

The Feeling of Migration

Narratives of Queer Intimacies and Partner Migration

Sara Ahlstedt



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Nobody can feel too much,
though many of us work very hard at feeling too little.

Feeling is frightening.

Well, I find it so.

Jeanette Winterson

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Chapter 1

Introduction

MONA AND KARIN'S STORY

“I was feeling depressed, really. Yeah, I was about to move back. When I went back for a visit I called Karin and said I wanted to stay, that I’m not coming back and everything was total chaos.” Mona sits on the couch next to me with her legs pulled up under her. She does not look at me nor at her partner Karin as she describes what happened after her move from Denmark¹ to Sweden. She had moved so that she could be with Karin, and it was a move they had longed for. However, they had not imagined it could be difficult.

Mona continues: “I didn’t think it would be as hard as it turned out to be, I didn’t expect that. I think I’m pretty good at getting to know people, but it was so difficult to start with. It was a totally new experience.” Mona’s migration and the feelings she experienced had consequences for Karin as well, who worried about Mona’s wellbeing and felt guilty and responsible because she had ‘made’ Mona move to Sweden. Because Karin was not in a position to leave Sweden and

1. Interview participants chose how they wanted the country(ies) they have roots in to be described in the dissertation, whether by country name, region, or continent. I discuss my reasoning behind this in the methodological chapter.

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move to Denmark, the only way they could be together in the same place was if Mona migrated, and Karin says: “I wanted Mona to make the decision, because she was the one who had to move. And when she did, it was like a proposal. I just, like, aaaah! [*exhales happily*] It made me so happy and I was like, really, for real?! Do you want to?!”

Mona, who is twenty-seven, has lived in Sweden for two and a half years when I meet her and Karin. Karin is a year older, and is white, grew up in Sweden, and has a name that is understood as Swedish. The two met at a festival in Sweden and had been together for close to four years at the time of the interview. Mona’s difficult move from Denmark startled them both; they never imagined that her migration would be as challenging and emotionally trying as it turned out to be. Their quotes show the complex feelings a migration coming about because of a relationship can bring on: even a relatively short move (as Karin says, “Denmark is only a few hours away by train, it’s not like Mona never visits there.”) between culturally very similar countries brings with it a flood of feelings but also new realities to negotiate. Mona says, “My identity became so weird when I moved here, and I can still feel like I’m not fully myself. I kind of don’t do the things I want to do. I have lost a part of myself.”

While Mona and Karin tell a story of Mona gradually becoming more independent and settling into Sweden, they are stunned by how they both lost their independence in the migration process: Mona because she knew no one and Karin was the only person available to her, both emotionally and socially. Karin because she became responsible for Mona in a way neither of them had anticipated when she realized the social and emotional need she filled for Mona. Their narrative is one of a dawning realization that even a fully voluntary migration propelled by what is generally interpreted as a positive feeling, romantic love, can be very complex and unsettling.

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For Mona the migration also meant feeling that she does not belong in ways she had not experienced before. Because she has roots² in Iran as well as Denmark, she says:

I'm from Denmark, or I grew up there, but I don't look Danish. People in Sweden can't place me. My background means a lot to me, it's been important in all situations in my life, and it's always meant something, both to myself and to others, that I'm not Danish. It's like a constant thing, it's just the way it is. And then things happen based on that, because of that you deal with things in one way and not another, and because of that you become the person you are and not someone else in the eyes of society. It's an important part of my life, that I'm from Iran, or I'm not Danish in that way. I might be able to say I'm from Denmark but it's pretty obvious that I'm not in that way.

Race and nationality matter when both migrating partners and non-migrating partners narrate feelings in the migration process. For Mona, it means negotiating being Danish, but “not in that way,” in a Swedish context that racializes her. Because she is read as ‘not-white,’ she is also assumed to be ‘not-Swedish’ as well as, by extension, ‘not-Danish,’ as the assumption is that both Danes and Swedes are white. In order to be read as Danish (rather than Swedish), a white Danish person would need to speak to show through language that they³ are Danish. Mona, however, is read as neither Danish nor Swedish. She

2. I use the term ‘roots’ rather than ‘country of origin’ when discussing the countries interview participants have lived in or migrated from, as roots can be grown in many places and do not limit themselves to growing in the country indicated on an individual’s passport.

3. I use a singular ‘they’ throughout this dissertation. This is because it is a neutral pronoun, a singular personal pronoun of indeterminate gender. A singular ‘they’ has a long history of usage in both spoken and written English, and my reasons for using it are both to avoid writing ‘he or she’ and to use inclusive language that does not assume that a person identifies as either ‘he’ or ‘she.’

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is read as a ‘migrant’ because of the inability of the people she meets in Sweden to interpret a non-white body as Danish. The migration to Sweden adds new layers to her already existing migrant identity.

Mona and Karin’s narrative shows the importance of emotions and feelings in their migration process. There is the love they feel for each other, the longing that eventually causes them to decide that Mona will migrate to Sweden, joy when this decision is made, pain when the migration causes Mona to lose her footing, Mona’s feeling of loss, Karin’s guilt, their frustration over the loss of independence and the equal relationship, and the feelings of alienation that race and nationality can cause. These are also some of the emotions and feelings of migration that I explore in this dissertation about queer intimacy and partner migration to Sweden. In particular, I center on love, loss, and belonging in this type of migration process.

Feelings ‘do’ ‘things’ to us, they affect us in ways we did not expect and move us in different directions than we had anticipated. It can mean we are caught by surprise, just like Mona and Karin in their narrative. Like Mona says, it is “because of that [the social processes of power that shape our experiences] you become the person you are and not someone else.” This dissertation in Ethnic and Migration Studies focuses on how migration experiences help orientate our lives differently depending on who we are – social processes of power such as gender identity, sexual identity, race, nationality(ies), class, economic resources, education, and language all affect the different paths available to us to walk. However, who we are also means that what we come to expect from the world differs, and so our feelings, and what those feelings do to us, also differ.

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

In this dissertation I explore narratives of queer partner migration; a migration that means that one of the partners of a relationship has migrated in order for the partners to be together, and where the

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partners queer the migration in the sense that they are ‘same-sex’⁴ and/or gender non-normative. Having said this, the dissertation is organized around several different themes. It is about migrants who queer migration because of their sexual or gender identities, about queer intimacy and migration, about voluntary migration, and about privileges and migration. Above all, it is about feelings, in particular romantic love, and migration.

I also explore the concept of queer partner migration from the perspective of both migrating and non-migrating partners. I do this by placing the relationship’s queerness at the center of the migration and the migration at the center of the relationship’s queerness. Specifically, I study what feelings do to individuals and relationships in queer partner migration processes to Sweden. The research questions I aim to answer are: first, how do feelings and emotions structure queer partner migration processes to Sweden in different ways? Second, how do queer partner migrants and their non-migrating partners narrate their lives and position themselves in relation to the migration processes they go through, and the feelings and emotions associated with these processes? Third, what do feelings and emotions do, and how are they understood by the interview participants, when a migration is narrated as voluntary and a choice, and, as in the case of Sweden, there are few legal obstacles to queer partner migration?

My interest is less in the bureaucratic and legal processes of migration, although these are also important as they are part of the larger migration process and certainly laden with emotions, too. However, my main focus is migrating partners’ as well as non-

4. I use the term ‘queer’ instead of referring to the partner migrants and their non-migrating partners as ‘same-sex.’ The main reason for this is that ‘same-sex’ renders invisible gender non-normative individuals who in a legal sense, and in relation to migration legislation, are positioned as being in a same-sex relationship but who may not identify their relationship as ‘same-sex’ at all. Melissa Autumn White (2010: 4) expands on this, drawing attention to how ‘same-sex’ conflates (biological) sex and (socially recognized) gender, which becomes particularly problematic in relation to (im)migration because it means that non-cisidentified individuals are made invisible in research and statistics.

migrating partners' understanding of their lives in relation to the migration: thoughts and experiences of a different life, about lives left behind, about lives lived now, about opportunities available and doors closed, of having several homes, and of having no home, of fitting in well and fitting in poorly, and the feelings that are associated with this. In particular, I am concerned with what these feelings *do* (Ahmed 2004a) to the individuals and their relationship, and this question, what do emotions and feelings do, is the larger question the dissertation aims to answer.

RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

Emotions and feelings as a Way to Access the Complexity of Migration

Scholarly work on migration rarely includes or takes into account love or emotions and feelings connected to sexuality and intimacy. This includes both those emotions and feelings which may initiate a migration and those which the migration creates. Nor does migration scholarship connect these feelings and emotions to the broader social landscapes and to social processes. As Nicola Mai and Russell King argue, mainstream migration research paradigms make it seem “as if migrants are not allowed to love, express their sexualities, have emotions, be intimate. A consequence of this is that emotional relations are regarded as something apart from the economic or the geographic, as something essentially private” (2009: 297).

My interest in feelings and emotions comes from the fact that the interview participants of this study described their migrations, just like Mona and Karin above, in terms of feelings and intimacy. Their feelings and their intimate relationships propelled the migration, but feelings and emotions also affected their migration processes in a number of ways. Entering the research by way of emotions and feelings, and using theories of affect, allow me to discuss the complexity of queer partner migration processes, as the feelings and emotions narrated by interview participants mirror this complexity.

The Specificities of Queer Partner Migration

This dissertation also contributes to the small field that theoretically explains the lived experiences of queer partner migrants without concentrating on the legal obstacles to this particular migration. Swedish migration legislation treats queer relationships as identical to straight relationships, and I want to understand how queer individuals experience partner migration processes in a voluntary migration context where the queer relationship itself is recognized, meaning the (lack of a) legal right to apply for residency is not the partners' main concern. Also, queer partner migration is experienced differently, with its own set of issues, questions, advantages, and challenges, compared to straight partner migration. Without a specific focus on queer relationships, it would not be possible to identify what, for example, queer sexual identities and non-normative gender identities 'do' or do not 'do' in this type of migration.

