (Spitze and Trent, 2006; see also Mauthner, 2005), as tense or estranged relationships (Blake et al., 2022), as essential for daily survival (Ray, 2016), or as interwoven with the family business (Thurnell-Read, 2021). Research suggests that in old age relationships between siblings often become closer and interactions are more frequent (Crenner et al., 2002; Miner and Uhlenberg, 1997). Other relationships can play a crucial mediating role in the relationship between siblings (Allan, 1977; Déchaux, 2007). Sibling bereavement appears to also signify losing a part of one's self, thereby demonstrating the deeply meaningful character of siblingship (Towers, 2019).

Sibling relationships in adulthood have been somewhat neglected in research; however, some researchers have argued that they are far from simply representing symbolic bonds (Eriksen and Gerstel 2002; Whiteman et al., 2011). Instead, such relationships shape adults' lives in many ways and can serve as an important part of an individual's safety net (Eriksen and Gerstel, 2002; see also Girardin et al., 2018; Weller et al., 2012) or involve tensions, rivalries, or conflicts influencing people's lives (Connidis, 2007; Suitor et al., 2013; see also Offer and Fischer, 2018; Wherry et al., 2019). While the significance of sibling relationships to an individual's educational path and personhood in childhood and youth, for instance, has been widely acknowledged (Aaltonen, 2016; Carr Steelman et al., 2002; Davies, 2015; 2019; Edwards et al., 2006, Gillies and Lucey, 2006; Gulløv et al., 2015; Gulløv and Winther, 2021; Jensen et al., 2013; MacIntosh and Punch, 2009; Punch, 2008; Winther et al., 2015), the significance of sibling relationships during adult life is less well understood (see Eriksen and Gerstel, 2002).

Time is integral to how we live in the world (Adam, 1990; Hitlin and Elder, 2007; Misztal, 2003; Zerubavel, 1981). Several studies have made visible the significance of temporality with its various dimensions in shaping personal relationships (Bennett, 2015; May, 2016; 2017; 2018; Zerubavel, 2003). Finch and Mason (1993) noted that family responsibilities accumulate through the passage of time and are negotiated amongst family members through slow processes across years. Furthermore, kinship is worked out in people's relationships over time (Finch and Mason, 2000: 164–165). Thompson (1993/2005) points out that within intergenerational relationships, social class,

family traditions and myths are transmitted, providing a context that merges with individual paths in life. In contrast to relationships forming through slow processes, some studies (Mason, 2018; Rebughini, 2011) suggest that *moments* can prove decisive in how relationships are experienced, such as during ordinary moments in daily life in couple relationships (Gabb and Fink, 2015).

In addition, the dimensions of past, present, and future entangle in personal life and relationships. For instance, May (2016) noted that nostalgia and belonging with the past can serve as a way of connecting with the present. Moreover, Holdsworth's (2019) analysis of people's one-day diaries demonstrated how the lived present incorporates the lived past and the anticipated future. Also, in the case of children moving between their divorced parents' two homes Winther and Larsen (2021) found that children pack their bags in a process not merely representing a necessary material practice, but which involves past, present, and future. Rites of temporality are significant because through them people celebrate what is significant, like family and friends (Etzioni, 2004; Gillis, 2004; Shoham 2021). Previous research thus demonstrated that temporality is significant in how close relationships are lived and made sense of.

Focusing specifically on friendship, Eve (2002) states that we should not consider the idea of an intimate and dyadic friendship as a universal model within modern society. Friendships are not always private and highly personalised relationships, as formulated in Giddens' (1991) famous concept of a *pure relationship*. The term refers, instead, to a relationship based on individual's free choice, intimacy, and not bound to institutional constraints (Giddens, 1991; 1992). Interestingly, the concept of a pure relationship has been criticised for fostering the idea of the individual as equipped with resources and the capacity to be simultaneously intimate and autonomous; free to enter and exit relationships; and as free to and capable of negotiating their own needs (Illouz, 2019: 8). Eve (2002) argues that because of the tendency to view friendships as dyadic and intimate, research might consider other types of friendships as different or exceptions which prove the rule. One body of empirical research demonstrates, in fact, the importance of the context in allowing a friendship to emerge and survive, thereby raising questions about the universality of the individualisation thesis (Adams and Allan, 1998; Allan, 1998; Davies, 2011; Parks, 2007).

The boundaries of friendship and family are not always clear, such that the sociology of personal life has turned its gaze towards examining these boundaries. Emotional, practical, and economic support are usually thought of as provided by family and kin, but may be provided on a long-term basis within friendship

relations, such as among the elderly (Policarpo, 2019). Studies among individuals not living in a heterosexual couple but instead amongst queer community specifically have introduced the concept of 'families of choice', highlighting the commitment, care, and significance that can emerge within relationships outside a couple relationship and the nuclear family. For example, Weston (1991) studied 'chosen families' among the queer community in San Francisco in the 1980s and found that most families were not organised through marriage and childrearing as lly found in traditional heterosexual families; instead, the key characteristics were family composition based on choice and a fluidity of boundaries, with only a tiny symbolic importance placed on erotic and non-erotic relationships.

In their empirical study, Spencer and Pahl (2006) distinguished between various ways in which the boundaries for family and friends suffuse. Firstly, family relations can evolve into friendship-like relations when people choose to spend time with their relatives instead of feeling obliged or expected to do so; in such cases, people might feel as if they have things in common and enjoy each other's company. Other studies also revealed that members of kin can be labelled as friends (Policarpo, 2015; Walker, 1995). Secondly, friends can become like family when there is a strong sense of obligation, such as when a relationship is long-lasting, survives hardships, and is considered meaningful. Calling friends family and vice versa implies a strengthening rather than a weakening of a tie (Spencer and Pahl, 2006: 119). However, Allan (2008) argues that while developments such as flexibility and reflexivity towards personal relationships are connected to a blurring of the boundaries between family and friendship, these two remain separate in people's minds.

Rebughini (2011) highlights the reciprocity inherent in providing and accepting support and compassion between friends in moments of trials; in this way, she states, the electivity of friendship reflects the process of individualisation. Within this study, the individual choice, reflected through the concepts of a pure relationship (Giddens, 1991) or an emotional modernity, might carry some explanatory power, especially with regards to friendship because, after all, friendship relations appear held together through the parties' wishes and attempts to maintain the friendship. Along this line, Finch (2007) highlights that display is distinctive of performance; it is not just conveyed for outsiders or other people, but instead is a process that becomes part of the self. It thus follows, to some extent, that the reflexive project of the self, whereby an individual is responsible for their self and sense of identity, is achieved through constant reflexivity (Giddens, 1991). This raises the question of to what extent do family relationships also follow an individual choice.

Previous research has demonstrated the variation that exists regarding what 'family' actually means (Becker and Charles, 2006; Castrén and Högbacka, 2016; Lück and Ruckdeschel, 2018; McCarthy, 2012; Wall and Gouveia, 2014) and the different ways in which friends (Adams and Allan, 1998; Castrén, 2001; Helin et al., 2022; Policarpo, 2019) and siblings (Allan, 1977; Mauthner, 2005) can be part of people's lives. Furthermore, previous research contributes to how the feeling of 'we', that feeling of being related, is created (Carsten, 2000; Etzioni, 2004; Finch, 2007; Gillis, 2004). However, the setting of a nuclear family or a married couple has not often served as the empirical context for research.

Simultaneously with the stated evolution of electivity within one's personal life (Giddens, 1991; Weeks et al., 2001; Weston 1991), policy and hegemonic discourses are less attuned to the variation in people's personal lives, which also continue to shape our understanding of family and personal relationships. Smart (2011) states that people's lives gain meaning in relation to the lives of others to whom they are linked and that family relationships are especially sticky, creating a lasting kind of embeddedness (cf. Offer and Fischer, 2018). This study contributes to a deeper understanding of how electivity regarding personal relationships, on the one hand, and the sticky embeddedness of family relationships, on the other, are lived and made sense of in people's lives.

3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

In this study, I examine how close relationships with family and friends are lived and made sense of, as well as the personal understandings of family and how they are formed. To do so, I draw from sociological thought on kinship and relatedness as well as theoretical insights on intimacy, figuration, and temporality. In Chapter 2, I introduced previous research relevant to this study. In this chapter, I present the central theoretical perspectives I apply as my analytical tools in this study.

3.1 RELATEDNESS

Theoretical perspectives concerning kinship and relatedness provide tools via which to analyse what is created and how when people are connected to each other. Relatedness, which is conceptually closely linked to kinship, functions as a pivotal concept for my analysis. In what follows, I briefly present a discussion regarding the concept of relatedness.

Schneider's (1968/1980) study of American kinship has been widely influential in the anthropological study of Euro-American kinship. Specifically, Schneider considered kinship based on two distinct orders: the order of blood and the order of law. The order of blood refers to a blood relation, or a genealogical connection. The order of law, by contrast, is based on legal ties and a code of conduct—ultimately, culture. In procreation occurring within marriage, these two orders come together, making it highly significant for Schneider's conceptualisation of kinship. Déchaux (2008) considers Schneider's thinking as a turning point in the study of kinship, since Schneider acknowledged that kinship acquires different meanings and interpretations in different contexts. Subsequently, anthropologists, and to some extent sociologists as well, built upon Schneider's concept of kinship.

In what Déchaux (2008) calls new kinship studies, a more nuanced conceptualisation of kinship was developed. The dualistic model of genealogy and culture underlying Schneider's thinking has been questioned in favour of viewing biology and culture as intertwined (Carsten, 2004; Strathern, 1992). Sahlins (2013) delineates kinship by recognising both connections determined at birth

and constructed after birth, highlighting the *mutuality of being* as fundamental to kinship. This means that people identified as kin are intrinsic to one another's identity and participate in each other's existence in a variety of meaningful ways. These intersubjective relations of existing can account for performative or 'made' kinship as well as for relations of procreation (Sahlins, 2013).

In addition to the question of kin or non-kin, it has been argued that we should also focus on more subtle tendencies in kinship (Carsten, 2013; Sahlins, 2013). Kinship can become stronger or weaker in processes that Carsten (2013) calls the thickening or thinning of kinship, respectively. Edwards and Strathern (2000) also note that cutting a kinship tie typically happens through a slow and gradual process, without paying much attention to it as it occurs. One distinct feature of Euro-American kinship is the division and combination of social and biological facts, such that a blood connection can be claimed or, respectively, dropped from a family sphere due to insufficient social interest (Edwards and Strathern, 2000).

An approach that provides tools for understanding how kinship is built in practice was conceptualised by Weber (2013; see also Déchaux, 2008), who makes a distinction between three types of family memberships or collective functioning: lineage, kindred, and *maisonnée*. Lineage refers to a symbolic affiliation; kindred refers to personal affinities and electivity; and *maisonnée* refers to a less stable relationship or group which shares in the everyday life, resources, care, labour, or work towards a common cause. These three areas of functioning together produce *practical kinship*. This distinction helps to understand the practical variation to kinship.

Kinship is more a process than a structure, brought into being rather than 'given' (Carsten, 2004; Finch and Mason, 2000; Kramer, 2011; Nordqvist, 2019). Being related is about much more than a genealogical connection; it is about the lived everyday life, personal preferences, and fleeting experiences of a connection (Nordqvist 2014; 2019; Mason, 2018; Sahlins, 2013). The complexity of contemporary kinship has also been acknowledged by Carsten (2000), who uses the term 'relatedness' instead of kinship, aiming to be more open to novel forms of being related. As a concept, relatedness has been used in empirical research to understand, for instance, the complex ways in which sibling relationships are lived in contemporary families of various forms (Winther et al., 2015).

In this study, I apply the concept of *relatedness* (Carsten, 2000) to understand how people represent a meaningful part of each other's lives, in the family sphere as well as amongst friends. I also use the word kinship when referring at a general level to research participants' families and relatives. Moreover, where boundaries of kinship and family are drawn, and whether individuals' particular relationships are made sense of in terms of kinship or friendship, are amongst the

empirical questions I explore in this study. Singly (2021) outlines the notion of a 'family of individuals', stating that individualism not only generates a new balance between 'I' and 'we' but also creates new 'Is' and new 'wes'. In the context of this study, the question arises whether there are new 'wes' within a family and what they are like.

3.2 INTIMACY

Understanding relatedness within people's relationships requires an analytical glance at intimacy. 'Family we-ness', a jointly constructed feeling of being part of a family, is partially based on individuals' feelings of intimacy (Widmer, 2021). In the context of relatedness among family and friends, intimacy thus appears as one significant element in characterising and creating relatedness. In non-erotic relationships, intimacy is often conceptualised as based on disclosure, trust, and a deep knowing of the other (Jamieson, 1998). This kind of intimacy is often thought of as pivotal in understanding close relationships, specifically friendship relations.

Forstie (2017) conceptualised intimacy as consisting of affect, knowledge, mutual action, and norms. Similarly, Jamieson (2011) noted that a deep knowing of the other person is often emphasised but it represents just one of many practices that can create intimacy, suggesting that intimacy is instead produced by practices during interactions between people in various contexts. Expanding upon Morgan's (1996) concept of family practices, Jamieson (2011) defined the concept *practices of intimacy*, referring to practices that enable, create, and sustain a sense of closeness and a special quality within a relationship. Practices of intimacy can include, for example, sharing with, spending time with, caring for, knowing, giving to, and expressing attachment to; each of these practices thus produces intimacy (Jamieson, 2011). Practices of intimacy as a concept allows me to operationalise the problem of intimacy as lived in relationships.