Also, given that very few countries recognize queer relationships for migration purposes,⁵ those that do are interesting to study, as their recognition helps us analyze which types of intimate relationships are valued as 'valid' and 'acceptable' and in what contexts. Queer partner migrants, together with queer asylum seekers, make rights claims on the nation-state from a queer location, meaning they assume a specific political identity (Cantú 2009: 68). This is something neither straight partner migrants nor other queer migrants who migrate for other reasons than a relationship or on humanitarian grounds do. These points taken together make queer partner migration interesting in its own right.

5. As of 2015, twenty-seven countries recognized queer relationships for migration purposes. However, this figure depends to some extent on an interpretation of legislation, so it is difficult to pinpoint the exact number of countries. The twenty-seven referred to here are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, and the US.

The Intersection of 'Privileged' and 'Not-Privileged' Migration

The queer partner migrants who participated in this study can partly be situated within what in scholarly literature is called 'privileged migration' or 'elite migration,' and my research enters migration studies at the intersection of this migration and 'non-privileged' (or 'ordinary') migration. I want to show that migration produces a lot of feelings regardless of the migration category one belongs to, and that those who can be interpreted as privileged migrants do not always, or even often, experience their migration as privileged (if by privileged in this context we mean going through a relatively comfortable migration process and experiencing one's migration as uncomplicated, particularly from an administrative perspective). Privileged migrants are voluntary migrants and often white, usually nationals of countries in the global north, often educated, often middle or upper class, and usually cisgendered.

However, several of the interview participants in this study do not fit this description of the privileged migrant. At the same time, they participate in a type of migration that in some ways can be described as privileged migration, and I explore how both the term 'privileged migration' and who is considered privileged are complex notions. For example, in comparison with many other migrants, Mona in the narrative above is highly privileged. Yet Mona's migration is neither comfortable nor easy, nor can she be situated unconditionally as 'privileged' in a Swedish context. As such, my intent has been to paint a picture of migration as more multifaceted, where privileged and 'less privileged' migration overlap, and where attending to 'the way things feel' helps us understand this complex overlap.

MIGRATING PARTNERS AND NON-MIGRATING PARTNERS

Mona and Karin are two of twenty-three individuals I have interviewed about their experiences of queer partner migration processes. These participants have either, like Mona, migrated to Sweden because of

a relationship, or are, like Karin, the ‘Swedish’⁶ partner of someone who migrated. In the text, I usually refer to these two positions as the ‘migrating partner’ and the ‘non-migrating partner.’ The migrating partners moved from Africa, Europe, Latin America, and North America, and had lived in Sweden from a couple of years up to more than twenty years when I met them.

The reason for interviewing both migrating and non-migrating partners is twofold. First of all, a partner migration process presupposes a ‘receiving’ partner⁷ who is also an active party in the residence application. The right to apply for residence depends on there being a relationship and so another person, as the migrating partner’s residency application is based on the non-migrating partner’s right to live in Sweden. Second, because this is not a study of queer *migrants* but rather of migration processes involving queer *relationships*, the effect of migration on these relationships as well as how queer relationships affect the partner migration process, the non-migrating partner’s understanding of the migration process is essential.

UNPACKING THE ‘MIGRATION PROCESS’

There are different ways of being a migrant and each causes you to feel your migration process in a different way. In the case of Mona and Karin, their process is shaped by Mona’s position as a racialized Dane as well as their class position, education, and gender identities. One way of understanding migration is through the categorization of migrant groups into, for example, refugees, partner migrants,

6. I place ‘Swedish’ in quotation marks because this partner may hail from Sweden for generations back or only ‘be’ ‘Swedish’ in the sense that they have the right to reside in the Sweden but do not identify as Swedish at all. As such, ‘Swedish’ in this dissertation means ‘the partner who had the right to reside in Sweden at the time of the residence application, and based on whose permanent residency or citizenship the migrating partner applied for residency.’

7. This individual is referred to as the applicant’s ‘reference person’ by the Swedish Migration Agency (the Swedish Migration Agency is referred to as the ‘Migration Agency’ from here on in the dissertation).

international students, family migrants, undocumented migrants, or labour migrants. Depending on the category, you will be understood and positioned differently by those around you, be subjected to particular legislation, and have specific rights and responsibilities assigned to you. Another way to differentiate between migrant categories is the length of your time in the country of migration and whether you can return to the country of your roots with ease, if at all. Both aspects matter for how you, as well as others, position you in a larger migration narrative, and it also affects the feelings brought on by the migration process.

Global Travel Privileges, Nationality, and Race

My study includes interview participants with roots in different countries. Because I wanted to understand what takes place when a queer partner relationship intersects with Sweden as a particular historical and political context, I wanted to include a number of different narratives rather than focusing on queer partner migration trajectories originating in one particular country or region. It should probably come as no surprise that the participants' experiences often differ depending on where the migrating partners are from. However, the emotions and feelings these experiences bring about are often similar; the main difference is what these emotions and feelings do to the queer partner migrant relationship. This is often contingent on nationality and race, as these provide different frameworks of expectations.

Nationality and which citizenship one is in possession of is vital for migrants crossing borders. For starters, your nationality determines whether you have internalized what Mekonnen Tesfahuney and Katarina Schough (2010) have termed "the global travel privilege" and whether you, as a consequence, interpret the world as open and welcoming, that is, whether the world in Ingemar Grandin's (2007) words appears to you as "a room of possibilities" or not. Secondly, your nationality determines how your migration is carried out. It matters whether you enter your destination country by plane and in possession of a passport with all the relevant paperwork in place to 'legalize' your stay, or under a truck, hoping to survive the trip and not be discovered.

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The migrating partners who participated in this study all entered Sweden with a passport containing the relevant permits and the knowledge that they were allowed to stay.⁸ However, they did so with vastly different understandings of their own place in the world, very different experiences of previous international mobility, and also different expectations on what to expect from this mobility. This is connected to the historical context of the country(ies) they have roots in as well as to nationality (that is, some nationalities allow an individual to enter most countries with relative ease, while other nationalities require lengthy visa processes and the risk of having one's application rejected) and, to a certain extent, class (that is, who has the cultural resources to imagine international mobility as well as the financial resources to do so).

However, race also matters. Being white and coming from a white country can often work (or can be made to work) in one's favour in a migration context, particularly when moving to a country in the global south (Armbruster 2010; Fechter & Walsh 2010; Knowles 2005; Knowles & Harper 2009; Meier 2006), but also when moving between countries in the global north (Lundström 2014). In a white country like Sweden, the concept of 'the migrant' is often equated with non-white bodies (Hübinette et al. 2012; Hübinette & Mählck 2015), meaning a person who is positioned as white is generally not interpreted as a migrant. This means the white migrant body is not included in dominant Swedish discourses on migrants, even

8. My research consists of narratives of documented migration, that is, migrants who are in possession of documents giving them the formal right to reside in the country they have migrated to. Undocumented migrants, in comparison, are no longer or have never been in possession of the required documents that would give them the formal right to live in the country of migration. This is sometimes referred to as 'legal' and 'illegal' migrants, which I argue are imprecise terms mainly used to elicit an affective response in the listener. A person can be in possession of documents or not, but they cannot be a 'legal' or 'illegal' individual (Guild & Carrera 2004). It is further important to note that an undocumented migrant can have started out as documented and vice versa; the borders between the two are porous, and it is possible to slide between the categories as changes in circumstances occur (Qvist, Suter & Ahlstedt 2015).

though it is included in national systems organizing migration, such as residence application processes. Mona, for example, who speaks of being Danish but “not in that way,” that is, not looking the way Swedish people expect a Danish person to look, is positioned as a ‘migrant’ in a way she would almost certainly not have been had she instead been Danish ‘in that way,’ that is, been read as white.

The importance of race and nationality in order to position or not position oneself as a migrant is evident in the narratives I analyze in this dissertation. All migrating partners I interviewed identified as migrants in one way or another, and all non-migrating partners agreed that their migrating partners were migrants, but at the same time, the migrant identity was contested and resisted. In many cases interview participants tried to reformulate the migrant label at the same time as they acknowledged its applicability to their situation. Nationality, race, and also that the migrating partner had entered Sweden as a partner migrant (rather than any other type of migrant) were at the heart of this attempt to reformulate the migrant position.

To Feel ‘Like a Migrant’

That many interview participants challenged or felt ambivalent about being positioned or positioning themselves as migrants mirrors how migrants in the privileged migration scholarship often position themselves. Anne-Meike Fechter and Katie Walsh point to how the migration undertaken by what they term “white Western migrants” is “often understood and experienced as being in some way different from other forms of migration” (2010: 1199) by both the white Western migrants themselves and others. I analyze the experiences of this type of migrants alongside those of non-white, non-Western migrants, showing that what the feelings of migration do is often connected to one’s understanding of oneself as a ‘privileged’ or ‘less privileged’ migrant. Yet, as Mona and Karin’s story gives a glimpse of, what can be interpreted as privileged migration in some ways can simultaneously be experienced as quite ‘non-privileged’ when race, gender identity, sexual identity, class, economic resources, and language enter the equation. As Sara Ahmed writes, “migration involves complex and

contradictory relationships to social privileges and marginality (they are not necessary about one or the other)” (2000: 91).

In the scholarly literature on migration (which, for the most part, focuses on non-privileged migration) there is usually an inherent assumption that migration involves hardship in various forms – a challenging journey, racism, exploitation, deskilling, or unemployment in the country of migration, for example. Migration processes are often described as difficult. In comparison, the privileged migration literature to a large extent analyzes migration as a choice and an opportunity. This is also how privileged migrants participating in these studies often describe their migration experiences. Neither literatures tend to analyze migration in terms of affect. However, the interview participants in this study often approached and interpreted their migration processes through feelings. Migration processes would seem to be emotional both when they can be perceived as ‘difficult’ (such as forced migration due to armed conflict or economic migration as a result of poverty), as well as when those involved in the migration processes are what can be considered privileged migrants. I examine how the feeling of migration is present in this intersection between privileged and non-privileged migration, and how it makes the categories overlap.

An Ongoing Migration Process

Because of the emotions and feelings inherent in a migration, I do not understand migration as finished because a person has crossed a national border and arrived safely on the other side. Rather, I think of it as an ongoing process which can go on ‘forever’; while it is at some times more present in one’s life than at other times, it may never finish completely. When I use the term ‘migration process,’ I am not (only) referring to the bureaucracy, paper work, and residency applications involved in a (documented) migration. Instead, it is a term that covers the internal process that starts from the moment an individual starts considering a migration and continues throughout the move to another country, perhaps for the rest of that person’s life.

Neither is migration necessarily a straight-forward permanent move from one country to another. This is the reason I use the term ‘migration’ rather than ‘immigration,’ as ‘immigration’ signals a permanent ‘emigration’ from one place to a permanent ‘immigration’ in another place. Migration is not necessarily orderly and neat, but can be rather messy, non-linear, often temporary, and characterized by going back and forth between countries as the literature on circular migration shows us (Newland 2009; Wickramasekara 2011). Most of the interview participants in my study are quite permanently settled in Sweden, but as I show, they too describe that they do not necessarily plan to stay in Sweden ‘forever.’ Several nourish a dream of the possibility to move back and forth between Sweden and the country(ies) the migrating partner has roots in, engaging in a kind of circular migration, although most acknowledge that this would be difficult for practical and financial reasons.

MIGRATION AS AN EMOTIONAL PROCESS

By placing feelings at the center of the analysis, and in particular feelings associated with intimate relationships, I want to emphasize that migration is an emotional process. In this I follow Mai and King’s (2009: 296) call for an “emotional turn” as well as a “sexual turn” in migration studies. They ask migration researchers to stop regarding particularly the feeling of love, but also sexuality, as something inherently private, and instead see how they are connected to social structures and larger migration discourses (see also Boehm & Swank 2011).

Love is central to this dissertation, mainly because interview participants interpret their migrations as motivated and experienced through romantic love. However, I did not set out to research feelings and migration; rather, their centrality in this dissertation is an outcome of my empirical work. I did think love would be present in the participants’ narratives because I assumed participants would perceive love to be the reason behind the migration, but I had not understood the extent to which feelings would be central to participants’ narratives, nor the work that these feelings do. While

there were a number of themes I wanted to cover in the interviews, I also tried to carry out the interviews in a way that would allow me to follow the participants' lead in the hope that I would discover the issues they found most important. This turned out to be, in various ways and different constellations, the way a queer partner migration to Sweden feels and what those feelings do.

Transnational Intimacy and Feelings in a Global Context

Micro experiences can often be found in feelings, and emotions and feelings also has the capacity to make the borders between different groups or categories (in the case of my research between privileged and less privileged migrants and between migrants from different geographical regions) more permeable because *everybody feels*. Russell King points out that contemporary migration can increasingly be explained and understood “with reference to individual and personal factors (which, nevertheless, at a societal scale have considerable significance)” and that “students and tourists travel, study abroad, have sex, fall in love. [...] Maybe, as far as migration factors are concerned, ‘love conquers all’” (2002: 99). King calls this type of migration ‘transnational intimacy.’ The queer partner migration I have studied fits in well with King’s discussion of transnational intimacy in that it specifically concerns newly established⁹ relationships between individuals who have met unintentionally, without seeking out a relationship with a person of a particular nationality.

9. The terms ‘newly established relationship’ and ‘new relationship’ are used by the Migration Agency about relationships in which partners are not married nor have lived together for two years or more in another country than Sweden. This means that partners who have lived together, but only in Sweden, are included in the definition regardless of the length of time living together. The majority of the interview participants in this study had not lived together before the migrating partner’s move to Sweden, nor were they married when applying for residency for the migrating partner, alternatively when the migrating partner moved to Sweden (in those cases the migrating partner was not required to apply for residency).

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, a focus on feelings and what they do also allows for a more complex and fuller picture of migration experiences. According to Deborah A. Boehm and Heidi Swank, asking how “discourses of emotion reflect and construct not only the self but also one’s many relationships with others as people move about the globe” and what narratives of emotion can “tell us about inclusion, exclusion, injustice, power, and control in a global context” (2011: 2) contribute to a broader conceptualization of migration and a greater understanding of what actually happens in migration processes. Centering on the emotions and feelings of migration also helps us understand how the social processes of power most central to migration are experienced by both migrants and non-migrating individuals affected by migration.

Feeling Queerly Different

The fact that the particular migrations I study in this dissertation are queer migrations matters, as sexual and gender identities are two such processes that are affected by migration. The specificities of the queer partner migration experience are of importance because your queerness makes you, as one of the interview participants stated, ‘feel different.’ This feeling of difference can, for example, make you undertake emotional labour to come across as ‘less different’ or, conversely, embrace ‘not being like everyone else.’ The feeling, however, has an effect, in that it forces the queer individual to relate to it in some way.

THREE FEELINGS: LOVE, LOSS, AND BELONGING IN STORIES OF MIGRATION

I mentioned above that I did not realize the centrality of emotions and feelings to the migration narrative until I interviewed the participants of the study and started analyzing their stories. In this sense, the research I have carried out has largely been formed by the participants; their narratives have been immensely important for the direction the

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research took. The participants and their narratives directed the project once I started the interviews: as mentioned above, while I brought up themes in the interviews, I assumed the participants would let me know what the most important aspects of their migration processes were if I followed their cues in the conversation. The participants and, later, their narratives, were the epicenter that the rest of the study revolved around.

It was striking how many feelings came forth in the actual interview situations, both the feelings the participants expressed with their bodies and those they shared with me by way of telling their story, but also how affected *I* was by the stories I was told. Once I started the analysis I found emotions and feelings in the narratives as well, without expecting them or looking for them. I realized that what the interview participants had communicated was really how they had *felt* about their migration processes rather than what had *happened*, and that emotions and feelings had a central function in the creation of their narratives. The emotions and feelings offer the narratives a structure and forced me to be attentive to a different dimension of the narrating.

I have already touched on the importance of love for the dissertation. The other two feelings I center on are loss and belonging. I discuss in more detail why I chose these three feelings in the methodological chapter, but, in short, these were the three most central feelings the interview participants shared with me in their migration stories, and I build the dissertation's narrative around these emotional themes.

FEELINGS AS NARRATIVES

The term 'narrative' is interpreted differently depending on discipline (Phoenix, Smith & Sparkes 2010; Riessman 2008), and I outline the ways the term can be used and understood in more detail in the methodological chapter. However, I want to point out here, so as to not confuse the reader, that while I mainly use the term 'narrative,' I also use it somewhat interchangeably with 'story.' Stories about ourselves are an integral part of our lives, and every person has one,

if not several, stories about their life. As Cassandra Phoenix, Brett Smith, and Andrew C. Sparkes write, “it is in and through stories that we live our lives” (2010: 3).

I introduce the concept of narrative here, rather than in the methodological chapter. This is because narrative in this dissertation is a kind of super structure: it is the *form* of the dissertation. Rather than simply being a method used, narratives structure the dissertation and, as I touched on above and discuss below, the dissertation is also a narrative (Conle 2000).

If stories are integral to our lives, emotions and feelings are integral to our stories, and as Jeffrey Pence argues, emotions and feelings are also “a primary feature of our reactions to, or interactions with, narrative” (2004: 273). He goes on to ask whether emotions are “inherently narrative in character” and concludes that “at the very least, *expressed* emotions may become narratives” (2004: 274; italics in original). For many of the participants I interviewed, how the migration process made them feel, or in Pence’s words, their expressed emotions, was *the* story, not the events of the process itself. Mona and Karin in the narrative that introduced this chapter built their narrative around certain feelings and connected the events of their story to the feelings experienced, making the feelings the narrative as well as that which moved their narrative forward.

TELLING STORIES OF MIGRATION AND QUEER INTIMACY

Thus, narratives and storytelling are central to this dissertation. As I discuss further in the methodological chapter, stories can have real power, and it matters which ones we choose to tell ourselves as well as others. I have always been interested in people’s stories, especially the stories about coming and going. Why did you leave? What did that feel like? Why did you decide to come here? What was it like when you first arrived? Caroline Knowles, who calls herself “a long-term collector of stories of displacement” (2002: 142), is similarly interested in collecting “arrival and departure stories” (2002:

140). Knowles wants to understand forms of human association and connections between biographies and places, arguing that these forms of association and connection bring “some of the missing texture of social analysis, which are given a lower priority than technical and economic forms in globalization theory” (2002: 141). With the narratives I have gathered I hope to add some of this “missing texture” as the stories show that “arrival and departure” is very complex, a complexity which cannot be fully understood without considering individual narratives.

I include the interview participants’ voices in the text from the very beginning, because the participants’ narratives are not only ‘material’ that I analyze but are also how the reader comes to know the participants. Twenty-three individuals have generously shared their queer migration stories for this study, and I would argue that hearing their voices is also what makes the reading enjoyable. Because I want to keep the participants’ voices present, I have included a participant narrative, similar to Mona and Karin’s story above, in each chapter.

Affective and Affecting Narratives

Rather than focusing on the migrating partner’s migration narrative, my intent has been to center on the narrative of the *relationship* and what it feels like to be in a queer relationship and experience a migration process. As I mention above, feelings help mobilize these types of narratives in the person telling the story, but feelings can also help us understand the story being told. I draw on narrative analysis to probe the narratives I have gathered, and one of the main points of this method is that by, for example, identifying and empathizing with a narrator or perhaps their feelings or a part of their story, the reader’s own understanding of the world will ideally be changed (Phoenix, Smith & Sparkes 2010). A narrative about an individual we get to know can be *felt*, meaning our understanding of how that individual negotiates the complexities of their narrative will hopefully increase. Reading becomes an affective experience. As I go on to discuss below, *how* a narrative is written therefore matters.