Intimacy can also take various forms within lived relationships, such as inclusive intimacy within friendships, extending to new people who enter a group of friends, contrasting with the hegemonic idea of exclusive intimacy within friendships (Cronin, 2015a; Marks, 1998). Importantly, intimacy does not exclude economic dependencies, feelings of anger or shame, or abuse (Zelizer, 2005). It also does not exclude distance; the two can be integrated (Ben-Ari, 2012). This also questions Giddens's (1991; 1992) influential perspective on intimacy in a 'pure relationship', which he considered based on mutual

satisfaction and free individualistic choice. Whereas a pure relationship remains a theoretical idealisation (Illouz, 2019; Jamieson, 1998), individuals can, however, be strongly involved in the processes of forming their intimate relationships (Seymour and Bagguley, 1999).

Finally, Simmel (1908/1950: 126) conceptualised intimacy as located fundamentally within a dyad. He outlined intimacy as based on an individual's tendency to consider the core of their existence to be exactly what distinguishes them from others. When, or if, this 'core of existence'—regardless of its content—is shared and this sharing becomes pivotal to the relationship, only then does intimacy emerges. That is, intimacy exists when the 'whole affective structure of the relation is based on what each of the participants gives or shows only to the one other person and to nobody else' (Simmel, 1908/1950: 126).

Because intimacy in its pure form is only found in dyads, according to Simmel, a third element can offer different sides to the other two and fuse these into a comprehensive whole, or, alternatively, it can disturb the dyad and represent an intruder (Simmel, 1908/1950: 135). A dyad represents a unique structure, completely different from a triad; as such, a dyad can cherish the individuality of its parts to a greater extent than a triad (Pyyhtinen, 2010: 103). Simmel's perspective on intimacy provides a tool via which to understand how intimacy might emerge differently in dyads and in groups.

I draw upon these various qualities of intimacy in analysing how relationships with friends and siblings are lived, and how intimacy entangles with personal understandings of family.

3.3 THE FIGURATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The concept of figuration (Elias, 1970/1978) and the configurational approach (Castrén, 2001) provide the central conceptualisation to this study.[2] Together they provide the tools for understanding close relationships from two

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[2] This line of research has adopted the term configuration. Elias himself used the term configuration and then replaced it with figuration, with no change in his thinking, claim Kilminster and Mennell (Elias, 1984/2009: 55, editors' note in a footnote). However, in his essay Figuration, Elias (1986/2009) makes a difference between the meanings of the two terms, using figuration in reference to a web of relationships between human beings, and configuration in reference to for example stars, planets, and animals. In this study, I choose to use the term figuration. However, when referring to the configurational approach and to Widmer's work specifically, I use the term configuration.

perspectives: as individuals' experiences of lived relationships and as interconnected with other relationships, thereby forming a figuration that has its own particular structure. Eve (2002) states that people's relationships and their lives more generally are shaped by configurational logics, and thus considering the networks in which relationships are embedded is crucial.

Building upon Elias's as well as Moreno's thinking, Widmer et al. (2008) suggested four key points to examining contemporary families. The first point highlights that families should not be defined based on institutional criteria. The second point stresses that instead of examining dyads as independent entities, the focus of analysis lies on the larger network of relationships in which the dyad is embedded. The third point underlines that individuals and structures are interconnected. Thus, in order to understand individuals' choices and commitments, it is necessary to understand individuals' family interdependencies. The fourth point emphasises history and space in understanding family.

A significant foundation for the configurational perspective (Castrén, 2001; Widmer et al., 2008) was Norbert Elias's concept of figuration and his process sociology. Elias (1986/2009: 1) states that 'the concept of the figuration is distinguished from many other theoretical concepts of sociology in that human beings are expressly included in the concept.' This formulation includes the fundamental idea of his sociological thinking: the interdependence between people, and the notion that people cannot be separated from society.

At the heart of Elias's sociology lie people, and, additionally, the concepts of interdependence and process (Mennell, 1992: 252–254; Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 36–39). As such, each individual is tied to other individuals through a functional dependence on others, simultaneously as a link in a chain of people who all have functions relating to others. These links are intangible, they cannot be seen in the way that iron chains can be seen; however, these links are more elastic and as real and as strong as iron chains. For Elias (1939: 16), this network in which people have functions for each other is society.

Elias (1970/1978: 130–132) defines figuration as a pattern created by a group of people as a whole. People, their whole selves, have functions over each other. The human mode of living together is shaped by the transfer of knowledge from one generation to another, through which people enter into a symbol-based world with an existing figuration. People are fundamentally interdependent upon one another and thus always group into specific figurations (Elias, 1986/2009). Any figuration is characterised by a constantly changing balance of power; power is, therefore, not a concept of substance, but of relationships. Elias (1970/1978: 147) highlights that figurations change in unplanned and unforeseen ways. It is

possible that when a group of people aims to preserve the present figuration, people in it actually act in a way that leads to changes. The importance of the interdependence of relations, on the one hand, and time, on the other hand, is illustrated in *The Established and the Outsiders*, an analysis of the evolving dynamics and social hierarchies of communities in a small industrial town (Elias and Scotson, 1965/1994; see also Eve, 2011).

The idea of figuration can also be expanded to encompass the concept of *valency*, a term derived from the natural sciences, applied by Elias (1969/2009; 1970/1978) in order to explain the dynamics of a figuration. Elias discusses the concept of valency in only two pieces of writing: in his essay 'Sociology and Psychiatry' (1969) based on a lecture he delivered in 1965, and in his book *What Is Sociology?* (1970). The concept is not explicit in most of his work; however, it provides a tool via which to better understand his thinking regarding how figurations evolve when people have new relationships or loose existing ones.

Each individual connects to others through valencies. A person has open valencies and, simultaneously, other valencies are connected to other persons. Some valencies are attached in a way that forms long-term affective relationships, whilst others remain open and in search for new relationships, in Elias's words 'scanning' (Elias, 1969/2009: 170). Elias (1969/2009: 172–174) provides an example of the dynamics and meanings of valencies by stating that when a close person dies, the entire figuration of the surviving person shifts and the balance of their whole web of personal relationships changes. Valencies are in constant movement, temporarily saturated, and then again unsaturated (Elias, 1970/1978: 136–137). This very specific conceptualisation helps to understand, for example, how sibling relationships shift due to changes that occur in other relationships within the figuration of interconnected relationships.

In addition, Elias (1970/1978: 152) criticised sociological categories and the conceptualisation of viewing change as something supplementary, as if changes could be traced back to something changeless constituting actual structured regularities. A Western evaluation enforces the idea that what is durable and eternal carries more value and is more real than what is changing and changeable (Mennell, 1992: 253). In sociology, this division can be seen in various concepts thought of as 'objects', as static and uninvolved in relationships. By contrast, Elias (1970/1978) argues that norms, values, roles, social class, and the like are about people in the plural, which are or were constantly in movement and relating to other people.

Elias's concept of figuration and the emphasis on constant change within figurations provide a useful perspective via which to attempt to understand the connectedness of personal relationships as well as their fluctuating character. The

configurational approach (Castrén, 2001; Widmer et al., 2008) provides tools that can be used to investigate, for example, how horizontal relationships with siblings and friends are lived as embedded within networks of close relationships. Furthermore, this allows examining where within a family figuration the boundary of one's 'family' is drawn.

3.4 TEMPORALITY

Temporality plays a significant role in shaping family relationships, family histories, a sense of who 'we' are, as well as friendships. Gillis (2004: 98) noted that annual, weekly, and daily cycles of modern life provide people with a shared past and a shared future. Families are drawn together in anticipation and remembrance, finding in this symbolic interaction something that they do not find in their daily lives. What we consider tradition provides an opportunity for 'a periodic fusion with the past', via which we attempt to become through rituals more fully integrated into the collective past (Zerubavel, 2003: 45–46). Different from linear time, ritual time has the capacity to diminish the distance between past, present, and future (Gillis, 2004: 99). As a consequence, time is not seen as simply going forward, but, for example, as circles, consisting of a day, or another year, and so on (Zerubavel, 2003: 23–25). Yet, this contrast is simultaneously compatible with the linear view of time. History is thus not viewed as linear, but from a cyclical perspective, in a way that Zerubavel (2003: 23–25) calls historical rhyming.

Halbwachs (1950/1980), who originally introduced the concept of *collective memory* to sociology, notes that collective memory is not only shared, but also jointly remembered. Whilst collective memory involves individual memories, it is always distinct from them and develops with its own laws (Halbwachs, 1950/1980). As such, every group develops a collective memory of its own, and the persistence of a memory contributes to the group consciousness explaining the group's continuity (Misztal, 2003: 52). Halbwachs's 'images of memories' relate to a specific time and place, rendering memories time- and place-specific, although not in a strictly historical or geographical sense (Šubrt, 2021: 75). Traditions can be constitutive of eras because they enable the bundling up of time—that is, past, present, and future—into 'time out of time' with specific and special atmospheres (Mason and Muir, 2012).

Mason (2018: 116–117) states that people have experiences and encounters that traverse the division between tangibility and intangibility by disrupting our

experiences of linear time in the here and now. These potent connections outside of time simultaneously inhabit the present, the past, and the future (Mason, 2018: 117). As such, moments can be full of sensations and decisive for relationships (Mason, 2018: 193) as well as for individual subjectivity (Green, 2016). Similarly, Burkitt (2004) argues that experiences can be fleeting and rather unbound to space and place. In people's everyday lives, however, these various kinds of experiences intertwine, forming a multidimensional whole of relations of fluid processes as well as of more permanent belonging (Burkitt, 2004). These views challenge Western understandings which often highlight a long duration as a prerequisite for a meaningful and intimate relationship (see Jamieson, 1998), and which consider temporary connections as not really telling something of who we are as our true selves (May, 2016; see Mennell, 1992: 253).

Tavory and Eliasoph (2013) note that people possess different immediate futures, protentions, depending upon different trajectories, which rely on plans and on temporal landscapes. Temporal landscapes can seem almost self-evident, but they do require acts of coordination in daily life (Tavory and Eliasoph, 2013). Analysing people's ways of coordinating futures can be helpful to understanding their temporal horizons as well as different macro-level forces shaping people's relationships and interactions at the level of individuals (Tavory and Eliasoph, 2013; see also Bidart, 2019).

Everyday life and its temporalities

The concept of *rhythm* provides a useful perspective for understanding people's encounters, lived relationships, and time (Zerubavel, 1981). The flux of everyday life involves various rhythms that can smoothly form a part of everyday life or, alternatively, various rhythms can clash (Tavory, 2018). Bringing rhythms together often requires reconciliation (see Bennett, 2015; Gulløv and Winther, 2021; Lefebvre and Levich, 1987; Tavory and Eliasoph, 2013; Zerubavel 1981). Thus, together, different rhythms—such as linear and cyclical rhythms—can create a different sense of belonging through everyday routines (see Bennett, 2015).

Lefebvre and Levich (1987) argued that the everyday is located in the nexus of two modes of repetition: firstly, the cycle that refers to those occurring naturally, such as nights and days, and, secondly, the linear cycle that characterises rational processes and which moves forward. This suggests, alongside Zerubavel's (1981) notion of simultaneous linear and cyclical rhythms, that multiple temporalities can characterise people's lives simultaneously. Unlike cyclical time, linear time is

connected to the modern. Lefebvre (Lefebvre, Rabinovitch, and Wander, 1967/2002: 204) states that the experience of the everyday should be transformed to modern understandings, becoming an activity reflecting self-realisation and self-determination: 'let everyday life become a work of art!'. Also for de Certeau (1984; Sheringham, 2006: 216) everyday life involves potential for invention through temporality; for example, having a sense of the unfolding of a process can lead to ways of determining the outcome of the process.

For Lefebvre, (Lefebvre and Levich, 1987), women are much more affected by everyday life than men, a gendered conceptualisation of everyday life that has received criticism from some scholars (Felski, 2000; 2004; see also Jokinen, 2016). Felski (2000: 84–85) criticises Lefebvre for understanding cyclical and linear as existing in opposition, as well as for viewing linear time as solely linked to the modern individual with the aim of self-realisation. Instead, Felski (2004: 617) argues, all human beings experience everyday life—this lies at the core of everyday life. Furthermore, Felski (2004: 617; see also Baraitser, 2017: 52–53) argues that repetition and routine are vital to maintaining life and making sense of culture, rendering the polarisation between linear time and cyclical time, and, respectively, the masculine and the feminine, misleading. While I agree with Felski that many gendered everyday practices, such as caring for children, are pivotal in both maintaining and understanding life, I take advantage of various theories conceptualizing everyday life, including that of Lefebvre.

The complexity of temporalities of the everyday life also becomes visible when rupture becomes routine, as in Jokinen's (2016) study of people who face precarity in the labour market and adapt an attentiveness to and anticipation of change as routine in precarious situations. Highmore (2010: 6) states that, in addition to 'being ordinary', 'becoming ordinary' exists; this idea suggests paying attention to processes whereby lived relationships become a part of everyday life and routinised.

I take seriously Felski's (2000; 2004) view of everyday life as involving complex temporalities. I thus attempt to capture the variety of rhythms that characterise people's relationships to each other in their everyday lives. To my mind, an analytical gaze of various rhythms in people's lives is pivotal, and doing so allows me to apply Lefebvre's, Zerubavel's, and Tavory's thinking.

The ideas outlined in this section demonstrate that temporality is multi-dimensional and shapes people's lives and relationships in complex ways. However, it becomes clear that we attach qualities to time, thus making our experience of it different from the mathematical notion of time. Furthermore, the past and the present are distinct from one another, yet not entirely separate

entities (Zerubavel, 2003: 25, 37). This underlines the malleability of dimensions of time.

For this study, temporality functions, firstly, as a more general framework assisting me to take into account dimensions of time and accounts describing change, for instance, in analysing my data. Secondly, the perspective of temporality provides specific concepts such as rhythm, past, present, future, and collective memory. These concepts help me to analyse how people's lived relationships are moulded by memories from the past and expectations for the future, and, moreover, how these temporal dimensions entangle in the lived present.