THE RETROACTIVE CHARACTER OF STORIES

Narratives are of course not necessarily ‘how things happened’ or how they ‘are.’ They are life events filtered through memories and feelings, and when circumstances change or new events occur that affect (how we feel about) previous events, the story of ‘what happened’ or ‘is’ also changes. Hence, stories are not only *about* people’s lives, but they are also *how we structure* our lives. Robert Atkinson argues that, “we are a storytelling species. Storytelling is in our blood. We think in story form, speak in story form, and bring meaning to our lives through story. Our life stories connect us to our roots, give us direction, validate our own experience, and restore value to our lives” (2007: 224).

Because stories are integral to how we live our lives, at the same time as they need to change to account for changes occurring in those same lives, all stories are by necessity created retroactively. We weave stories together based on the audience and what the purpose of the story is. We need to know the ‘then’ – how we felt ‘then’ and what happened ‘then’ – in order to create and tell our story. This means we cannot tell a story until we have interpreted ‘what happened,’ and, also, ‘what happened’ is put together differently depending on where we are right when we tell the story. In my research on queer partner migration processes in Sweden, this might mean whether the story is told when the interview participant is still in the relationship the migration took place in or after the relationship has ended; when the love is new, when the love has taken on a quality of everyday life, or when the love is no longer there; and if things in Sweden eventually work out for the better or perhaps were always good, or if the loss of friends, jobs, and social contexts is or has been overwhelming. It is these feelings that give the narrative its texture and make us notice a new and different dimension to the narrative.

By operating retroactively, narratives ‘do something’ to both individuals and couples. The love stories the interview participants have told and which I analyze are *created*: the couples need to tell a story about how things *became* love in order for it to *be* a story about love. The interview becomes the place where the participants create this narrative; it is the place where it becomes *this particular*

story – a love story, a break-up story, a story of difficulties, a story of hope. Mona and Karin’s story is shaped as a confusing and unhappy story when told to me – a love story in a complicated world as well as a story of surprise at how love could cause disorientation and confusion. However, it is also a story that places the process outside Mona and Karin’s power and becomes something that happens *to* them. As we create stories retroactively, it is also possible to focus on what the narrator finds most important, which for Mona and Karin is the love that they emphasize underwrites their migration process.

A DISSERTATION AS A WRITTEN NARRATIVE

The word ‘narrative’ when used in academic texts generally refers to the stories of research participants. At the same time and as I noted earlier, an academic text is also a narrative, and, just like a love story, it is a retroactive story: this dissertation is a story about a research process *after* this process took place. Like the queer partner migration narratives the interview participants told me, it too is created for and told to a specific audience; it too *becomes* the story as I am telling it.

Writing Narratives Meant to Be Read

Toril Moi points out that “even a dissertation needs a plot” (2011: n.p.), and, as Annelie Bränström Öhman (2014) would argue, not only a plot but a way of writing that suits the story the researcher is telling. Öhman asks why academic writing is marginalized and transformed into a pure formality, and why we, as teachers, train our students how to formulate relevant research questions and to find the theories and methods that are most suitable to answer these questions, but never ask “what kind of writing does your research question require?” (2014: 18; my translation). Just as particular research questions require particular theories and methods, certain types of research require a certain style of writing, and Öhman hopes that she sees a new turn towards a more narrative approach to academic writing and “a realization that the theories also are stories about

the world and the people” (2014: 20; my translation). This is the reason I introduce the form of the dissertation, not only the material, the theories, and the methods: the writing is an integral aspect of knowledge production (Richardson & Adams St. Pierre 2005).

By pointing out that the dissertation is (also) a narrative, I want to tie together two different types of stories: the ones I gathered from the interview participants and reworked into theoretically explained narratives as well as the larger one that is the dissertation and that organizes the gathered narratives. Following Öhman, I have also asked “what kind of writing” telling the stories of queer partner migrant relationships requires. Scientific writing is a very particular way of writing and there are “forms and norms” (Öhman 2014: 17; my translation) to follow. However, academic language is often opaque to those who do not possess the key to it, and as Anna Adeniji (2008: 68) states, the goals of writing accessibly and yet staying with the academic form are not always easy to reconcile. By actively remembering that the dissertation also is a narrative and by consciously focusing on narratives and writing, my aim has been to write in a way that takes the stories of queer partner migration seriously and makes them ‘real’ to the reader.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation is divided into eight chapters. This introductory chapter has introduced the topic of queer partner migration to Sweden, and spelled out the overarching aim and the research questions guiding the study. I have also outlined the connection and overlap between queer partner migration and privileged migration as well as the importance of emotions and feelings in migration processes. Further, I have emphasized the importance of the retroactively created narrative in order to ‘add texture’ to how we understand migration in general and queer partner migration in particular.

In Chapter 2: Academic Backgrounds, I situate my research academically. The three scholarly fields I position the dissertation in relation to are queer migration, intimate migration, and privileged

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migration, and I describe and discuss each field in turn. I also examine how I understand the fields in relation to my study, where they match up and where they deviate.

In Chapter 3: Theoretical Frameworks, I outline the theories I use to analyze the participants' narratives. These theories originate in feminist, queer, and critical race and whiteness theories, and as the dissertation operates in a framework of affect, emotion, and feeling, I start by outlining my use and understanding of this particular theoretical framework. I also introduce Sara Ahmed's (2006) approach to queer phenomenology, which is the theory I more explicitly use to analyze the interview participants' narratives. I also connect Ahmed's queer phenomenology to the concept of narrative, and discuss how narratives help us orientate ourselves in our own eyes as well as in the eyes of those listening to our narratives. Finally, I outline the three theoretical frameworks which frame the historical and cultural contexts that the narratives of this dissertation, as well as the dissertation itself, exist in. These are entanglement, intimate citizenship, and homonationalism.

Chapter 4: Creating Knowledge about Queer Partner Migration, introduces the interview participants as a group:¹⁰ who they are in terms of age, countries they have roots in, educational and professional background, and length of time in Sweden. It also outlines how I designed the study as well as the ethnographic methods I used during the research, including a detailed discussion on research ethics and ethnography. From here, I move on to examine how I analyzed the material I gathered. While I discuss narrative analysis in particular, I also bring up writing as a method of analysis.

Chapters 5 to 7 form the bulk of the dissertation. They are empirical chapters, and each focuses on one of the three emotional themes that I have identified in the interviews: love, loss, and belonging. These chapters each start off with a discussion of how the particular feeling or emotion the chapter centers on can be understood theoretically

10. See the list of interview participants at the end of the book for an overview of each individual participant.

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before introducing two extended participant narratives. Two of the chapters also include thematic analyses, which include several participant narratives.

In Chapter 5: Love, I focus on *the equal relationship* as being what is most important in the Swedish discourse on intimate relationships. I discuss how a migration can cause inequality because of migration status, race, and gender identity when queer partner migration relationships are measured against normative (white, Swedish, cisgendered, straight) relationships. I also discuss how queer partner migration relationships are required to be positioned in ways that signal that a relationship is *a 'serious' relationship based on love*, and how this dictates that queer partner migrants and their Swedish partners negotiate various discourses of love and intimacy to become believable and intelligible.

Chapter 6: Loss discusses how *migration processes become places of lost privileges* filled with feelings of disappointment and confusion when the process becomes very different than anticipated. This is particularly in relation to migrating partners who are used to having certain privileges tied to their race, class, nationality, and gender identity who become subsumed into the category of 'migrant' in Sweden. I then examine how these social processes of power operate to create a different kind of loss in those cases where the migrating partner could be described as a less privileged migrant as well as how they can create differences in *how the loss of friends, family, and community is experienced*. This chapter also analyzes *the loss of the independent relationship* as the migrating partner becomes emotionally dependent on the non-migrating partner, causing both partners to experience loss, though in different ways.

The final empirical chapter, Chapter 7: Belonging centers on how *social processes of power such as class and age can create feelings of belonging* in Sweden in migrating partners as well as an analysis of how *the emotional labour of non-migrating partners* can make feelings of belonging possible and accessible to the migrating partner through the positioning of the non-migrating partner as 'less of a migrant' and 'more Swedish.' I also discuss how *queer partner migrants are allowed to belong 'more' and more easily* in Sweden than other types

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of family-tie migrants, and what feelings of a relatively hassle-free residence application process do for the queer partner migrant's sense of belonging in Sweden.

In Chapter 8: Conclusion I sum up my findings, and, in particular, I discuss them in relation to the theoretical frameworks of entanglement, intimate citizenship, and homonationalism.

The dissertation ends with an epilogue that briefly outlines what has happened in the lives of those interview participants whose narratives are included in the dissertation in the almost four years that have passed between their interviews and the publication of the dissertation.

Chapter 2

Academic Backgrounds: Queer Migration, Intimate Migration, and Privileged Migration Scholarships

TIMO AND IDA'S STORY

Timo is from a country in Africa and has lived in Sweden with his partner Ida for the past year and a half when I meet them. Ida, who is thirty, is a white, university-educated, majority Swede who grew up in Sweden. Timo, who is thirty-eight and black, worked for an activist organization for a number of years before moving to Sweden. They met in Sweden when Timo visited for a month as part of a work exchange, and before they decided that Timo would move to Sweden, Ida stayed with him in the African country for six months in order for them to 'try out' the relationship. Ida has previous experience of staying in Africa for extended periods of time, and had, before she met Timo, been in a cross-border relationship with a partner from another African country.

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Sexual orientation and gender identity is prominent in Timo and Ida's narrative. Timo says:

I have never identified as straight or seen myself as a straight person. When I was younger I thought I was a boy who was like... raised like a girl. And I didn't have a problem with that. Sometimes I would feel like, I'm more a boy today and I would go with that feeling and be happy with that. Sometimes I felt like, I'm a girl today, and I would go with those feelings. So... I never really had any... [*sighs*] gender identity when I was young. And then when I got older I... I... I just thought that I had to be something because everybody else was something. So... being a lesbian was comfortable. It wasn't right but it was *comfortable* for me. Then lately I decided I wanted to explore my... my gender identity. Maybe I should... accept who I am and try to... to find out what life is like being that person. So now I'm a gender-neutral person.

Ida laughs when she tries to describe her sexual identity, acknowledging that Timo's gender identity affects how she can define herself. She explains she identified as bisexual for a long time but was mainly in committed relationships with cisgendered men. Then, she met Timo, and "at that time you [Timo] were identifying as a woman... for not a very long time, but it just happened that we met at that time. And then I sort of started identifying as a dyke. And then [*starts laughing*], oops, you're not a woman anymore! And... now I don't know! [*everyone starts laughing*] But it's not that important right now."

When they met, Ida's life was up in the air, while Timo's was more stable. However, by the time they had decided they wanted to live in the same country, this had shifted: Ida had secured a more long-term job in Sweden, while Timo was starting to dislike and possibly want to leave his job, at the same time as his mother was very sick and dying, meaning Timo's life in the African country was changing in different ways. They were indecisive about whether they

would settle in the African country or in Sweden even as they applied for Timo's Swedish residence permit. In the end they decided there were more obstacles in the African country: it would be difficult for Ida to secure a work permit even if she would have a right to remain in the country; the unemployment levels in the country were very high; and as they wanted to inseminate to have a baby, they assumed that the cost of insemination would be much higher in the African country compared to the government-funded insemination program in Sweden. However, when I met them they were still considering the possibility of moving to the African country Timo has roots in, or maybe another African country, at some point.

Race is much less central to Timo and Ida's narrative than is sexual and gender identities, despite the fact that Timo is black in a white-dominated country and theirs being an interracial relationship. They discuss racism and clearly find it both important and relevant, but do so in a distant kind of way, where racism becomes a discourse present in society rather than something that affects them or their relationship. Race seems to be a difficult topic in the narrative, and I interpret this, when thinking back at the interview and reading the transcript, as Timo and Ida being uncomfortable discussing it with me, not that they find race an uncomfortable topic in general. What they do say reveals that they have reflected deeply on race and racism, but they are much less open and forthcoming compared to when talking about sexual and gender identities, for example. I can, of course, only speculate about the reasons for this, but assume that it is connected to my whiteness.

Timo and Ida's narrative is one of a highly voluntary migration: they made a conscious *choice* to live in Sweden, and they could just as well have decided to live in the African country. Their narrative also positions Timo as a fairly reluctant migrant, with Timo saying: "I was almost dragged out of the country, I didn't want to leave," and Ida adding:

 | You really sacrificed something and I knew that. Of course
 | I really wanted you to be happy here. And you did it [made

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the sacrifice to leave the African country] because you wanted to be with me, not just because you wanted to get out of your country because you [*starts laughing*] didn't really want to get out!

This way Timo and Ida construct both a highly voluntary migration narrative at the same time as they emphasize the centrality of their intimate relationship to the migration process.

Another central theme in Timo and Ida's narrative is dependency. Timo realized early on that his move to Sweden would mean being completely dependent on Ida – financially, socially, language-wise, and as an interpreter of Swedish society and social codes. She also felt that this would be a burden for Ida. Ida, on the other hand, felt the pressure to make sure that Timo liked his life in Sweden and that she was happy, because of the sacrifices she felt she had made in order to migrate. This dependency and pressure is at the core of several of the participant narratives I have gathered, and I discuss it in relation to a number of the narratives I analyze in the dissertation.

Even this condensed version of Timo and Ida's narrative shows how their story is highly complex and includes many different levels. In this chapter I contextualize and position my research academically, as I introduce the reader to the three research fields in which I situate my research, that is, the academic fields I attempt to 'have a conversation with.' I draw on Timo and Ida's narrative to make certain points or exemplify issues within the scholarships I discuss in order to show how complex narratives cannot easily be made to fit into pre-determined fields. The scholarships I examine are queer migration, intimate migration, and privileged migration, and I discuss each by introducing relevant literatures and positioning my own study in relation to these scholarships. I also discuss what I see as the challenges of each scholarship.

The scholarships I introduce are vast, and an exhaustive review is beyond the scope of this chapter. Instead, I focus on those parts of the scholarships that are of main relevance to my study and which help me understand queer partner migration to Sweden and emotions

and feelings as they pertain to partner migration. I start by briefly outlining the three main fields of inquiry before moving on to situating emotions and feelings, in particular love, and sexuality in migration studies. I then discuss each scholarship in turn, starting with queer migration, then moving on to intimate migration, before finishing the chapter by examining the privileged migration field.

THREE INTERSECTING FIELDS OF RE-SEARCH: QUEER MIGRATION, INTIMATE MI-GRATION, AND PRIVILEGED MIGRATION

As I argue in this chapter, the queer partner migration that I examine in this study is not fully encompassed by any single academic field. While the queer migration literature would seem to be the ideal ‘home’ for my research, this field often approaches ‘same-sex migration’ (as queer partner migration is generally referred to) from the perspective of the legal impossibility or, at least, difficulty of carrying out such a migration. It also generally leaves out issues pertaining to intimacy and emotions. The intimate migration scholarship, on the other hand, which includes the ‘marriage migration’ (or what I call partner migration) field, is quite heteronormative and thus poses challenges when applied to a queer context, in particular a queer partner migration context that does not presume marriage. Finally, while the field of privileged migration is relevant, as I discussed in the previous chapter, my research blurs the borders between ‘privileged’ and ‘less privileged’ migration. As such, there is a knowledge gap that this study has the possibility of filling. Zigzagging between and moving across these three bodies of scholarship allow me to carve out a space to start a new conversation in, and in which queerness, intimacy, and privileges intersect.

The **queer migration scholarship** mainly centers on queer subjects, identities, and practices as they relate to migration, even though there are also a few attempts to queer *migration* rather than examining queer *subjects*. This scholarship covers issues similar to mainstream migration research, including diaspora, refugees and

asylum seekers, belonging and feelings of home, ethnic communities and transnationalist practices, and nation and citizenship, but from a queer (subject) perspective.

Intimate migration scholarship, broadly speaking, concerns intimacy, emotions and feelings, sexuality, and migration. It includes literature on partner migration (or ‘marriage migration’), transnational families, sex work and mobility, ‘mail-order brides’ and internet relationships, international adoption, and any other area of migration where feelings, emotional bonds, and/or sexuality is the most salient point of departure.

Finally, the **privileged migration scholarship** centers on migration undertaken by individuals from the global north who migrate either to the global south or to other Western countries. It includes scholarship on lifestyle migration, retirement migration, elite-level work migration, au pairs, backpackers and gap-year travellers, and any other type of migration and mobility undertaken by individuals from the global north.

However, as my focus in the dissertation is emotions and feelings and migration, I start by briefly outlining how love, emotions, and sexuality are (or, as is often the case, is not) included in migration studies.

MIGRATION, LOVE, AND SEXUALITY

As I noted in the introductory chapter, Nicola Mai and Russell King argue that the mainstream migration research paradigms “sideline the role of emotions, feelings, and affect in the motivation and experience of migration” with the effect that “it is as if migrants are not allowed to love, express their sexualities, have emotions, be intimate” (2009: 297). They point out that “many migrations and other forms of mobility are informed by a variety of emotional, affective and sexual liaisons, attachments and expectations, which can be powerful and necessary motivations for mobility and for the risks taken in crossing boundaries” (2009: 295). They advocate for a “sexual turn,” recognizing that migrants are sexual beings, as well

as an “emotional turn” in migration studies “which explicitly places emotions, especially love and affection, at the heart of migration decision making and behaviour” (2009: 296).

A handful of researchers within migration studies or closely related fields are attempting to broaden migration research to include intersections between love and/or sexuality and migration. This includes Katie Walsh’s (2006) study of British migrants in Dubai, in which she examines how relationships of love (whether romantic or other types) are lived in transnationalism, and the discourses surrounding intimate relationships as sites in which love can be located and experienced; Fataneh Farahani’s (2007) study of narratives of sexuality among Iranian-Swedish women; Naila Moukbarel’s (2009) study of “emotional closeness” between live-in Sri Lankan maids in Lebanon and their employers, such as emotional bonds created between maids and children but also the control the employers exercise over the maids’ feelings and sexuality, by, for example, not permitting them to have friends or lovers; Alpa Shah’s (2006) study of internal seasonal returning labour migrants in India who do not understand their movement in purely economic terms but who see work at, in this case, brick kilns as a temporary space of freedom where they can live out sexual and emotional relationships prohibited back home; Ali Nobil Ahmad (2009), whose study on male Pakistani labour migrants in Europe shows that these migrants experience social as well as sexual marginalization and are denied love, sex, and intimacy; Harriet Westcott’s (2012) research on friendships and migration, which analyzes the emotional impacts caused by migration on friendships; and Mary Holmes and Roger Burrows (2012) who explore the importance of emotions, in particular a love for and wish to be with family, in people’s return migration from Australia back to the United Kingdom.

Love and sexuality are here conceptualized as key factors in migration. For example, what can be interpreted as economic rationales for migration may, if starting from the point of view that love, affection, and emotions and feelings are essential notions for all human beings, be interpreted as migration caused by love for someone else (a child one

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wants to give a better life, a family member one wants to be near) or because one wants to move to a place where it is possible to experience certain feelings or take part in certain sexual practices more freely. Love and other intimate feelings are understood as intrinsic to migration decision making and behaviour, and placed at the center of the analysis. Sexuality is similarly constructed as important for all humans, and this scholarship highlights “migrants and other ‘people on them move’ [as] sexual beings expressing, wanting to express, or denied the means to express, their sexual identities” (Mai & King 2009: 296).