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In analysing family and friends in people's lives I thus draw on various theoretical discussions (Carsten, 2000; Déchaux, 2008; Elias, 1970/1978; Jamieson, 1998; Simmel, 1908/1950; Tavory and Eliasoph, 2013; Zerubavel, 2003). While these discussions represent several theoretical threads, they all share the more abstract idea that various phenomena in people's lives, such as close relationships, possess a processual character and thus unfold over time. The theoretical concepts presented in this chapter—relatedness, intimacy, figuration, and temporality—form an analytical toolkit with which I attempt to open the black box of the nuclear family and examine personal experiences of family and friendship relations. In doing so, I analyse how relatedness to family and friends comes into being in lived relationships, through intertwined levels of institution, personal experience, and relationality.

4 DATA AND METHODS

The data in this dissertation consist of several datasets collected from the same group of participants: 32 individuals forming 16 married couples. In what follows, I introduce the research design, research participants, data collection process for each of the datasets, the analysis of the data, and, finally, the ethical considerations surrounding the research process.

4.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study is rooted in a research project focused on weddings and social networks amongst couples marrying for the first time, a project led by Anna-Maija Castrén. The project, 'Getting Married, Staying Married', was conducted at and funded by the University of Helsinki in 2011–2013. I joined the project in 2012, supported by a personal research grant I received, to begin my doctoral study, under Castrén's supervision and with the aim of collaborating with her to collect data. The first wave of data collection had already been completed in the larger project. The second wave of data collection was postponed until 2014 when we began collecting data.

However, to understand the foundation of the research setting of my study, it is necessary to briefly present here the data collected during the first phase of the project before I joined the team. In total, 19 different-sex couples were recruited to participate in the study, consisting of a couple interview and questionnaire that mapped the wedding guest list and the structure of the social network[3] (for the results of that study, see Castrén, 2019; Castrén and Maillochon, 2009; Maillochon and Castrén, 2011).

The data collected during the first phase provided abundant background information on interviewees' lives, their families of origin, the history of the couple's relationship, kin networks, and friendships. During the second wave, the objective was to focus on family and friendship ties from individuals' points of

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[3] The criteria for participation were that the couple was getting married for the first time during the following months, had already set the date and the venue, and had no children. The research participants were recruited by advertising on wedding sites on the internet, on the notice boards of universities, and in local newspapers, as well as via personal contacts.

view and, furthermore, to gain a picture of couples' shared social networks. To achieve this aim, we planned the research setting and data collection together with Anna-Maija Castrén. The data collected at time point II forms the nucleus of the data used in my study, whereas the data collected in Castrén's research at time point I provides the broader context surrounding participants' specific experiences and accounts for the data collected during the second wave.

At each time point in a longitudinal data collection process, entrance to the study participants needs to be renegotiated (see Miller, 1998). From the 19 couples interviewed at the time of their wedding, all were contacted again. They were asked about their willingness to participate in the second wave of data collection, specifically, to participate in individual interviews and completing a questionnaire on their social networks. In total, 16 couples agreed to participate, and, additionally, one couple had divorced, but the two research participants separately agreed to take part in the second interview. In addition, two couples refused to participate. The 16 married couples who participated in the interviews were included in this study; since this study focuses on personal relationships in a specific setting—heterosexual marriage—the interviews with divorced individuals were excluded from the data.

Saldaña (2015, in Mason, 1996/2018) states that a method refers to how you do something, whilst methodology refers to why you do something in a particular way. Methodology thus refers to the logic behind how answers to the research questions are sought, from designing the research and throughout the research process (Mason, 1996/2018: 32). To build a wider methodological framework to guide my research process, we drew from the configurational approach (Castrén, 2001; Castrén and Ketokivi, 2015; Widmer, 2021; Widmer et al., 2008). The configurational approach highlights the need to methodologically find ways to understand the complexity of social and structural expectations, and individual preferences when analysing personal relationships; both the structure of the network and the experiences of relationships are thus scrutinised (see Castrén and Ketokivi, 2015). By using these two distinct viewpoints—personal experiences, on the one hand, and the interconnectedness of relationships, on the other hand—it is possible to combine an outsider and an insider perspective on family understandings or personal networks.

Within this study specifically, the insider perspective is reached by analysing individuals' interview accounts of how they experience and make sense of their family and other personal relationships. To reach an outsider perspective, the research participants are considered informants of their figuration of relationships (Castrén and Ketokivi, 2015). In this study, this information is used to gain a deeper understanding of the context in which research participants live,

particularly in relation to personal relationships. In what follows, I explain in more detail how the different datasets were generated and analysed. Next, however, I introduce the research participants.

4.2 RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The 32 research participants consisted of 16 women and 16 men, forming 16 heterosexual couples. Participants were 26 to 41 years old, with a mean age of 33.5 years. Among the 16 couples, 14 lived in the metropolitan area of Helsinki, the capital city of Finland. One couple lived in a smaller town about 250 km from Helsinki, where they had settled a few years previously. One couple lived outside the metropolitan area, with the idea of returning to the capital, which they did subsequent to the interviews.

In terms of education, 29 of 32 interviewees had completed either a Bachelor's degree at a university of applied sciences or polytechnic institution or, alternatively, a Master's degree at a university (one had earned a PhD). Two were still enrolled, and one had completed comprehensive schooling only. Most participants were in paid employment; 24 interviewees were employed full-time and eight interviewees either worked part-time (mostly 80%, which is available for parents of young children), were on family leave, unemployed, or were full-time students; one participant was not in the labour market for health reasons. Amongst their professions, participants represented the following: accountant, family counsellor, music teacher, occupational health nurse, musician, researcher, project manager, and managing director. Generally, the interviewees seemed to have relatively solid financial and social resources, although several faced labour market insecurity given working on fixed-term contracts. All but two interviewees were white. One was adopted from abroad, and one had a parent from another country and another ethnicity.

Turning to the interviewees' histories as couples, they had relatively long relationships, varying from 6 to 17 years at the time of the interview. Participants had been married from 3 to 9 years, and all couples except one had cohabited before marrying. Twelve couples had children and four were either voluntarily or involuntarily childless. Those who were parents had one child or two children, in addition to one couple who had three children. Two couples were expecting another child at the time of the interview.

The interviewees present a rather homogenous group regarding the institutional family setting, education, and cultural background, and a generally

middle-class lifestyle. However, they each have their own particular relational setting, including a specific family background and social network. I thus take into consideration the individual variation in relationships beyond the interviewees' 'conventional' family setting—that is, what Mason and Tipper (2008) call the ordinary complexity of kinship.

4.3 GENERATING DATA

The data collected at time point II involved thematic research interviews as well as questionnaires about social networks. Moreover, as a part of the individual interviews, we used a specific methodological tool, the Family Network Method (FNM) (Widmer, 2010), to gain a deeper understanding of research participants' definitions of family. In what follows, I describe the data collected at time point II, which served as the primary data for this study and the different datasets— that is, interviews, the Family Network Method data, and the questionnaire data.

Interview data

To elicit details regarding the experiences of lived relationships, a central theme in sub-studies II and III, interview data provide a multi-faceted and rich source of information. During the interview, the interviewer is involved in the interaction, directs the discussion, and thus is an active part in creating the data for analysis (Charmaz, 2001; Holstein and Gubrium, 1995).

Instead of speaking about collecting data, I prefer talking about generating data (Mason, 1996/2018: 21) to highlight the researcher's involvement in the process. Data are not simply there, ready to be collected, but are instead constructed through a joint effort (Mason, 1996/2018). Furthermore, Charmaz (2001) notes that analysis is present from the beginning of the research process when the researcher makes methodological choices. This mirrors my own experiences, whereby designing the research setting, together with Castrén, and developing an interview guide required analytical thought. At the same time, however, I aimed to maintain an openness to new and emerging themes throughout the research process, as suggested by grounded theory (see Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Johnson (2001) notes that in-depth interviewing begins with common-sense understandings of a lived cultural experience, then aims to explore the boundaries of the context of that experience; it seeks a reflective understanding

that is typically hidden from view. Pursuing this aim, I was interested in understanding the experiences of lived relationships and the understandings of family held by the interviewees.

The semi-structured individual interviews were conducted between March 2014 and June 2015, with each interview taking one to two hours. The interviews took place in the interviewees' homes or on university premises, and on some occasions at an interviewee's workplace, depending upon the interviewees' preferences. I conducted 23 interviews, whereas Castrén conducted nine interviews. All interviews were conducted in Finnish.

The interview guide (see Appendix) consisted of themes concerning everyday practices and sociability amongst friends, family, neighbours, and colleagues; providing and receiving practical help and emotional support; and celebrating holidays. In addition, we retrospectively discussed the evolution of close relationships in more recent years, following marriage and where appropriate parenthood. Under each theme, we had some specific questions that we used to prompt interviewees. However, the discussion often moved smoothly to a new theme introduced by the interviewer or sometimes even the interviewee without always having to ask the questions precisely as formulated in the interview guide.

In general, the interviews can be characterised as quite pleasant and informal situations. At times, I sensed some tension at the beginning, which was of course unsurprising since I personally had previously never met any of the interviewees. However, the atmosphere usually became relaxed quite quickly. Those interviews that took place in the interviewee's home were usually informal. The interviewees often started the conversation by talking about their home, when they had moved there, or if they had done some remodelling to their home. I was usually offered coffee or tea, which I also offered to the interviewees who came to the university premises for the interview. In addition, some interviewees pointed out that their spouse who had already been interviewed by me or Castrén had had a pleasant experience and had told them about the issues discussed, which seemed to create confidence amongst the interviewees.

The interview guide also involved several name generator questions in order to determine, through practical examples, the persons appearing in interviewees' everyday lives, their joint practices, and the exchange of help and support—a part of which could easily go unnoticed because of its everydayness (see Brownlie, 2019; Jokinen, 2005). For example, we asked: Whom do you ask for help when you need someone to carry heavy furniture / lend you a tool / water your plants when you go on a holiday? Did you give someone (whom?) a key to your house? Who babysits for your child? Whom do you provide help to yourself? We also asked questions about sharing difficult emotions and receiving emotional

support. When the interviewees responded to these questions, we wrote down the (first) name of each person that they mentioned. Following the interview, this list of persons was transformed into a questionnaire concerning interviewees' social network, as I explain in further detail below.

Family Network Method data

Interviewees' views on who belongs to their family were collected through the use of a specific methodological tool, the Family Network Method (FNM), developed for investigating peoples' personal understandings of family (Widmer, 2010). The Family Network Method has been employed in several studies on people's understandings of family or their circle of close relationships (Castrén and Widmer, 2015; Wall and Gouveia 2014; Widmer 2006). Here, we aimed to systematically collect the persons each interviewee (*ego*) listed as members of their family and to collect systematic information about the relationships with the persons (*alters*) listed. This supplemented the information provided during the interviews.

Basically, at the end of the interview, interviewees were asked to list all of the individuals whom they considered their family members based on their personal understanding rather than on what is generally meant by family or what other people might think. The interviewer wrote down the names provided on a specific form. Subsequently, we asked for additional information about the persons listed, such as their first name, age, gender, and place of residence.

Moreover, information on the relationship between the interviewee and the person listed—that is, between ego and alter—was collected, including the type of relationship, such as wife, child, father, and so on; duration of the relationship; and frequency and modes of contact. The relationships between persons listed—namely, between alters—was also probed, regarding receiving and providing practical help and emotional support, as well as upsetting the person (for details, see Appendix).

Questionnaire data

Following the interviews, a questionnaire on couples' shared social networks was sent to each couple. Using different kinds of data allows us to understand both the inside and outside perspectives of lived relationships (Castrén and Ketokivi, 2015). As such, while the interviewees act as informants during data generation, the questionnaire data on couples' shared networks of personal relationships provides the outsider perspective.

Generating questionnaire data was linked to conducting the interviews. Specifically, the list of people in the couples' network was created during the interviews by the interviewer listing the names that emerged during the interview discussion. After interviewing both spouses in a couple, the two lists were combined and transferred to a specific form. The questionnaire was then sent via paper to the couple soon after both were interviewed (an electronic format was also available).

Both spouses provided information concerning persons in their network;[4] this included for example the frequency of contact, the duration of the relationship, experienced closeness, and background information on persons in the network such as their age, place of residence, occupation, and family situation. Another section of the questionnaire concerned relationships between all persons included in the network: specifically, we asked who knew whom.[5]

4.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Next, I outline the analyses of the interview data and the Family Network Method data, and, finally, explain how I used the different datasets.

Analysing the interview data

The interview recordings were transcribed into text verbatim, thereby forming a textual corpus for analysis and interpretation. To check the quality of the transcriptions,[6] I listened to each interview whilst reading the transcript on a computer screen. Whereas the power and accuracy of a 'verbatim' interview transcription can be criticised for its inability to fully capture, for example, emotional variation (Poland, 2001), Castrén and I decided that the more or less

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[4] Upon request, I provided practical help for one busy interviewee with a large network, for whom the questionnaire turned out to be rather extensive. We scheduled a meeting at her workplace, and I completed the questionnaire by asking her the questions concerning each person in the network.

[5] This information on relationships between alters provides data for the analysis of the structure of the social network. I did not, however, utilise it in my study. Graphs illustrating couples' shared networks, sent to each couples (see section 4.5), were completed by Castrén using these data.

[6] The interview recordings were carefully transcribed by service providers paid by the University of Helsinki, and by research assistants, Susanna Heino and Samuli Neuvonen. I warmly thank them for their excellent work.

exact transcription, noting longer breaks and pauses, laughing, crying, or a change in tone, would be sufficient for the analysis aimed at addressing our research questions.

In analysing the interview data, I applied methods of abductive analysis, introduced by Tavory and Timmermans (2014). In an attempt to avoid the pitfalls of inductive analysis as well as deductive analysis, Tavory and Timmermans (2014) construct a pragmatist theory of meaning. This is a perspective that allows researchers to note surprising themes in the data. In addition, an abductive analysis highlights abduction or defamiliarisation of the data during the analytical process. The ability to do so requires a vast knowledge of theories, enabling us to mould our habits of thinking and, thereby, perceive surprising themes (Tavory and Timmermans, 2014: 123).