This scholarship taking love and sexuality as its starting point when examining migration has been essential to my research on queer partner migration. Especially Mai and King’s arguments that emotional relations cannot be regarded as apart from the economic or the geographic, that these relations are not any more ‘private’ than the economic or political considerations for migration, and that they need to be understood and analyzed in their own rights have underwritten my research project. Nor are all migrations motivated by economic or political considerations, or by these considerations only. Rather, the interview participant narratives I have gathered show that affective migration considerations in many cases are economically detrimental to the migrating partners, and while some explicitly position Sweden as more politically tolerant in regards to their sexual and/or gender identities and sexual practices than the countries they have roots in, some of these migrating partners nonetheless felt more comfortable with their sexual and gender identities in the countries they migrated from.

Timo and Ida’s narrative that I started this chapter with is an example of this. When Ida mentions the “sacrifices” Timo has made in order to migrate to Sweden, one of the things she has in mind is the fact that Timo had a good job in the African country but gave up his financial stability and career to be with Ida in Sweden. Before the migration, they assumed that it would be difficult for Timo to find a job, any job, in Sweden, which also turned out to be the case, even though Timo has had the opportunity to work in his field for shorter periods of time, too. However, in this they put their relationship before economic gain.

Part of Timo and Ida's narrative also relates to gender identity and how Timo's gender "disappears" in Sweden, as zhe puts it. While zhe says "it's cool" to be queer in Sweden, because zhe feels less threatened and there is less violence against queer people, zhe also finds it somewhat confusing that gender expressions are more fluid in Sweden than what zhe is used to from the African country, as this fluidity limits Timo's own gender identity. In the country zhe moved from, zhe is generally read as a man, but in Sweden zhe has little idea what goes on in the mind of those zhe meets, as less firm borders between gender expressions in Sweden mean zhe is not automatically read as a man or a masculine person. Sexual and gender identities are historically and context specific, and Timo explains feeling more comfortable with hir gender identity in the African country. There, zhe feels zhe is seen "as a person" while in Sweden, zhe "disappears." Both putting their relationship ahead of economic gain and Timo's gender identity are key factors both in their migration process and their narrative.

QUEER MIGRATION

Within the two fields of queer migration and intimate migration, I chose to concentrate on that part of the scholarships that relates to the main topic of my research, that is, partner migration or, to use the language of the these two respective scholarships: 'same-sex migration' and 'marriage migration.' This is particularly so in terms of the intimate migration field, which is vastly larger than the field of queer migration. What I find the most interesting is that the two sub-fields of 'same-sex migration' and 'marriage migration' rarely 'speak to' each other, despite dealing with the same type of subjects, that is, individuals who migrate because of intimate relationships. Consequently, one of my aims with this dissertation is to initiate such a conversation.

Queer migration is a fairly small but growing field that intersects migration studies with theories of sexuality and heteronormativity. The starting point is that sexuality influences all migrants, not only queer subjects, and sexuality (understood as both sexual orientation and sexual practices) is thus understood as a power relation entangled with other social processes of power such as race, class, and gender.

This makes the queer migration scholarship highly relevant for my research, and also positions it as the scholarship I speak to most directly. Feelings and emotions are, however, relatively invisible in this scholarship. While certain American organizations which campaigned to have partner migration extended to queer couples did so from within a discourse of romantic love (Chávez 2010; Human Rights Watch/Immigration Equality 2006), queer migration scholarship does not analyze or discuss love or other emotions to any great extent. The literature also tends to concentrate on subjects from the global south migrating to the global north (exceptions are Collins 2009; Luibhéid 1999; Simmons 2008; White 2010, 2013a, 2013b, 2014), rendering other types of migration trajectories invisible.

*'Partner Migration' Instead of 'Same-Sex Migration'
and 'Marriage Migration'*

Before I move on, a clarification of terms might be in place. I refer to 'same-sex migration' and 'marriage migration' as *partner migration* for two reasons. To start with, not all 'same-sex migration' relationships are same-sex; individuals who identify as transgender or gender non-normative may be covered by this term in a legal sense, but they and their partners may not experience themselves as being 'same-sex.' For example, as Timo and Ida's narrative shows, Timo's fluid gender identity and hir identifying as gender neutral mean their relationship cannot be included in the concept of 'same-sex migration' without doing violence to Timo's gender identity and how Timo and Ida understand their relationship. If we wish to also include non-heterosexual and non-cisgendered individuals in research on this type of family-tie migration, I argue we need to avoid using terms that are in and of themselves excluding. There is a point to be made for using the term 'same-sex migration' when, for example, lobbying governments currently not allowing queer partner migration to change legislation. However, in research, and unless we specifically only mean couples defining themselves as 'same-sex' (and so make an active choice to exclude gender non-normative individuals), I strongly suggest using the term queer partner migration. Used this

way, 'queer' becomes a way of signaling that the relationship deviates from the heteronormative norm as viewed by migration legislation as well as dominant social norms; the relationship queers the migration. In terms of 'marriage migration,' not all straight couples are married, and to identify this particular migration as such, by assuming that all straight partners are married, is, as I go on to discuss later in this chapter, to reinforce particularly strong normative ideas of what a relationship 'should' look like rather than taking into account what relationships *do* look like. However, all, both individuals who are part of 'same-sex migration' relationships and those who are part of 'marriage migration' relationships, can be described as 'partners' and the migration process they are going through as 'cross-border partner migration.' The purpose of re-labeling these migrations is, thus, to emphasize that cross-border migration for the purpose of an intimate relationship is too similar, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity, to be treated as two separate fields of research.

*Making Sexual Identity and Heteronormativity Visible
in Migration Practices and Theory*

Theoretically, the queer migration field tends to position itself as part of, or at least engaging with, gender and migration scholarship. Eithne Luibhéid (2004: 227) points out that mainstream migration research generally ignores the links between heteronormativity, sexuality, and migration. Sexuality is viewed as something 'natural' and 'private' rather than the opposite: that the state and strong social organizations interfere and organize sexuality in normative ways, and that this is related to other forms of social regulations such as gender, class, and race (see also Cantú 2009). Luibhéid argues that at the same time as the gender and migration literature is valuable in terms of studying sexuality and migration, the gender-centered analyses in this literature is often a way of reinscribing heteronormative assumptions by conflating sexuality with gender "which in turn is often conflated with women – a triple erasure meaning that only women have sexuality, sexuality is gender, and gender or sexuality is normatively heterosexual" (2004: 227; see also Shephard 2012).

To this I would add that queer migration scholarship as a general rule often overlooks gender identity, including non-normative genders and transgender positions. An exception is Katrin Vogel's (2009) study of Venezuelan *transformistas*' (transgender women's) migration to Europe to participate in sex work, a migration that is both undertaken because of and made possible by the *transformistas*' non-normative gender identity, as well as Trystan T. Cotten's (2012) edited volume on transgender migration (see also Solomon 2005). Given that several of the participants I interviewed for this study do not identify as cisgendered made me quite aware of the lack of gender non-normative voices in the scholarship.

Martin Manalansan (2006) argues for the strengthening of links between the gender and migration and the queer migration fields, maintaining that "a political and theoretical perspective that suggests that sexuality is disciplined by social institutions and practices that normalize and naturalize heterosexuality and heterosexual practices including marriage, family, and biological reproduction by marginalizing persons, institutions, or practices that deviate from the norm" (2006: 225) would enrich the gender and migration literature. By including a queer *perspective* "underexamined assumptions about kinship, marriage, desires, and social roles" (Manalansan 2006:225) can be undermined. Nicole Shephard (2012) similarly argues that queer methodologies need to be applied also to straight subjects to address heteronormative assumptions underlying much theorizing and research on gender and migration. That part of the queer migration field which focuses on queer diaspora can be mentioned here as well, as it also, at least partially, moves away from the queer subject and queer practices towards a queer *understanding* or a *queering* of diaspora in its use of theory (e.g. Alexander 2005; Eng 2003; Gopinath 2005; Ponce 2011; Wesling 2008).

Queer Migration and the Nation-State

However, the part of the queer migration literature that most informed my research is that which focuses on queer subjects and practices. A large part of this literature centers on queer individuals in ethnic minority communities or being a queer migrant in a particular country, mainly in the US (e.g. del Aguila 2012; Cantú 2009; Carrillo & Fontdevila 2014; Eng & Horn 1998; Gupta 2006; Khan 2011; La Fountain-Stokes 2005, 2009; Manalansan 2003, 2005; Peña 2005; Ramirez 2005; Rodriguez 2003), but also in Australia (Smith 2012), Belgium (Peumans 2012, 2014a, 2014b, 2015), Germany (Petzen 2004), France (Amari 2012, 2013, 2015), Ireland (Luibhéid 1999), and Israel (Kuntsman 2003, 2007, 2009a, 2009b). In addition, a smaller part emphasizes nation and queer citizenship (Cruz-Malavé & Manalansan 2002; Luibhéid & Cantú 2005; Somerville 2005). As evidenced, much of this scholarship is American, often focusing on queer Latin Americans in the US, but an increased interest in queer migration from a European perspective has emerged in recent years (Adihartono 2014; Avrahami 2007; Fassin & Salcedo 2015; Salcedo 2013, 2015; Shield 2014; Simmons 2008; Stella 2015), including in the sub-field of asylum and refugee migration (Akin 2015; Cowen et al. 2011; Giametta 2014, 2015, forthcoming 2017; Mühleisen, Røthing, & Svendsen 2012; Peumans 2008).

More directly of importance to this project, however, is the part of this scholarship which considers the crossing of national borders and the legal aspects of migration. This literature asks questions about who may or may not cross what national borders, for what reasons, and in relation to whom borders can or cannot be crossed. Again, the majority of this scholarship tends to focus on a (North) American context (Chávez 2010; Bailey 2004; Cantú 2009; Cantú et al. 2005; Dueñas 2000; Epps 2005; Fairbairn 2005; Garland 2009; LaViolette 2004; Lorenz 2005; Luibhéid 1998, 2002, 2004, 2008; Luibhéid & Cantú 2005; Miller 2005; Randazzo 2005; Reddy 2005; White 2010, 2013a, 2013b, 2014).