Similarly, Layder (1998) seeks to deconstruct the division between deductive and inductive methodological approaches by introducing a methodological perspective called adaptive theory. Adaptive theory underlines the importance of starting from the data. However, theoretical concepts and frameworks are used at different points of research, providing a direction to the research process and the analysis, a process that complements the idea of abductive analysis (Tavory and Timmermans, 2014).

Following the stages of abductive analysis, I tested my empirical findings in relation to theoretical concepts and discussions instead of approaching the data with a specific set of theoretical concepts. The methods of abductive analysis involve revisiting the phenomenon, defamiliarisation, and alternative casing (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012). Working with transcribed interview data using the Atlas.ti software program served as the first step in defamiliarisation. In both sub-study II and sub-study III, I coded various practices, groups of people, and places. The second round of coding, which itself entails revisiting the phenomenon studied, focused on more abstract themes, such as the qualities of friendship relations (sub-study II) or sibling relations (sub-study III). In sub-study II, I conducted a third round of coding, following Layder (1998). It was only during this phase that I applied some central theoretical concepts as analytical tools, such as the past and the future. For sub-study III, I was already thoroughly familiar with the data, and could apply theoretical concepts as early as the second round of coding.

The rounds of coding also functioned as methods suggested by abductive analysis. During each round of coding, I revisited the phenomenon when approaching the data with a novel focus and attempting to pick out new observations. Defamiliarisation is implemented when working with data in a

textual format, and distance from the phenomenon studied is also established when coding becomes more abstract during each round.

Revisiting the phenomenon suggested by Timmermans and Tavory (2012) also meant taking a step back from defamiliarisation and revisiting individual interview accounts with a novel gaze. At this point in the process, I also took advice from the narrative approach (see Brannen, 2013) and returned to the data, considering individual experiences and accounts in the larger contexts of individuals' lives, testing my initial findings. During the analytical process, in practice, there was a constant movement back and forth between, firstly, individual interview accounts and the more general findings, and, secondly, between empirical observations and theoretical discussions. It was this creative interplay from which the findings emerged.

Analysing the Family Network Method data

For sub-study I, the Family Network Method data served as the primary dataset. Castrén and I analysed these data, firstly, by focusing on the number of people interviewees listed as members of their family and the relationship categories of the people listed. Secondly, we analysed the relationship categories in relation to information provided in the questionnaire, namely, the emotional closeness experienced.

Then, we moved from the general to the individual level by analysing individuals' lists of family members in the context of each interviewee's particular extended family of origin. We aimed to identify who was included and who was left out; this extended to include each interviewee's spouse's extended family of origin. Our analysis allowed us to determine the extent and type of selections research participants exercised when listing their family members, for instance, by listing one of their siblings but not all or listing their mother-in-law but not their father-in-law. At this stage, we also compared the two spouses' lists to determine whether their understandings of family matched or to what extent they aligned. Next, we complemented the analysis by drawing from the questionnaire data, which provided the closeness values for people also listed through the Family Network Method, thereby providing us the opportunity to analyse the connections between family members and the emotional closeness experienced.

In sub-studies II and III, I used the Family Network Method data to provide background information. Knowledge of the personal histories of the interviewees, as well as of their relational settings, emerged from examining the entire dataset providing the basis upon which I could reflect information available in each specific dataset.

Using multiple datasets to understand the figurations of close relationships

I used each of the datasets in different ways for each of the sub-studies. In sub-study I, we aimed to investigate definitions of family, specifically whom the research participants consider members of their own families. To analyse this, we (Anna-Maija Castrén and I) used the Family Network Method data as the primary dataset. We also drew from the interview data to gain a deeper understanding of upon what family understandings were based. The analysis was complemented with the questionnaire data, allowing us to investigate family relationships as embedded within the couple's combined network. Moreover, emotional closeness values were developed from the questionnaire data allowing us to examine the relationships between interviewees and the persons listed as their family.

Different from sub-study I, in sub-studies II and III, I focused on research participants' accounts of their lived relationships with friends and siblings, respectively. To investigate their experiences and the accounts of their relationships, I used individual research interviews with 32 research participants as the primary dataset. Furthermore, the questionnaire data, along with the Family Network Method dataset and, additionally, the data collected at time point I, provided a deeper context for the interviews forming the core of sub-studies II and III. These data allowed me to check details that were missing in the interviewees, and to form a more detailed understanding of each interviewee's relational setting.

Each sub-study was thus based on the analysis of a primary dataset: sub-study I focused on the Family Network Method dataset, and sub-studies II and III relied on individual interview data. In addition, a specific secondary dataset was used for each of the sub-studies. Moreover, the data collected at time point I, consisting of couple interviews with the same research participants as well as questionnaires, provided information on the couple's background, their history, and their social network. Furthermore, some of the data collected at time point II were used as background material. This contextual information was used specifically in planning the research design, creating the interview guide, and preparing for the interviews. However, it was not analysed for this study, and I thus classify it as contextual data. The use of specific datasets is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. The use of primary data, secondary data, and contextual data in sub-studies I, II, and III

	Individual interviews, Time point II	Family Network Method data, Time point II	Questionnaire data, Time point II	Couple interviews & questionnaires, Time point I
Sub-study I	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Contextual
Sub-study II	Primary	Contextual	Secondary	Contextual
Sub-study III	Primary	Secondary	Secondary	Contextual

By using these different kinds of data, I examine close relationships from two different perspectives: the insider perspective provided through interview accounts of personal experiences, and the outsider perspective provided through the Family Network Method data and questionnaire data, which provide systematic information on an individual's network (see Castrén and Ketokivi 2015). In this way, it becomes possible to gain a deeper understanding of what family and other close relationships mean to people.

4.5 RESEARCHING ETHICALLY

Ethical questions were considered throughout the research process, remaining integrated into how I think about doing research, generating data, and analysing and reporting findings. Research ethics extends to the general accountability of the research; the researcher should be transparent regarding the epistemological, ontological, theoretical, and personal assumptions shaping the research, specifically regarding the analysis and interpretation (Doucet and Mauthner, 2012). As such, from the beginning of the research process I reflected upon my methodological choices as well as upon my ways of informing, including, and encountering interviewees.

Research participants were contacted and asked about their willingness to participate in the second phase of the study, thereby also providing them the opportunity to refuse, which two couples did. We provided written information about the purpose of the study and the practicalities concerning the interviews

and questionnaires to participants. In addition, participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any point during the data generation.

Research interviews concerning people's personal lives and experiences can touch upon sensitive, deeply personal matters, and demand sensitivity from the researcher throughout the interview (Mason, 2018/1996). In practice, approaching personal matters in a sensitive way during an interview requires, in addition to a carefully planned interview guide, that the researcher is continuously sensitive during the interaction within the research setting (Mason, 1996/2018: 92–96). This meant, for example, that I listened to the interviewee carefully, such that I was able to modify the next question in a sensitive way. It is not always possible to know in advance which topics are experienced as highly sensitive by a particular interviewee. For example, for some of the interviewees, the question about whether they had children, asked at the beginning of the interview, was neutral or provided an opening to an event filled with joy, whereas for others it was more problematic. In the latter instances, I moved quickly to other themes to stabilise the situation and create an atmosphere of confidence. Two interviews became quite emotional for the interviewees. In these cases, I sent an email a few days later, asking how they were doing after the interview, and received positive responses in both cases. I also corresponded via email with other interviewees. For example, interviewees remembered an old friend or friend-at-a-distance that they wanted to mention.

We promised the couples to send them a graph illustrating their shared social network following our interviews, which took place after the questionnaires were sent to participants, couples completed and returned them, and then we saved the questionnaires. We sent each couple their graph with a note; this represented not only a nice way to thank participants for their time, but also highlighted the interaction between the research participants and researchers.

Researching couples involves specific ethical issues that must be considered. Although the research participants were interviewed separately, they were aware that their spouse was also interviewed about the same topics. It was important to establish confidence in that what they shared during their individual interviews would not be disclosed to the spouse in any way. This was successfully executed such that in general the interviewees did not seem to hesitate to talk about, for example, a spouse's family of origin or a spouse's friendships. However, the most sensitive issue in this regard was connected to the questionnaires about the couples' shared social network. The spouses separately completed one form that included the same questions posted to both respondents. They were thus able to see each other's answers, which could possibly be problematic and create tension between spouses. In fact, two couples did not send back the questionnaire, not

indicating their reason. However, the primary reason for this was likely that the questionnaire was quite extensive; one interviewee already anticipated during the interview that he would probably not find the time to complete it.

Another example of the wide spectrum of issues that require ethical consideration is the question of how to examine 'the insignificant', as Brownlie (2019) points out. How do we reassure the interviewees that we are interested in their personal everyday lives even if they might feel that it is too insignificant of a matter? These examples highlight the dialogical character of an interview situation in which the researcher constantly anticipates and shapes the next question in response to how the interaction is perceived by the interviewee. While the interview method in general allows for flexibility, such as pursuing emerging leads (Charmaz, 2001), I suggest that flexibility extends to sensitivity in knowing which leads should not be pursued.

Preserving the anonymity of the research participants is a standard procedure in adhering to research ethics. In this study, it consists of not only using pseudonyms when referring to the interviewees or using quotes in research articles, but also the various procedures in place to protect the anonymity of those dozens of individuals that the interviewees mentioned in their interviews and questionnaires about their social network. Therefore, when drafting research articles, I carefully considered every detail disclosed about the interviewees, their close relationships, and their social networks.

Mason (1996/2018: 103–104) notes that ethics in qualitative research is extensive and, during the analysis and writing process, ethics is not limited to guaranteeing anonymity. Instead, researchers should ask themselves questions about the quality of the analysis. Along this line of thought, I have reflected upon whether my analysis does justice to the accounts of the personal lives and relationships provided by the interviewees, and whether the points I ultimately make in this dissertation have a solid empirical foundation. While self-reflectivity is never finished, I can say that throughout the research process I have done my very best.

5 SUMMARIES OF SUB-STUDIES I–III

In what follows, I summarise each of the sub-studies, highlighting the findings from each study.

5.1 SUB-STUDY I: UNDERSTANDINGS OF FAMILY AMONG WIVES AND HUSBANDS: RECONCILING EMOTIONAL CLOSENESS AND CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS

Sub-study I examines the personal understandings of who belongs to a family amongst people living in a married couple with or without children. We—co-author Anna-Maija Castrén and I—investigated how personal understandings of family are constructed by balancing individual preferences with the general rules of kinship. The research participants live in their first (heterosexual) marriage, in most cases as the parents of young children, thereby representing a structural setting often called 'the family' (see Smart, 2007; Yesilova, 2009). In this study, we looked beyond the institutional setting of the couple and the nuclear family, and instead examined whether and to which extent the particular family form of the nuclear family determines individuals' personal understandings of who belongs to their family. In doing so, we applied a configurational perspective highlighting families as dynamic constellations of relationships characterised by interdependencies (Widmer et al., 2008; Widmer, 2010; Castrén and Ketokivi, 2015).

The Finnish word *perhe* refers to a smaller number of people than the English word family. As a result of developments in the twentieth century, *perhe* came to mean the unit of (married) parents and their biological children (Yesilova, 2009). The Finnish word *suku,* family or kin in English, refers to a larger number of people usually related by genealogy or an alliance. Consequently, in the Finnish cultural context, referring to someone as family indicates a rather significant bond.

We interviewed 32 individuals from 16 married couples. More specifically, the dataset consists of three types of data. Firstly, we collected information on family conceptions using the Family Network Method (FNM) questionnaire completed at the end of interviews. FNM is a tool developed to collect information on

people's personal understandings of family, and, additionally, on interactions between family members (see Widmer, 2010). FNM data serve as the primary dataset for the analysis in this sub-study. Secondly, when necessary, we drew from the individual research interviews; and thirdly, we consulted the mapping of interviewees' shared social networks with their spouses that we created from the questionnaire data.

The interviewees were asked to name those individuals they considered as belonging to their family based on their personal view. The results revealed a remarkable variety of family understandings both at the level of individuals and regarding the logics through which people were listed as family members. The number of persons listed ranged from 2 to 21. While all of the interviewees named their spouse and children (if they had any), all but six interviewees also named other people, most often their parents, one or all of their siblings, or their parents-in-law. The results thus show an individual selectivity regarding family understandings. This was often, but not always, in line with the emotional closeness felt.

For all 16 couples, those family members named as belonging to the family by the wife and the husband were in part different. In other words, none of the couples had two identical lists. Sometimes, they shared a similar logic, such as when both spouses listed their partner, child, and their own parents. But, mostly, the divergence of spouses' family understandings stemmed from differences regarding how they demarcated family. In some cases, one of the spouses followed the nuclear family model in understanding family, while the other spouse had a more inclusive understanding. Alternatively, both spouses conceived of family in an inclusive way, but quite differently from each other. The interviewees individually selected family and other close people, thus reconciling their personal affiliation, on the one hand, and the general rules of kinship, on the other. Our results show that individual selectivity is most prominent when a friend is considered family, as well we when only one or a few individuals from a specific kinship category, such as siblings, are considered family, while others are not.

These findings demonstrate that the institutional setting of a married couple, with or without children, does not predetermine a person's family understanding in any specific way. While emotional closeness was typically connected to listing a person as a member of one's family, we found three other tendencies. Firstly, the growing significance of emotional closeness, demonstrated by including non-kin friends as family; secondly, the quality of the dyadic relationship within the kinship structure, visible when only one person from a specific kinship category was listed as family; and, thirdly, when a person is listed as family based not on

dyadic closeness but rather the transitivity (see Krackhardt, 1987) of family belonging, such as when the not-close husband of a close sister was listed as a family member.

This study demonstrates that the family form does not determine interviewees' views on who constitutes family. Instead, the interviewees defined their family in ways that combined cultural expectations regarding family alongside individual affinity, resulting in family understandings that reflect what Déchaux (2002) calls a floating type of family membership. We argue that family belonging is understood in terms of balancing between feelings of emotional closeness, genealogical proximity, and cultural expectations. Taken together, these produce diverse and sometimes conflicting tendencies of family belonging delineated in our analysis.

5.2 SUB-STUDY II: TEMPORALITIES OF FRIENDSHIP: ADULTS' FRIENDS IN EVERYDAY FAMILY LIFE AND BEYOND

In sub-study II, I examined how close friendships are lived and made sense of through the use different temporalities. The modern ideal of friendship underlines individual choice and affinity such that friendships are viewed as voluntarily chosen and cherished, and, furthermore, based on trust and disclosure, preferably dyadic (Allan, 2008; Jamieson, 1998; Silver, 1990). Living this ideal is often challenged by marriage and family in two ways. Firstly, family responsibilities usually strongly shape individuals' opportunities to engage in leisure-time activities with friends. Secondly, the ideal of a companionate marriage may contradict close dyadic friendships (Oliker, 1989, 1998).

Using a temporal approach, I aimed to elicit the variety of experiences of lived friendship relations among individuals during the early years of marriage. The data consist of interviews with 32 individuals forming 16 couples, collected in 2014–2015. Additionally, I used questionnaires to systematically map the shared social network of the couples in order to gain a more detailed picture of the relational setting of each interviewee.

I examined how different dimensions of time, such as past, present, and future, as well as rhythms and moments, were used in order to live and make sense of friendships (see Mason, 2018; May, 2016; 2017; Tavory and Eliasoph 2013; Zerubavel, 1981; 2003). Based on the analysis, I identified three temporalities of

friendship: 1) friendship here and now; 2) friendship in cyclical time; and 3) friendship based on the past and revived through timeless moments.

Firstly, friendship here and now refers to friendships lived in everyday surroundings, such as homes, gardens, and courtyards, often with neighbours who had become good friends. Friendship practices entangled daily family practices, such as cooking and spending time in the yard with children. These friendships often involved both parents and their young children and they were thus not dyadic. The friendships did not have a long history nor were they planned ahead. Instead, they were lived and experienced as significant here and now, as part of the rhythms of everyday life, and specifically in domestic spaces. Practices of intimacy (see Jamieson, 2011) with friends entangled with ordinary family practices, rooting the friendships in the domestic sphere and the realm of the everyday life.

Secondly, friendship in cyclical time refers to friendships that were lived through an established set of practices that repeated themselves again and again through time. For example, a group of friends might establish their own traditions, such as a summer kick-off party gathering friends with their spouses and children or a cultural trip amongst friends which takes place a few times every year. These practices required reconciliation of various rhythms of several individuals and families (Tavory and Eliasoph, 2013), and, furthermore, the traditions were repeated year after year with the same concept. Therefore, they formed a structure of practices that sustained the friendship. Within this structure and through repetition, a rhythm of its own emerged, situated outside the rhythms of everyday life within cyclical time (see Zerubavel, 1981).

Thirdly, friendship based on the past and revived through timeless moments refers to friendships that have a long shared history and are characterised by trust, disclosure, and emotional closeness. These friendships are usually dyadic and do not involve partners or children. The friends might be infrequently in contact, but, importantly, the moment of reunion is pivotal in how the friendship is lived and described. The moments of reunion are moments out of time, providing a strong sense of belonging and not having been apart (see Mason, 2018). For the friendship, remembering these moments, as well as imagining and anticipating similar moments in the future, become the core of the friendship; they become characterised by a dyadic intimacy as Simmel (1908/1950) described.

These three temporalities of friendship distinguished in my analysis illustrate how varied friendships are lived and experienced by people living with a spouse or within a nuclear family. While some friendships are intertwined with everyday practices amongst family, such as within friendships 'here and now', other

friendships remain dyadic, involving intimacy as outlined by Simmel, and simultaneously challenging the experience of linear time. This study contributes to our understanding of contemporary friendships as lived within and beyond the family, and, moreover, to a more general sociological discussion on the use of temporality in analysing social life.

5.3 SUB-STUDY III: SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS IN ADULTHOOD: CHANGING FAMILY FIGURATIONS, KINSHIP, AND TEMPORAL LAYERS

Sub-study III investigates sibling relationships as lived and experienced as part of individuals' larger networks of family, kin, and friends—namely, as family figurations. Previous research demonstrates that sibling relations can serve as a source of support, although tensions are common and the frequency of contact can vary greatly during adulthood (Allan, 1977; Cicirelli, 1995; Connidis, 2020; Cumming and Schneider, 1961; Mauthner, 2005). However, experiences of sibling relationships as part of people's everyday lives have received scant attention. Thus, this study contributes to how people make sense or their sibling relationships as embedded in family figurations. Drawing upon Norbert Elias's (1970/1978) conceptualisation of figuration and his process sociology, I analyse sibling relationships as interconnected to other relationships, demonstrating that they can be close, tense, or ambivalent, and that they are understood specifically within the context of family figurations.

Methodologically, in order to apply Elias's figurational sociology, I employed the configurational approach (Widmer et al., 2008) by combining the analysis of the interview accounts with an examination of the structure of the figurations for the research participants (Castrén and Ketokivi, 2015). The primary data for this study consist of in-depth interviews with 32 individuals from 16 married couples, supplemented with questionnaire data that systematically map the structure of interviewees' social networks, as well as the Family Network Method data (see Widmer, 2010). I used these secondary data to situate the interview accounts of sibling relationships within the framework of the unique relational context in which each interviewee lived. Furthermore, the fact that siblings fell with the variety of topics discussed during the interviews benefits the research setting in two specific ways. Firstly, the data describe diverse sibling relationships regardless of the emotional closeness and the frequency of interactions. Secondly,

sibling relationships were made sense of genuinely within the context of discussing relationships with family, kin, and friends (on themes in the interview guide, see Appendix).

Building upon Elias's (1970/1978; 1986/2009) conceptualisation of figuration, I analysed accounts of sibling relationships as embedded in the figuration of interdependent relationships under constant change. I focused on three distinct, yet interconnected ways in which sibling relationships were made sense of within the framework of the figuration. Firstly, sibling relationships were experienced as continuous and durable even if contact relied exclusively on parents or other members of the family and kin. Family, especially parents, could function as mediators, thus providing more neutral opportunities for siblings to meet. Despite tensions or disputes which created ambivalence (see Lüscher, 2011), the relationship was expected to continue. Furthermore, sustaining an ambivalent relationship was usually a joint effort not only from the siblings themselves, but from the broader family. But not all sibling relationships had support from family; in some cases the sibling relationships was embedded in a figuration of rather loose ties that could not sustain the relationship. These sibling relationship were more vulnerable to estrangement or rupture.

Secondly, the analysis showed that change within the family figuration, highlighted by Elias (1970/1978) as a central characteristic of any figuration, shaped sibling relationships. As interconnected with other family relationships, sibling relationships unfold and shift over time. The analysis demonstrated that the shift can be rapid, such as when a new person enters the family figuration, thus occupying an open valency (see Elias, 1939; 1969/2009) and changing the dynamic of the entire figuration. Alternatively, small changes can accumulate within the figuration over a long period of time, resulting in a dynamic similar to the slow process described by Finch and Mason (1993) concerning family responsibilities.

Thirdly, sibling relationships have temporal layers that have influence over how people experience them in the present. The analysis showed that shared childhood memories and the closeness emerging from them can be important when people make sense of sibling relationships that are geographically and emotionally distant in the present. Also, the collective memory (see Halbwachs, 1941/1992) of a family, and of a sibling group, can become decisive in how a sense of 'we' evolves, building upon the genealogical kinship tie (cf. Schneider, 1968/1980).

The findings show that sibling relationships unfold as multidimensional, with simultaneously existing closeness and tension, variating ways of keeping in contact, and temporal layers. Sibling relationships continue to be tightly

connected to the family figuration. For example, movement within the figuration is connected to change within sibling relationships, and additionally, the continuity of the figuration allows sibling relationships to endure. Moreover, when the family figuration suffered fractures and could thus not support a sibling relationship, it made the relationship vulnerable to a rupture.

This study contributes to our understanding of sibship and family and, furthermore, to the broader sociological discussion by demonstrating how Elias's process sociology can be applied to understanding interconnectedness and relational processes in contemporary lives.

6 FROM EMPIRICAL FINDINGS TO ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS: OVERLAPPING INTIMACIES AND RELATEDNESS

In this chapter I discuss the findings from the three sub-studies. Firstly, I show how intimacy emerges in lived relationships with friends and siblings, and how it is entangled with personal understandings of family. Secondly, I describe the ways in which temporality is used to make sense of close relationships. Thirdly, I show how lived intimacies with family and friends can overlap, and how these overlapping intimacies are temporally organised. Finally, I discuss how family understandings, intimacy, and temporality contribute to how relatedness among family and friends comes into existence.

As I noted in Chapter 3.1, I use the term *relatedness* when referring to what is created within the relationships under consideration in this research. The concept of relatedness is more open than kinship, and more capable of empirically capturing the variation found regarding who is intrinsic to whose life and how (Carsten, 2000; 2013). In other words, relatedness provides a conceptual tool via which to examine how people construct ties with each other and give such ties meaning (Déchaux, 2008). For a more detailed discussion on relatedness, see Chapter 3.1.

6.1 INTIMACY AND FAMILY UNDERSTANDINGS INTERTWINED

The participants of this study live in a married heterosexual couple with or without children, a family setting that needs no justification or explanation, but is often considered ordinary if not normative. Thus, participants are not often put in the position of justifying to themselves or others their experiences of family relatedness in the same way that people whose relationships are shaped by, for instance, adoption or donor conception are (see Högbacka, 2016; Nordqvist and Smart, 2014). However, their interview accounts showed that their experiences of family relatedness can draw upon various sources.

One element of building relatedness stems from intimacy, or feeling emotionally close to each other. In this study, intimacy refers to emotional and cognitive closeness, experiences that involve a shared feeling of being 'of like mind', caring for each other, providing mutual support, and being special to each other (Jamieson, 2011).

From the personal definitions of family analysed in sub-study I, intimacy and emotional closeness intertwined with family understandings in a complex way. We analysed lists of persons understood as part of the family collected using the Family Network Method, interview discussions of these relationships as well as responses to a question of emotional closeness provided from the questionnaires on networks of relationships. While emotional closeness can only be considered a part of how intimacy is formed, it is an important indicator of experiencing someone as significant to one's life. These results show that most individuals listed as members of a family were experienced as emotionally close. However, interviewees' family understandings also extended to persons who were not considered particularly close. This demonstrates that family can be understood based on a genealogical connection, putting aside the lack of emotional closeness within a relationship. This is the case, for example, when an interviewee included all members of their family of origin as family members even if a sibling was not considered emotionally close to them.

Similarly, emotionally close, intimate, and highly significant relationships of genealogical connection are not always included in the definition of family. What is the rationale behind excluding, for example, an emotionally close sibling when listing family members? Here, it seems that family is interpreted alongside institutional terms, as a nuclear family of two parents and their children. Emotional closeness, intimacy, and being a significant part of each other's lives are not sufficient reasons for everyone to extend their personal understanding of family.

Most often, however, family understandings are shaped in ways that also allow varying degrees of selectivity and choice, thereby forming a more complex logic of how family is understood. For example, defining one's family to include friends means stepping outside the kinship structure. This suggests that family relatedness is understood in a way that has little to do with the bedrock of Western kinship: genealogy and law (Schneider, 1968/1980). Alternatively, when a person's understanding of their family includes one sibling but not the other, thereby demonstrating selectivity within a specific relational category, such choices seem based on personal preferences instead of kinship categories. These practices of choosing and combining different logics of understanding family reflect the idea of claiming a person as one's own or, respectively, dropping people

from the sphere of family (Edwards and Strathern, 2000). The choice can be meaningful for a variety of reasons, such as due to experienced emotional closeness or an active participation in each other's lives in the present (see Sahlins, 2013). It can also reflect experiences of such affinities in the past, making visible a temporal layer to how family is understood.

Intimacy in friendship relations

In addition to defining family, relationships with family and friends are lived in everyday life, often providing intimacy, support, opportunities for disclosure, and care. Sub-study II reveals that practices of intimacy (Jamieson, 2011) are often significant for relationships between friends. Firstly, friendships can intertwine with family practices in everyday life, such as spending time together, cooking, hanging out in a communal courtyard, and providing practical help to one another. These activities reflect Weber's (2013) notion of practical kinship. Intimacy thus involves not just two friends, but entire nuclear families and becomes part of the flow of everyday life. In addition, intimacy is often inseparable from a feeling of belonging in the neighbourhood and community (see Kuurne and Gómez, 2019).

Secondly, practices of intimacy can also be located outside of everyday life, such as through a cycle of gatherings that take place during the year. This occurs when friends develop their own traditions, following them during the year again and again. Such friendships can be experienced as meaningful and intimate as those that are cherished on a daily basis—the intimacy is just not part of the everyday life. In both cases, intimacy is usually collective and extends to involve a larger group of friends or spouses and children.

Thirdly, sub-study II also reveals a specific kind of intimacy that can emerge in dyadic friendships. The emotional connection between two friends is strong, although contact may be quite infrequent. Here, the friendship is based on a shared past, sometimes extending into childhood, and involves a deep knowledge of the other (see Jamieson, 1998). The current relationship is made sense of, to a significant extent, by recalling the past (see May, 2016). Thus, intimacy stems from the shared past and is cherished and revived during reunions. As some interviewees described, upon encountering one another, they feel as though they were never apart or were moved to tears, thus describing powerful sensations (see Mason, 2018). The sensation experienced at the shared moment of reunion becomes the focal point for intimacy within the friendship. This mechanism follows Simmel's (1908/1950: 126–127) conceptualisation of how true intimacy, possible only in dyads, arises. In Simmel's view, intimacy exists in its 'pure' form

within a dyad, which also requires excluding a 'third'. Within these friendships in fact, the relationship is cherished between the two original friends, but excludes, for instance, spouses. Intimacy lay beyond the everyday life but is still experienced as strong and meaningful. That intimacy also becomes lived, to a significant extent, in people's minds whilst apart. I suggest that remembering, imagining, and thinking about the other person (cf. Mason, 2018) become central practices of intimacy (see Jamieson, 2011) within significant dyadic friendships characterised by rare contact.