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These sub-fields have been valuable to me when trying to understand how my own research intersects with the queer migration scholarship. The part of the literature centering on queer partner migration has held the most relevance in the sense that it has allowed me to compare my own research with that of others and notice differences and similarities in material gathered in different localities and political contexts. I also see connections between this sub-field and that of queer asylum and refugee migration, although I do not directly engage with queer asylum and refugee migration in the dissertation. Cantú states that for both these categories of migrants,

their sexual orientation is a salient characteristic of their identities by which they are making “rights” claims upon the state. [...] [T]his population of “queer immigrants” differs from other immigrants who may also be gay, lesbian, or bisexual but do not make rights claims from a “queer” location; that is, they assume a specific political identity, constructed in part vis-á-vis their relationship to the state, from which they contest notions of citizenship and make “rights” claims’.

(2009: 68)

It is interesting to note here that, despite the fact that Timo and Ida, whose narrative I open this chapter with, clearly do not position themselves as a same-sex couple, they, too, make this claim on the Swedish nation-state by virtue of being positioned as ‘same-sex’ in Timo’s residence permit application.

‘Same-Sex Migration’; or Queer Partner Migration

Quite limited research has been carried out on queer partner migration. Tracy Simmons’ (2004, 2008) study of queer partner migration to the UK, Melissa Autumn White’s (2010, 2013a, 2013b, 2014) research on Canada, and Manuela Salcedo’s (2013, 2015)

study on France are the only more substantial qualitative studies that examine queer partner migration in national contexts where queer intimate relationships are recognized for migration purposes. Simmons focuses on the heterosexist discourses in the British family reunion provision, which assumes a relationship must be ‘marriage-like’ in order to be approved for migration (and Holst (2004) engages in a similar discussion about queer partner migration in an Australian context). Through interviews with queer partner migration couples, she examines how queer couples practically go about achieving a British family-reunion migration and illustrates how this results in a normative construction of sexual identity. Her research also shows that in the British case, “the possession of attractive skills to the state and financial dependency are an important element in achieving family reunion” (2008: 213).

White’s research similarly centers on normative perceptions of what a relationship ‘should’ ‘look like’ in order to be read as a ‘genuine’ relationship by Canadian migration authorities. Through interviews with queer partner migration couples, immigration lawyers working on queer migration cases, and analyses of policy as well as activist texts, White examines “why the state [is] so invested in regulating *which* (sexual) relationships ‘count’ for immigration purposes” (2010: 18; italics in original) and how queer desires and intimacies are brought into coherence with national structures of feeling through the governing of intimacy (2013b). She shows that “the affective governance mobilized by immigration recognition [of queer relationships] demonstrates that recognition is *simultaneously* symbolic and material” (2010: 215; italics in original), but that it also mobilizes homonational identifications and attachments in the Canadian immigration system. White’s research has, in particular, helped me reflect on the ways that queer partner migrants in different national contexts comprehend and approach the administrative part of their migration process.

Salcedo’s research on France examines what Salcedo terms “the politics of suspicion” that surrounds cross-border relationships in a French context, asking why cross-border relationships are constituted as a ‘problem’ to the point that they are, as a general rule, considered

‘marriages of convenience’ in public debate. Through participant observation at a French organization working on queer migration and interviews with queer partner migrant couples, she connects these ‘suspicious’ relationships with the normalization process that queer partner migration couples go through when they, similar to Simmons’ and White’s research participants, need to make their relationships intelligible to the French migration authorities. Salcedo is particularly interested in how age, class, and nationality intersect in queer partner migration relationships in the process of creating a relationship that is read as ‘genuine.’ An important aspect of her research is the fact that she examines queer partner migration as not isolated from, but alongside, straight partner migration, showing how the two influence one another as well as public debate on partner migration.

Simmons’, White’s, and Salcedo’s studies have all been highly relevant in the process of writing this dissertation in that they have acted as points of comparison, or places to ‘check’ the interview participants’ narratives against to find consistencies and differences between national contexts. They have also acted as spotlights, shining a light on ‘what is Swedish’ in my material. When working with ‘small stories,’ that is, personal narratives revolving around one or two individuals, it is sometimes easy to overlook the ‘larger stories,’ such as the cultural and national context the narratives exist in. Reading similar studies set in different national contexts allowed me to see how those contexts produced different understandings of both queer partner migration processes specifically and partner migration processes more generally. It also made it easier to notice those instances when the interview participants of my study positioned themselves in particular ways because their migration process took place in Sweden.

Other literature examining queer partner migration I want to mention includes Audrey Yue’s (2008) study of the development of Australian same-sex migration policy; Jon Binnie’s (1997) discussion on sexual citizenship in Europe; Karma R. Chávez (2010) analysis of a report by American LGBT organizations on bi-national same-sex couples excluded by American immigration laws, which constructs this exclusion as a concern only because American, white, middle-class citizens’ rights are violated by the laws; Eric Fassin and Manuela

Salcedo's (2015) analysis of the definition of gay identity in relation to partner migration and asylum and refugee policies specifically, but also more broadly as a transnational process of identification; S. Iimay Ho and Megan E. Rolfe's (2011) comparison of Australian, Israeli, and American migration policies as they pertain to queer partner migration; and Danielle Antoinette Hidalgo and Carl L. Bankston's (2010) study of the close connection between the American controversies over migration policy in general and gender-neutral marriage.

I am aware that there is a considerable body of legal scholarship on queer partner migration, but as my research does not engage with the legal (im)possibility of queer partner migration, I do not include this work here. This scholarship is mostly American, as queer partner migration to the US was not legally available until 2015. However, in Sweden, queer partner migration exists in a very different context, as Swedish migration legislation does not differentiate between queer and straight relationships. This means queer partner migration research in a Swedish context, as well as in other countries allowing this type of migration, needs to center less on who is and who is not allowed to cross the national border and instead centers on issues of more relevance in those contexts.

In conclusion, my study builds on and contributes to the queer migration scholarship outlined here. Timo and Ida's narrative, which opened this chapter and which shares many points of reference with other narratives I gathered, is clearly a part of the queer migration field because of the centrality of their queer sexual orientations and gender identities to their narrative. However, I find that the queer migration scholarship is not enough to understand all aspects of Timo and Ida's story; for example, of equal centrality to their narrative is their relationship and how it came to affect their migration process as well as how the migration process affected their relationship. As such, the scholarship I have engaged with the most and find myself coming back to, arguing with, as well as drawing on to a large extent when analyzing my material is the intimate migration literature, which I will now go on to discuss.

INTIMATE MIGRATION

The intimate migration scholarship is both of considerable size and varied, and it focuses on what can be termed “transnational intimacy” (King 2002), that is, ‘the intimate’ and feelings, emotions, sexuality, and relationships. Important sub-fields within this literature include transnational sex work, international adoption, ‘mail-order brides’ and internet relationships, and transnational families.

I am particularly interested in the part of the intimate migration literature that covers internet relationships and sex tourism encounters that transform into migration as types of partner migration. This literature has contributed immensely to my comprehension of partner migration in a wider perspective, and it plays an important role in the analysis of my ethnographic material. It has also helped me come to the conclusion that queer and straight partner migration must be analyzed not as separate phenomena but as sometimes related and sometimes nearly identical practices, because, as Manuela Salcedo (2013, 2015) shows in her research, cross-comparisons can offer us new understandings of how societies and nation-states structure intimate relations.

‘Marriage Migration’; or Straight Partner Migration

The ‘marriage migration’ literature is vast and wide-ranging, and I make no claims to cover it all in this literature review. As I noted in the introductory chapter, my focus is solely on cross-border relationships *not* consisting of two individuals belonging to the same national or ethnic group who intentionally sought out a relationship with a person of that group, meaning I do not discuss the large part of the straight partner migration scholarship that examines this particular type of partner migration. My focus is instead on the straight partner migration literature concerning partners from different national and/or ethnic groups that often centers on men from the global north

and women from Eastern Europe, Asia, and Latin America¹¹. These men and women more or less intentionally seek out relationships with each other, which results in migration, usually undertaken by the women to the countries in the global north where the men live. These relationships often come about through internet dating, organized trips to the countries the women live in which the men participate in, or sex tourism. Studies that are of relevance to my research because of their examination of power relations, emotions, and sexuality in cross-border partner migration include Ericka Johnson's (2007) study of Russian women searching for American men through internet sites; Felicity Schaeffer-Grabiell's (2004, 2006) research on Mexican women attending 'vacation romance tours' with the hope of dating and perhaps marrying an American man; Nicole Constable's (2003) internet ethnography of the complex motivations and experiences of Chinese and Filipina women and American men who meet through internet dating sites; and Anne Britt Flemmen and Ann Therese Lotherington's (Flemmen 2007; Flemmen 2008; Flemmen & Lotherington 2008; Lotherington & Flemmen 2007) study of Russian women's migration because of relationships with Norwegian men as a form of political economy and cultural logics of desire. It also includes Swedish research such as Lissa Nordin's (2007) study of single men in northern Sweden hoping to meet Russian women to share their lives with, and Natasha Webster and Karen Haandrikman's (2016) examination of the migration narratives of Thai women married to Swedish men living in Sweden and how these women exercise agency and power. It is important to point out that this scholarship is almost exclusively focused on women migrating; an exception is Nadine Fernandez's (2013; see also Fernandez & Jensen 2014) research on Cuban men migrating to Denmark. Migrations are also generally assumed to go south-north, meaning that articles such as Susan Frohlick's (2009) study of North American and European

11. I focus exclusively on straight partner migration to Western countries. There are also, for example, many 'marriage migration' studies centering on Asian women migrating to other Asian countries, but I have not included this scholarship here.

women living in Costa Rica because of intimate relationships with Costa Rican men stand out.