Whilst I agree with Eve (2002) that friendship relations are never completely individual (or dyadic) and are also always connected to a societal level (see Adams and Allan, 1997), I suggest that friendship relations can sometimes have a rather independent character. This is the case in dyadic friendships lived outside everyday life, relationships in which intimacy seems unaffected by 'thirds' such as spouses, children, or geographical distance. Jallinoja (2000: 88–89) notes that, in a couple relationship, a 'third' forces the two parts to notice the outside, which marks a turning point in the relationship. Similarly, in an intimate friendship relation, 'thirds' may question the strength and intimacy of the dyad.

Intimacy in sibling relations

In sibling relationships, intimacy can be lived in similar terms as in friendships. As sub-study III demonstrates, sibling relationships can involve caring for each other, giving advice to one another, and spending time together— that is, the practices of intimacy (Jamieson, 2011). However, not all sibling relationships resemble close friendships. Siblings may only meet during larger family gatherings or holidays such as Christmas, and they might not have much in common with one another. The findings demonstrate that relationships between siblings are often experienced as tense. However, they may simultaneously be considered intimate, rendering the relationship ambivalent (see Hillcoat-Nallétamby and Phillips, 2011; Lüscher, 2011; Merton and Barber, 1963/1976). Thus, remarkable variation characterises how sibling relationships are lived.

Despite differences of opinion, tensions, periods of geographic distance, or disputes, sibling relationships appear lasting and durable in ways that the interviewees found hard to describe. The durability has its roots in the interconnectedness of relationships, as pointed out by Elias (1970/1978). Sibling relationships are to a significant extent sustained by family. For example, parents might invite their adult children to visit or the larger family provides occasions for siblings to meet each other at Christmas, Easter, or birthdays. Parents can also

be mediators in sibling relationships, providing diplomatic means via which to soothe tensions or resolve conflicts. The findings show that parents' contributions and the role of the larger family and kin groups were viewed positively. This diverges from Winther et al.'s (2015: 75) findings in a study among children and young people, whereby parents' attempts to support intimacy between siblings in blended family contexts were experienced by children as too much and rather intrusive. Here, however, the interconnectedness of relationships is in fact considered positively and, furthermore, it renders sibling relationships durable.

Intimacy within sibling relationships is not fundamentally dyadic. Instead, sub-study III demonstrates that intimacy was described as emerging from the family figuration through shared experiences amongst family and forming a particular family history. While practices of intimacy (see Jamieson, 2011) may, as I noted above, in everyday life take place between two siblings exclusively, intimacy is not created and sustained solely by these practices. Instead, intimacy becomes experienced in terms of the figuration; specifically, it intertwines family history and other people within the family, thus showing a more collective character. This type of intimacy appears quite different to the intimacy described by Simmel (1908/1950) and from the intimacy characterised in a dyadic friendship.

Comparing friendship relations and sibling relations from the perspective of intimacy, it becomes clear that they have similar as well as distinct features. Similar practices of intimacy (see Jamieson, 2011) can occur amongst friends and amongst siblings, such as spending time together, providing practical help to one another, giving and receiving advice and support, and expressing meaning. The distinction, however, lies in the different origins of intimacy when comparing friendship and sibling relations. Sibling relations are fundamentally connected to the family figuration (see Elias, 1970/1978), deriving their meaning as intertwined with shared experiences and history amongst family, the dynamic within a family, and, consequently, the intimacy that emerges from this entanglement.

Family understandings and intimacy

Returning to personal understandings of family, intimacy has clear connections to such understandings when it comes to friendship relations. When a friend is considered a member of one's family, as was the case for several interviewees, that individual is clearly a close friend. The friendship in question is typically of a long duration, and the individual is brought into the family sphere by spending holidays together, visiting one another regularly, and in some cases

by asking the friend to be a godparent to a new-born child. Ultimately, the friend is also listed as a member of one's family. However, not everyone lists a close friend as family; this indicates that the definition of family extends to friends only by some, whilst others consider a genealogical connection pivotal.

Regarding intimacy in sibling relationships and understandings of family, the picture becomes more complicated. While some consider their emotionally close sibling a family member, some do not. Moreover, some consider their not-close sibling a family member, while others do not. Some interviewees also listed only one of their siblings as family, excluding other siblings. It seems, then, that there are multiple dynamics of inclusion and exclusion occurring here (see Castrén and Högbacka, 2014; Young, 1998). For example, intimacy is typically connected to individual choices, such that interviewees might choose a particularly intimate sibling as a family member; following the logics of intimacy and individual choice, leaving another sibling out of the definition of 'family' makes perfect sense to individuals making such a choice (see Edward and Strathern, 2000).

The findings of sub-studies I, II, and III, and my discussion here, make visible that, while intimacy and a feeling of emotional closeness are important in how individuals define their own family, the entire picture is much more complex. Personal understandings of family are formed through individual logics that combine at least cultural expectations, genealogical connections, experiences of intimacy, and individual preferences. The complex entanglement of intimacy as lived in relationships in daily life, on the one hand, and various logics of understanding family, on the other, bring to the fore that people can be significant to each other in multiple ways.

These findings suggest that even if the nucleus of a family, consisting of a spouse (and children), is not contested, beyond this nucleus, family is understood using multiple logics that combine individual experiences of intimacy, the structure of a family configuration, and the genealogical connections. This mirrors what Lück and Ruckdeschel (2018: 739) noted concerning family understandings amongst German adults, namely, that a 'common cultural conception of the family is very clear in its core and blurred in its outer contours'. All of these different ways of experiencing and making sense of relatedness can be equally meaningful (cf. Nordqvist, 2014). Furthermore, relationships and figurations shift constantly, and, therefore, relatedness is also created through temporal layers. I turn now to discuss temporality in more detail.

6.2 TEMPORALITY IN MAKING SENSE OF RELATIONSHIPS

The dimensions of temporality, such as past, present, future, and rhythms, shape personal relationships. Our findings reveal that interviewees use these dimensions to make sense of their relationships.

In sub-study II, I identified the different temporalities of friendship. One of these temporalities based on the present involved reconciling various rhythms of everyday life (Zerubavel, 1981), and resulted in a friendship 'here and now'. These friendships are lived primarily in one's immediate surroundings and entangle everyday practices such as hanging out in the courtyard, cooking together, babysitting on short notice, and lending tools to one another. From the perspective of temporality, these friendships become part of the flow of everyday life; they may not have a long, shared past nor are they planned ahead for the future. Instead, they are lived in the here and now. Furthermore, they merged with one's everyday life smoothly, without having to schedule, plan much in advance, or make appointments, thereby becoming a part of the temporal landscape (Tavory and Eliasoph, 2013). However, reconciling various rhythms of everyday life never happens by itself, but instead requires what Tavory and Eliasoph call (2013) minor acts of coordination.

At first glance, friendships 'here and now' seem synchronised with linear time. While people are aware of the past and future, these dimensions do not play a significant role, such that the focus lies on the present. At the same time, practices within these friendships intertwine with ordinary family practices, such as taking care of children, cooking, spending time in the courtyard watching children play, or gardening. These friendships are lived within the material reality of homes, gardens, and yards, and thus intertwined spatially, materially, and temporally with everyday life (see Bowlby, 2011; Heinonen, 2022). This entangling of dimensions and objects constitutes a multidimensional everyday life (cf. Ingold, 2011; Mason, 2018).

Friendships are deeply embedded within the mundane, the daily routines that are repeated in cyclical time (cf. Felski, 2000). Everyday practices and routines with the aim of maintaining life within a family become entangled with practices of intimacy (see Jamieson, 2011) amongst friends. The process by which friendship practices become part of everyday life follows Highmore's (2010) notion of 'becoming ordinary'. These friendships here and now reflect Felski's (2000: 81) conceptualisation of the everyday; its temporality relies on repetition, is spatially connected to the sense of home, and is characterised by habit. And, yet, linear time characterises how these friendships are rooted in the present instead of the past or the future.

Sometimes various rhythms clash and attempts to reconcile rhythms become more explicit (Tavory and Eliasoph, 2013). This was the case in another temporality of friendship I identified in sub-study II. Here, friends created their own traditions and repeated them at specific, planned times and places. Whilst these traditions can also be seen repetitive and habitualised, they are, however, considered by their participants more like ruptures to everyday life (cf. Lefebvre 2002; cf. Felski, 2000). These gatherings require work, such as coordinating the calendars of various families and making plans well in advance. When gatherings are repeated in a similar manner, they form a cyclic pattern, resulting in a rhythm of their own. The rhythm can be understood by applying Zerubavel's (2003: 23–25) concept of historical rhyming via which time is simultaneously linear and cyclical (see also Lefebvre and Levich, 1987).

Intimacy can be based on a shared past in a relationship, such that individuals make sense of the present relationship by remembering and thinking about the past (see Mason, 2018; May, 2016). Shared experiences and entangled lives produce a *collective memory*, reflecting what was previously shared and what is later jointly remembered (Halbwachs, 1950/1980). Each group develops its own collective memory over time. This can be a group of close friends from high school or a family perhaps extended over time as children grow up and find partners, such as those reported by participants in this study. Family history and a collective memory provide a reference point for individuals, something that exists without the self but is simultaneously a part of the self (Déchaux, 2002).

The collective memory of the group is often cherished as gatherings of friends or with family which take place year round, making the group stronger and more connected (see Etzioni, 2004; Gillis, 1997). Gatherings are repeated time and again in a cyclical manner. These gatherings mark 'ritual time' (Gillis, 2004: 98–99) or 'time out of time' (Mason and Muir, 2013; May, 2016). Ritual time is different from time as experienced in daily life, because it often involves a change of place and pace (Shaw, 2001), such as slowing down during the Christmas holidays and gathering at parents' homes. Ritual time provides people an opportunity to remember and to have a periodic fusion with the past (Zerubavel, 2003: 45–46). This also provides an opportunity to jointly remember and create new memories, thereby cherishing and building a collective memory.

The past is also used to make sense of relationships in the present (see May, 2016; 2018). As I described in the previous chapter, some dyadic friendships strongly relied on a shared history and were experienced as intimate, despite two friends hardly remaining in touch at all. The experience of intimacy can be revived during moments of encounters, thereby providing a strong sense of connection. Recalling the moments of a reunion specifically from the perspective of

temporality appears to mark a disruption in linear time (Mason, 2018). While a reunion with a long-distance friend takes place in less formal circumstances than the family celebrations mentioned above, the experience of connection is similar to that experienced in 'ritual time' (cf. Gillis, 2004). In both cases, the moment provides a strong sense of connection through a fusion (even if only momentary) with the past (see Zerubavel, 2003). These findings render visible that temporality brings to the fore the differences regarding how intimacy within relationships emerges and is sustained.

Furthermore, sibling relationships are lived and made sense of as connected to the family figuration, as I demonstrated in sub-study III. When examining sibling relationships from the perspective of temporality, two major differences can be distinguished when compared with friendship relations. The first difference is that sibling relationships are strongly connected to other relationships in the sphere of family and are made sense of within the context of the family figuration. Consequently, shared experiences with siblings bring a temporal layer to how sibling relationships are lived and understood. This is connected to past in the form of a family history, and to the present as sibling relationships are part of sometimes large and complex family figurations undergoing constant change (see Elias, 1970/1978). Moreover, there is a temporal layer through the future to sibling relationships. Because family is viewed as continuous in some form or the other despite change, sibling relationships embedded in the family figuration are considered durable across time.

The second particularity characterising sibling relationships from the perspective of temporality concerns the self. My findings from sub-study III suggest that siblings can be considered a part of the self. This was so despite tensions, geographical distance, or a lack of contact; it would be so even if siblings did not see each other in a decade, as one interviewee reckoned. Living sibling relationships can thus present a process through which not only relationships acquire their meanings, but also the self unfolds, thereby acquiring its identity.

This follows Elias's (1970/1978) idea of how the self is connected to a shifting figuration (see also Roseneil and Ketokivi, 2016). A sibling can be strongly felt as a part of the self, experienced independently from the extent (or lack) of sharing practices of intimacy, or without really being a part of each other's everyday lives (see Carsten, 2013; Jamieson, 2011). This marks sibling relationships as different from friendship relations, since in light of these results, friends are not considered a part of the self.

Bringing the temporal approach together with the question of relatedness, it appears that relatedness is formed over a long period of time and intertwined with the self. It not only emerges from a family's collective memory (Halbwachs,

1950/1980) and the shared past but, additionally, involves a dimension of the future. Individuals act as embedded in the flow of time and have an inner orientation towards past, present, and future (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). People recognise a change in relationships, as my findings show; nevertheless, they consider family relationships lasting. For example, when talking about sibling relationships, people's time horizons involve an expectation of continuity, thereby shaping how those relationships are experienced in the present (see Hitlin and Elder, 2007; Flaherty, 2003; Flaherty and Fine, 2001). Making sense of relationships as continuous and durable is also in line with individuals' attempts to imagine and narrate a coherent future self (May, 2016; Rebughini, 2011; Smart et al. 2012).

Revisiting the understandings of family presented in sub-study I, the perspective of temporal layers offers several possible explanations for the complex ways in which intimacy entangles family understandings. For instance, listing as a family member a sibling with whom contact is infrequent and with whom the relationship is tense becomes understandable from the perspective of the past. To be precise, a shared childhood, shared history, and collective memory demarcate family relatedness even in the present. In a similar fashion, the present relationship could be made sense of in terms of the future (see Flaherty, 2003) by listing family members to whom individuals wish to be close in the future.

6.3 OVERLAPPING INTIMACIES AND THEIR TEMPORAL ORGANISATION

Based on the findings from sub-studies I–III, it becomes clear that family as well as friends can be involved in individuals' everyday lives in significant ways. Siblings can be considered friends, friends can be considered a part of the family, and both family and friends can provide help and support and serve as confidantes. It can be concluded that relationships with family and friends can acquire similar qualities and, furthermore, that family and friends can form an intrinsic part of each other's lives simultaneously. I call this simultaneity of intimate relationships *overlapping intimacies*. Using this concept, I thus refer to the multiplicity of close relationships which, simultaneously, are lived as intimate and significant in an individual's life.

Let us take a closer look at how overlapping intimacies emerge in this research. First, as sub-studies I and II demonstrated, intimate, long-time friends are sometimes considered members of the family along with siblings. Furthermore,

sub-studies II and III revealed that relationships with siblings as well as friends can be considered significant sources of emotional and practical support; both friends and siblings can be confidantes and people with whom a long history is shared. Notably, however, that overlap differs from the suffusion of relational categories. The latter indicates that family and friendship relations acquire similar characteristics such that their meanings suffuse (Spencer and Pahl, 2006). In this study, friendship relations were not lived as compensating for genealogical family and kin who failed to meet people's needs, as described for example in a study concerning queer people (Budgeon, 2006). Instead, family and friendship relations were often lived side by side.

Through overlapping intimacies, relationships of different origins—such as family and friendship—often share similarities in how they are lived in everyday life. However, they are made sense of in ways that reveal different connections, firstly, to the figuration of close relationships, and secondly, to temporality.

Overlapping intimacies extend across people's lives in varying time frames. They are lived and made sense of by using dimensions of the past, present, and future. Overlapping intimacies are thus *temporally organised*. The temporal organisation can occur in a short time frame, such as by bringing together various rhythms of daily life and coordinating the immediate future (see Tavory and Eliasoph, 2013), as I demonstrated above regarding friendship relations in the 'here and now'.

Furthermore, overlapping intimacies can also be temporally organised in terms of explicit rhythms that form cycles (see Zerubavel, 1981, 2003) as I discussed in Chapter 6.2. This is often the case with gatherings amongst a specific group of friends, who established gatherings in a specific form and occurring at specific times (and places) throughout the year. These gatherings following each other bring forth a rhythm of their own, situated in cyclical time (cf. Zerubavel, 2003; cf. also Lefebvre and Levich, 1987). Temporal organisation can be complex, conforming to the conceptualisation of everyday life as containing a complex internal temporality (cf. Felski, 2000).

Overlapping intimacies can also be temporally organised spanning across the life cycle of an individual. This emerges in how particular relationships are lived as intimate and significant during certain periods of time. For example, siblings can form a rather central part of an individual's life as experienced in childhood, sharing major and minor life course events, whereas siblings in adulthood may be experienced as leading separate lives. Or, alternatively, at a specific life stage a particular relationship can be deliberately nourished, whilst others are not, such as when couples prefer friendships with other couples.

Additionally, the temporal organisation of overlapping intimacies can also be found in how the boundaries of family are drawn at a specific moment in time, such as during the early years of marriage amidst family formation, as discussed in sub-study I. Ultimately, family would quite likely be defined in different ways at other life stages or during other eras.

Following this line of thought, over an individual's life course, there are periods during which some intimacies tend to be stronger, whilst others are weaker. Not everyone in the figuration is particularly close at the same time, and not everyone is distant at the same time. Rather, temporally organised intimacies stretch out over the life course, becoming stronger and more intimate during some life stages and more distant during others. This emphasises the processual character of figurations. Specifically, a figuration is continually changing when persons leave or enter a figuration, opening up or occupying new valencies, thus forcing the entire figuration to shift (Elias, 1969/2009).

For Elias, temporality is integral to how figurations evolve in a process. However, in his work, valencies are not explicitly discussed from the perspective of temporality. Drawing from the findings from my research, I now attempt to bring the concept of valency into the temporal framework more specifically (for a discussion on the concept of valency, see Chapter 3.3). Valencies of a person connect to other persons, forming affective relationships that can be short-term or enduring. When people leave a figuration, the valencies remain open for new relationships (Elias 1970/1978: 135–136).

The participants of this study, in general, occupied a life stage during which some valencies were firmly established to important affective relationships, such as with a life partner and shared children. Many valencies were attached to relationships with among family of origin, as well as to relationships amongst the extended family involving for example parents-in-law or a sibling's partner. Simultaneously, some valencies remained open. In this study, parenthood represented a transition that intensified changes within a figuration and, thus, regarding valencies. I found this when old connections intensified with one's family after the birth of a child, such that those valencies become even more firmly connected. Furthermore, when a friend becomes more intimate, the valency forms a stronger connection. Respectively, some friendships become less active and gradually less intimate, thereby rendering the valency more vulnerable to opening. Furthermore, new valencies are also connected when new friendships are established.

Examining new valencies that connect, old valencies that become even more firmly connected, or old valencies that gradually begin disconnecting brings me conceptually to the very core of the figurational dynamic. As Elias (1970/1978)

highlights, all of a person's relationships are interdependent. As a consequence, valencies are connected or remain open in a multidimensional dynamic that involves place, time, and other relationships within the figuration. I suggest that this dynamic involves several simultaneous temporalities that characterise the movement of connecting and disconnecting valencies. Sometimes, an open valency is connected to when a new person enters the figuration, and closely related connections become even more firmly connected through rapid change. A different kind of temporality can be found when a relationship with a friend, for example, is lived as embedded in the everyday, entangled with ordinary routines, and, consequently, slowly becomes an integral part of a person's figuration. Here, the valency becomes firmly connected through the temporality of routine and repetition, representing a different kind of temporality compared to a sudden change, such as when a new person enters the figuration or when a person dies and leaves the figuration.

I suggest that different temporalities characterising people's lived relationships—linear, cyclical, as well as reconciling different rhythms—have significance in how valencies open and connect. Thus, we must then methodologically and conceptually focus on the dynamics of the process. The entire idea of Elias's process sociology lies in considering figurations as having a processual character, resulting in constant change. However, he paid more attention to macro-level change (cf. Elias, 1939/1994) in his theoretical thinking, rather than the temporalities characterising the process of specific valencies of connecting and opening. I suggest that temporalities characterising lived relationships can shed light on the conceptualisation of how valencies connect, open, and reconnect. By showing the different temporalities via which relationships are lived and understood over time, my study contributes to Elias's discussion on valencies.

Building on this discussion of overlapping intimacies and their temporal organisation, I move on to discuss how relatedness comes into being amongst family and friends.

6.4 RELATEDNESS AMONGST FAMILY AND FRIENDS

I now return to attempt to answer my final research question: How do personal family understandings and lived relationships, which I have examined in the three sub-studies, bring forth relatedness amongst family and kin? Relatedness,

understood here as described by Carsten (2000) as being intrinsic to each other's lives, seems to have multiple dimensions and temporal layers.

Before delineating how relatedness comes into being, I pause to note that the lived experiences of relationships with siblings, friends, and a family community found in this study are rich and varied. These experiences involve experiences that provide a nuanced spectrum of intimacy, love, tensions, disputes, and even estrangement. However, as I now aim to develop a more abstract conceptualisation regarding how relatedness is brought into being, it is now time to 'fuck nuance', as Healy (2017) suggests, in favour of making a theoretical contribution.

I have shown above that relatedness consists of a combination of intimacy, genealogical connections, collective memory, and a sense of connection. These elements intertwine with the dynamics of a family figuration and, furthermore, have temporal layers. Yet not all of these elements are necessary; in each relationship, relatedness is formed through a specific combination of characteristics. For example, a genealogical connection is not a prerequisite for an intimate, family-like relationship, as shown in sub-study II regarding friendships. The results suggest that new 'wes' are brought into being by people in nuclear families (cf. Singly, 2021), and these 'wes' are understood and defined based on multiple criteria. Furthermore, such relationships are connected to life history temporalities. In fact, new 'wes' reflect Déchaux's (2002) conceptualisation of people's attempts to balance between two opposing lines of thinking regarding family ties: on the one hand the modern individualised social tie, and on the other hand an assigned membership to a particular family and within the world. Balancing these two lines of thinking results in various logics via which relatedness is understood.

Relatedness comes into being in the short term as well as through life-long processes at different phases across an individual's life course. There are more as well as less dense periods in each relationship (see Zerubavel, 2003; 26–27). Alternatively, a specific relationship can be temporally organised such that its high-density points take place during an encounter once each year, thereby following the idea of historical rhyming (Zerubavel, 2003). Slow and subtle processes related to the thickening or thinning of relatedness (see Carsten, 2013) can thus be conceptualised in an almost visual manner by Zerubavel's (2003) temporal differentiation. At the same time, these processes are organically intertwined with the temporal organisation of overlapping intimacies.

The temporal organisation of overlapping intimacies refers to the temporal dynamic of living relationships with people from different life history periods and relational contexts as close or distant. It is this dynamic that produces, sustains,

makes vivid, thickens, or thins relatedness (cf. Carsten, 2013). Individuals attempt to shape this dynamic to varying degrees, with more or less successful outcomes. But relationships are unique in how they adapt to the temporal organisation. It seems that relationships based on genealogy or those lived within the family sphere are deeply embedded in the figuration of family relationships (see sub-study III; Elias, 1970/1978). This renders relationships with a genealogical connection more durable vis-à-vis temporal periods of distance, whether emotional, spatial, or geographic. Consequently, relatedness amongst family appears more durable.

Compared with family ties, friendships do not usually have such a strong collective foundation based on an interconnected web of relationships. Whereas friendships can be embedded in a web of several friendship relations and contain rich histories and memories, these are not usually as extensive as family figurations that involve interconnected life-long relationships amongst several generations. Additionally, friendships may be rather dyadic relationships between two persons who share an intimacy and collective memory (see Halbwachs, 1950/1980).

Therefore, the mere existence of friendship relations might be more vulnerable to disruptions to intimacy or contact. As a consequence, the thinning of relatedness (Carsten, 2013) may be more fatal to such relationships compared with relationships within the familial realm. However, a strong experience of intimacy, specifically a dyadic type of intimacy as outlined by Simmel (1908/1950), can sustain friendship through periods marked by distance. These lasting friendships are rooted in a shared history, and a key experience within the relationship is a shared moment of reunion that provides people with time out of time, which is beyond the linear time of the everyday (see Gillis, 2004; Mason, 2018; May, 2016; Zerubavel, 1981).

The results of the study suggest that relationships with family and kin are more strongly connected to linear time than relationships outside the familial realm. Family relationships are to a significant degree sustained by gathering for celebrations and holidays. Many of these occasions mark established steps on the normative life course (see Fry, 2003; Settersten, 2003). By contrast, in friendship relations, the traditions are often self-made such that they are not connected to specific moments during one's life course. This difference has two consequences for the connection between the temporal organisation of overlapping intimacies, on the one hand, and relatedness, on the other.

Firstly, whereas friendships can be sustained by a cyclical rhythm emerging from a structure of gatherings and traditions, as I demonstrated in sub-study II, this structure is not connected to any specific steps during an individual's life

course. By contrast, gatherings and celebrations amongst family are connected to an individual's life course and, thus, accumulate over time in an almost self-evident manner. Consequently, relatedness amongst family comes into being simultaneously within linear time and cyclical time (cf. Zerubavel, 2003). It seems that friendship relations are not sustained by a life history temporal structure involving anticipation to the same degree that family relationships are.

Secondly, differences become clear from the perspective of collective memory (Halbwachs, 1950/1980). Relatedness amongst family is constituted to a significant degree by sentiment and memory (Finch and Mason, 2000: 165). Therefore, as the link between family celebrations and transitions during an individual's life course is strong, these shared moments of revisiting the collective past entangle with the most meaningful moments in an individual's life course. In the cultural context of Finland, the steps and rituals that form part a conventional path regarding family life include weddings, children's births and christenings, parents' wedding anniversaries, children's graduations, and Christian confirmations. The collective memory of family and kin is created during these events which, simultaneously, mark deeply meaningful personal moments. Therefore, they accumulate over an individual's life course and in linear time.

Relatedness amongst family has as its foundation a collective memory into which personally significant moments merge across the life course. These moments are lived in linear as well as cyclical time such that they render relationships durable. This pattern delineates family as different from friends regarding the ways in which relatedness is connected to temporality. However, in people's everyday lives, friends can be equally (or more) meaningful, supportive, intimate, and on the same page as can people that fall within the familial realm.

Life history temporality and collective memory thus shape the 'wes' (cf. Singly) that are brought into being. Feeling related, that is, being intrinsic to each other's lives (cf. Carsten, 2000) manifests in a feeling that there is a 'we'. In light of this study, these 'wes' are defined in novel ways, such as in how 'family' is defined. Furthermore, temporality emerges in other ways.

To conclude, I revisit my discussion regarding Elias's valencies from the perspective of temporality from Chapter 6.3, and reflect upon the idea of new 'wes'. It becomes clear that various temporalities in everyday life as well as of moments out of time (cf. Mason, 2018) play a role in how new 'wes' form. Relatedness can be brought into being through cyclical time, through repetitive practices taking place simultaneously in linear and in cyclical time, or by building upon the past. Following multiple rhythms in the lives of individuals, valencies open and connect, together creating temporal dynamics within the figuration.

During that process, new 'wes' come into being, reminding us that relatedness is not just about genealogical connection or institutional definitions, but also stems from sharing, caring, remembering, and being a part of each other's lives one way or another.

7 CONCLUSIONS

In this dissertation, I asked how family and friends form part of people's everyday lives, and how these relationships are lived and made sense of by people during their family formation years. In examining this, I considered three levels: the institutional level, the level of personal experiences, and the level of interconnected dynamic relationships (see Chapter 1.1). These three levels feature tense connections with each other. By conducting this study, I have opened the black box of the nuclear family (on black box, see Latour, 1987), aiming to look beyond the institutional setting to investigate how individuals themselves define their family and live their close relationships. I also sought to know how *relatedness*, here defined as being a meaningful part of each other's lives (see Carsten, 2000), is created amongst family and friends. In this concluding chapter, I firstly identify some limitations to this study and outline the needs for research in future. I secondly provide some concluding remarks.

Generalisability, limitations, and future research

This study has tackled understandings of family and lived relationships with siblings and friends amongst people in a specific setting—during the early years of a heterosexual marriage with or without children. Whilst qualitative research makes it possible to reach, at best, a deep and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under scrutiny, it is not possible to say much about the scale or extent of the phenomenon studied. However, these findings do provide an account of what is also *possible* beyond this study; the findings point out ways of living in close relationships and making sense of them that exist also outside of this study. The findings here, therefore, increase our understanding of what family can be and what relatedness means.

In this research, the choice of theoretical framework and analytical concepts meant that I had to leave out some other concepts that might have been useful. For example, considering that previous research has often found gendered patterns and differences in how people experience family and close relationships (see, e.g., Cronin, 2015b; Jokinen, 2005; Oliker, 1989), analysing gendered differences would have seemed relevant. In fact, I did have that in mind during the early stages of this project. However, during the analysis, gender did not emerge as a central ordering principle (cf. Fuhse, 2009). Instead, the theoretical

perspectives of temporality and figuration provided more useful analytical tools to make sense of people's accounts. Nonetheless, sensitivity to gendered differences in experiences is pivotal in researching personal lives.

Regarding the time frame of the study, after the main data for analysis was generated in 2014–2015, there have been some developments concerning personal relationships and family forms in Finland. For example, family leave system was renewed, and furthermore, the diversity of intimate lives as well as needs for policymaking are becoming more and more acknowledged (see Koulu et al., 2023). These developments might raise the question of whether these findings still make sense amidst such discussions and policy changes. My answer is yes. Whilst there is much happening within family life, public discourse, and policymaking, marriage is a persistent institution that continues to carry cultural significance as well as to be a legally binding contract, and, therefore, a relevant setting for research. I suggest being attuned, in research in future, to the richness of the lived realities of people living in various relational settings regardless of the institutional setting or the composition of the household.

Another change, one that seems to have permeated most realms of life, is digitalisation. In recent years the significance of digital communications in people's lives has certainly grown and shaped the ways in which close relationships are lived and experienced. The discussion on digital intimacy has started within research on personal lives (see Eklund and Sadowski, 2023; Hänninen et al., 2021; Sadowski, 2016) and should be part of future discussions on families and intimate lives.

Concluding remarks

The central findings of this study outline a variety of ways in which friends and siblings can be meaningfully part of one another's everyday lives. Furthermore, family can be defined using several different logics, and as shown by the results, differently by two partners in a couple. This demonstrates that the institutional settings of marriage and the nuclear family do not necessarily determine how 'family' is understood by individuals. Instead, understandings of family are formed by following logics that combine genealogical connections, cultural expectations, personal preferences, and experiences of intimacy.

Even for people during their family formation stage of life, there is often space and a need for family and kin as well as for friends, typically for both family friends and personal friends. This study contributes to an understanding of the broad spectrum of experiences, from intimate friendships to tense or ambivalent sibling relationships. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that siblings and

friends can be equally important in people's lives, providing joy, companionship, emotional support, and practical help. In addition, siblings can be experienced as friends, and friends may be considered members of one's family. These multiple intimate and significant relationships form *overlapping intimacies* which are *temporally organised* in people's lives.

Relatedness amongst family and relatedness amongst friends have different foundations. Family relationships are sustained, to a significant degree, through larger family gatherings, often connected to transitions in an individual's life course. Thus, these gatherings also mark a highly significant moment in people's personal lives. Through family gatherings, a collective memory is created, and, accumulating over time, these occasions form a life history temporal structure that sustains family relatedness. Intimate and meaningful friendships may also be strongly connected to other relationships that share a history and feature a collective memory, and they can sometimes last for nearly a lifetime. However, they appear different from family relations in how the past and the future of the relationships are connected to life history temporalities. Yet, this does not mean that friendship relations are less appreciated or less meaningful.

This difference between family and friends regarding the foundation of intimacy may stem from various empirical contexts. People who more or less follow the conventional life course regarding family formation, as did the participants in this study, may rather strongly experience the connection between life transitions, family rituals, and family relatedness emerging from this. Most likely, other empirical contexts exist in which the difference is not as explicit, and sociological research still has uncharted territory in this area.

The results of this study also make clear that family, as understood by people, is flexible. Whilst the nucleus, formed by a spouse and shared children, is not called into question by the participants of this study, beyond that nucleus, plenty of room exists for individual experiences and interpretations.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to our understanding of how temporality can be applied to understanding the relationships in people's lives. By using the specific concepts of temporality, I have demonstrated how different relationships are lived in everyday life and beyond. I argue that people use the dimensions of past, present, and future in how they experience and make sense of close relationships. Specifically, this study illustrates that we need not limit ourselves to talking about functions or meanings when we attempt to understand personal relationships or family life. Instead, employing the concept of the *temporal organisation of overlapping intimacies* I demonstrate how mechanisms of emerging intimacy and the structures that sustain intimacy diverge in relationships amongst family and in those amongst friends. This has

consequences not only for the present but also the future of relationships, rendering friendship relations more vulnerable to a thinning of relatedness (see Carsten, 2013).

I have also expanded upon Elias's (1970/1978) conceptualisation of valencies, reflecting it in relation to temporality. In doing so, I demonstrated how analysing the temporalities shaping people's lived relationships allows us to understand the temporal dynamic with which valencies open and connect, thereby forming a person's relationships that taken together, in turn, form a person's figuration of close relationships. This study thus shows how concepts of temporality (see Zerubavel, 2003) and figuration (see Elias, 1970/1978) can help capture the malleability of contemporary family and friendship ties, thereby contributing to more general sociological discussions on temporality and societal processes.

Moreover, this research also contributes to a more general societal understanding of family and intimate lives. My findings make visible that understandings of family are not fixed, but instead unfold in processes. These processes are connected to institutional structures, such as marriage, parenthood, and genealogical kinship, and, at the same time, have temporal layers as well as individualised tendencies. It is of utmost importance to acknowledge that personal understandings of family concern everyone, including people who live in more conventional family settings as well as those living alone, for example. I argue that friends and siblings can have a profound significance on the lives of people who live with a spouse and who have formed their 'own' family. These relationships often fit into people's everyday lives and are included in the sphere of the closest relationships. In public discourse about how we live in intimate relationships or about changes to family life, we must also include those who live in a nuclear family. This makes visible how people's lives, values, and preferences are not defined by institutions, such as marriage, but instead how they vary and change over time. Family is vivid and flexible, and this is just as true among those who live in nuclear families.

Finally, relatedness among family and friends cannot be understood based on only institutional settings. The boundaries of personal understandings of family can be drawn quite differently from the boundaries of the nuclear family, which may go unnoticed if we do examine them. Research should be more attuned to variations in the lived experiences amongst people in nuclear families. This is necessary if we aim to deeply understand, both in research as well as in societal and political discourses, the way in which family and intimate lives are currently shifting before us.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDE

0 Start

What is your life situation at the moment (family, work, place of residence, etc.)?

Please describe in general what has happened in your life after you got married (e.g., relocations, graduation, finding a job or changing jobs, birth of child[ren], etc).

1 Everyday life, people, and support at the moment

Everyday life and the people in it

What was your day like yesterday? Please briefly describe your day, starting when you woke up until when you went to bed.

If you consider your normal life at work and at home, who are the people you meet quite regularly (daily or weekly), and with whom do you share your daily life and consider as part of the network of your close people? (Clarification if needed: Does not include persons you met strictly in a professional role.)

In your current job, do you have colleagues that you meet outside of work and/or who have become your friends? (Clarification if needed: If you changed your job now, would you continue to be in contact with them?)

Free time

Do you have time for hobbies? With whom do you spend your free time or share your hobbies?

Providing and receiving help

Whom do you ask for help when you move, have to do repairs in your home, or borrow tools from? Is the help mutual?

When your family is out of town, who takes care of your home, for example, waters the plants and picks up the mail? Did you give a spare key to a friend, neighbour, or relative?

If your child falls ill or you have an important appointment, who can you ask to help babysit? Do you provide childcare for someone?

Meeting personal friends, confidentiality, and support

Do you meet your personal friends? On what kinds of occasions do you see each other? What do you do together?

If you have confidential issues or worries, with whom can you discuss them? What about worries concerning your child?

2A For childless interviewees

Influence of getting married over social relationships and social network

If you compare your relationship with your parents now to the relationship you had when you were dating, and consider the closeness, contact, or frequency of seeing each other, have there been changes?

What about your parents-in-law? Are you more related to them now?

What about your own siblings? And your spouses' siblings?

Are your relationships with friends similar to what they used to be at the time you got married? If not, how would you describe the changes that have occurred?

2B For interviewees who have a child / children

The birth of the first child

Were you on family leave taking care of the baby? For how long? How about when you had your second (and third) child?

When your first child was born, whom did you ask for advice regarding the baby? With whom did you discuss your worries concerning taking care of the baby and motherhood/fatherhood?

Who provided help to you in taking care of the baby?

Family leave / returning to employment

While you were on family leave, did you have friends or acquaintances that you met regularly with your child? Who was important in your daily life? Are these people also important today?

When you returned to work (or studies) after family leave, were there any changes in with whom you meet and how often?

How starting a family influenced relationships and your social network

In your opinion, did starting a family (marriage and the birth of a child) change your relationship with your parents? Compare your relationship with them now to your relationship with them at the time you were dating, have there been changes regarding intimacy, keeping in contact, or seeing each other?

What did the birth of your child(ren) mean to your parents? Is your relationship different with them now after the birth of a child(ren)? Do you meet your parents more or less now compared with before your child was born?

Is your relationship with your siblings and their spouses and families different now compared with the time before you got married and had a child? Do you have more or less contact with them now than before? What about with your spouse's siblings and their families?

If you think about your relationship with your parents-in-law, did starting a family change it?

What did the birth of your child(ren) mean to your parents-in-law? Did the birth of your child change your relationship with them? For example, are you closer now or do you meet them more or less now than before your child was born?

Did starting a family change your relationships with your friends in one way or another? If yes, how would you describe those changes?

3 Sociability and holidays

Since you got married, how do you spend Christmas? Have you established some customs or traditions? With whom do you spend Christmas?

Please describe how you spent Christmas last year.

If you think about other annual holidays, how do you spend them now, after you got married / had a child? With whom, and how, did you celebrate last Easter? What about Labour Day? And Midsummer?

With whom do you spend your summer holidays? And other holidays? For example, do you visit your parents' or parents-in-law's summer cottages?

Who invites you to visit? Who do you invite to visit?

If you think about your circle of friends, with whom do you usually meet on your own and with whom do you meet with your spouse or with your spouse and your children?

The christening or naming celebration of the child / godparents

Did you celebrate a christening or naming? Who did you invite?

Did you name your child after someone in your family or your spouse's family?

Who did you ask to be godparents to your child? Was it difficult for you to decide whom to ask?

Are you a godparent to someone? If so, to whom? Do you keep in contact with the child and their family? How?

Whom do you invite to celebrate your child's birthday?

4 Family and kin

On what kinds of occasions do you see your family, parents, siblings, and their partners and children? What about your spouse's family?

Do you keep in contact in some other ways (e.g., phone calls, Facebook, email, etc.)?

Do you have aunts, uncles, cousins, or other more distant relatives that you consider close or significant to you? With whom are you regularly in contact?

On what kinds of issues do you help your parents? Do they need your help? What about your parents-in-law?

If you consider you relationship, on the one hand, with your siblings and their families, and, on the other hand, to your close friends, are these relationships different somehow?

Who amongst your family and friends are most intimate with your child(ren)? Why is that?

5 Closeness and intimacy

Who are the most intimate people with you after your spouse and child(ren)?

Did marriage change your relationship as a couple? Do you think differently about your relationship as a couple now compared with before marriage?

With whom do you discuss your relationship as a couple?

This question concerns a hypothetical question. If you suddenly needed a large sum of money as a loan (like €10 000 or €20 000), but could not turn to a bank, and you did not have to worry about the money situation of anyone, who would you turn to? Who would you ask for a loan? Could you ask a friend? If your friend was in this kind of situation, would you consider lending them money?

6 To conclude

Do you now have in mind someone who is significant to you but has not been mentioned during the interview? Do you want to add something else?

7 Family Network Method

This last part is about your personal understandings of your family during the last year. [move on to Family Network Method]

Family Network Method, Part 1

'In your personal understanding, who are the persons that belong to your family at the moment or during the last 12 months? The person may have had a positive or negative role in your life during the past year; they might have helped or supported you; or your relationship with them might have been contradictory and tense. Here, we are interested entirely in your personal view, not in how people usually think or how someone close to you might define family.'

Scale: 1) daily; 2) 2–3 times per week; 3) 1–4 times per month; 4) 2–4 times per year; and 5) more seldom.

Person X	First name and initial of the last name	Sex F/M	Age	Relationship to ego	Duration of the relationship	Place of residence	How often do you meet face to face? (1–5)	How often are you otherwise in contact? (1–5)
Example	Elli E I (Ego)	F	35	sister	33 years	Helsinki	3	2
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								
13								
14								

Family Network Method, part 2

Person X	Who provides emotional support (encourages, comforts, etc.) to person X?	Who does small favours for or helps person X?	There are tensions in all families. Who has sometimes made person X angry or sad?
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			