A central discussion in this research is often how the types of relationships they depict challenge norms and cause disruptions. Helena Hedman, Lennart Nygren, and Siv Fahlgren (2009) examine this by analyzing articles from Swedish newspapers that discuss Swedish men's relationships with Thai women. Hedman, Nygren, and Fahlgren show that the couples' relationships are discursively portrayed as 'different' and 'wrong' by the merging of discourses on romantic love, sex tourism, and normalization with power relations such as gender, race/ethnicity, class, and sexuality, where Swedishness, Western whiteness, and Western understandings of love always constitute the 'normal' position.

These studies are all important for this project because at the heart of them are the negotiations the couples need to engage in as part of their migration processes in order to come across as being in intelligible relationships. This is very similar to how the interview participants in my study negotiate with each other and with others. While there are differences, mainly connected to issues of sexual and gender identities, there are also many similarities that help me better understand and examine cross-border intimate relationships. However, as I now go on to discuss, at the center of this scholarship is also the concept of marriage, which is different from most of the narratives I have gathered.

The Assumption of the Heterosexual Marriage

Straight partner migration scholarship is underpinned by *marriage*, and there is an assumption of heterosexuality, but also that gender is something mainly women possess (there are of course exceptions to how gender is understood, which, for example, includes discussions of masculinities, e.g. Nordin 2007; Schaeffer-Grabel 2006). This means that the concept of marriage is generally not critically examined or questioned. The focus on marriage also means that few other types of intimate relationships are available in this literature, and that

other types of relationships are generally neither problematized nor theorized. By extension, it remains unproblematic why a certain type of intimate relationship between two individuals of different sexes is almost always regarded as so fundamentally important that most countries offer a residence permit to the migrating partner if the two can demonstrate the validity of such a relationship.

Authors frequently use the term ‘marriage’ when other terms, which would allow for a wider variety of relationships to be included, could be used. Using Nicole Constable’s book *Born Out of Place: Migrant Mothers and the Politics of International Labor* (2014) as an example, all women in the narratives are introduced as ‘married’ and their cross-border relationships as ‘marriages.’ However, a number of the women mentioned are not married in the legal sense, but rather in relationships that range from living with male partners without any type of marriage ceremony having been performed, to relationships that the women call marriages but that are not registered as such or where the ceremonies performed were not considered legal weddings, to more casual relationships where the partners do not live together. Similarly, Helena Wray states that the term ‘marriage migration’ to her “means migration where the UK-based partner is a national or a long-term resident and includes co-habiting couples and civil partners where the relationship is the basis of the entry rights” (2011:1).

Coming back to Timo and Ida, whose narrative I started this chapter with, they were, like most of the interview participants of this study, not married either when they applied for Timo’s Swedish residency, or at the time of our interview. In fact, as I discuss in the chapter on belonging, only one of the couples interviewed was married when they made their initial residence application, and in total only seven of twenty-three interviewed participants were married at the time of the interview. Despite this, all the interview participants of this study would be considered participating in a ‘marriage migration’ by the scholarship I am discussing here, including participants who migrated to Sweden before gender-neutral marriages were introduced in May 2009, and who therefore did not even have the possibility of getting married, had they wished to do so.

Using the term ‘marriage’ for any type of intimate and romantic relationship reinforces ideas of marriage being the only legitimate intimate relationship when, in reality, the nature of relationships of migrants (and people in general) is much more complex than what ‘marriage’ allows for. Feminist scholars in particular have argued for a more critical understanding of intimate relationships, including problematizing the two-partner norm, the monogamous relationship, and the assumption that marriage and reproduction is the obvious end goal of all relationships (see e.g. Adenji 2008 for a critical discussion). The use of ‘marriage’ as the only term to describe intimate relationships is problematic, as it negates other types of intimate relationships migrants engage in at the same time as it reinforces a heteronormative discourse of ‘correct’ and ‘appropriate’ relationships.

However, having argued this, marriage is the only publically and legally recognized intimate relationship, particularly in relation to migration, in many countries. I conduct my research and write this dissertation from a Swedish location, where intimate relationships can legally be organized slightly differently than through marriage while still enjoying state recognition. State recognition of marriage as well as cohabiting without marrying is also available to queer couples in Sweden, and migration legislation differentiates only slightly between migrating married and non-married couples. It is from this perspective I expect non-married trajectories to be included in partner migration research. At the same time, I am aware that non-married intimate relationships are not recognized everywhere. However, Sweden is hardly unique among countries in the global north in recognizing cohabiting or common-law relationships as grounds for migration, and Constable’s and Wray’s inclusion of narratives and cases of non-married partners is proof of a relationship complexity that cannot be captured by the concept of marriage alone. Ignoring non-married relationships means missing out on asking questions about how and why migrants and non-migrating partners choose to organize their intimate lives in certain ways.

At least when I met them, Timo and Ida, for example, had not decided to get married, despite having been together in a monogamous relationship for three years and having started an insemination

process to hopefully have a child together. This differed from other participants I interviewed and for whom marriage was very important, in legal and spiritual senses as well as because of the social recognition it offers their relationships. Separating between these two ways of organizing intimate relationships meant I could ask questions in the interviews about why couples had decided one way or another, and how they understood this to affect their migration processes.

Straight Partner Migration, Relationships, and Romantic Love

While I am critical of the heteronormativity of straight partner migration scholarship and explicitly aim to contribute to unsettling this approach, this scholarship has the great benefit of often focusing on the importance of the *relationship* and, by extension, love and emotions as an important area of study. The relationship is central to this field, although the starting point is also frequently that it is a problematic relationship, or at least that others consider it as such. This is also often the reason for studying the phenomena, as cross-border relationships are regularly considered illegitimate in dominant Western discourse, either because the migrating partner is assumed to be abused, the relationship cannot be properly understood by others, or the migrating partner is assumed to have migrated for the ‘wrong’ reasons (such as a wish to live in the global north rather than being in love) (Carver 2014; Charsley & Benson 2012; Eggebø 2013; Flemmen 2008; Hedman, Nygren & Fahlgren 2009; Kringelbach 2013; Leinonen & Pellander 2014; Mühleisen, Røthing & Svendsen 2012; Nordin 2007; Rosén 2010; Satzewich 2014; Wray 2006a, 2006b, 2011).

Just like most of the participants I interviewed for this study, Timo and Ida narrate their migration process as one underwritten by love. In their narrative, Timo is positioned to have migrated because they wanted to be together, not because zhe wanted to leave the African country. As I come back to several times throughout the dissertation, looking for a way to leave one’s country of origin is one such ‘wrong’ reason for migration, while being in love and having a ‘true,’ loving relationship legitimizes a partner migration and qualifies it as ‘genuine.’

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The straight partner migration scholarship has been instrumental in helping me make these links throughout the research process.

At times, however, love in the straight partner migration literature is constructed as relatively instrumental. This is particularly the case when it comes to partner migration as a consequence of sex tourism. When love is discussed, as it is in Denise Brennan's (2004) aptly named book *What's Love Got to Do with It?* about Dominican female sex workers hoping to meet men from North America or Europe, or in Dina de Sousa e Santos' (2009) study of black sex workers in Cuba hoping for the same, it is a love with an end-goal. These relationships are explicitly sought out by the women because of the relationships' migration potential, and are couched in terms of love because both migrating and non-migrating partners understand they are expected to at least *perform* love if they want their relationship to be intelligible to others (see also Brennan 2007; Cabezas 2006). However, these authors also point to the ambiguity inherent in this performance, and that the borders between "relationships for love" and "relationships for green cards" (Brennan 2004) are very porous. Similarly, Nicole Constable's (2003) ethnography of the internet dating of American men and Chinese and Filipina women is a study that specifically examines emotions and love in partner migration, and Constable analyzes how both partners of the relationship understand the discourses of love they are required to position themselves in and against. Her research participants also very candidly reflect on how they understand these discourses in relation to their own relationships. This part of the scholarship has been of great relevance to me when I have analyzed how the interview participants in my research position themselves in their narratives in relation to love and emotions. It has also helped in the analysis of the participants' assessment of how others perceive their relationships.

Having discussed how I draw on the intimate migration literature, I will now turn to the third scholarship that I situate my research in, the field of so-called privileged migration.

PRIVILEGED MIGRATION

The privileged migration scholarship has to a large extent underwritten my research from the start. The narratives that make up the bulk of the material for this dissertation cannot be explained using only queer migration and intimate migration scholarships. Many of the participants I interviewed clearly position themselves as a type of privileged migrants; they understand and experience themselves as somehow different from other types of migrants, and, as I noted in the introductory chapter, they do so from a position where nationality and race entangle (Fechter & Walsh 2010). This makes it necessary to situate my research in the privileged migration scholarship and draw on it theoretically in order to understand the participants' stories.

Migration from Northern Non-Traditional Migrant-Sending Countries

The privileged migration field is relatively small, and it takes as its object of inquiry migration from countries in the global north. As Caroline Knowles and Douglas Harper point out, “migration literature and debate in Britain and other European countries and the United States focus on *in-* rather than *out-*migration: immigration. It focuses on asylum seekers, on undocumented and economic migrants: on those fleeing famine, war, human rights violations, and disaster to live in economically developed countries” (2009: 6; italics in original). The privileged migration scholarship analyzes the opposite of this migration, that is, out-migration from countries we generally do not consider to be migrant-sending countries. Large parts of the general migration scholarship overlook that not all migration goes south to north, nor that all migration is part of the ‘problematic’ ‘in-migration.’ I agree with Anne-Meike Fechter and Katie Walsh’s statement that, “one critique of mainstream Migration Studies literatures might be that they are producing somewhat skewed notions of ‘who migrants are,’ leading to rather particular and limited notions of migration processes as a whole” (2010: 1198).

Privileged migration is important to consider and take into account in migration studies scholarship because it is the other side of the ‘problematic’ in-migration coin. It is the silent norm against which the perceived ‘problematic’ in-migration is measured and compared. Privileged migration scholarship covers, for example, lifestyle migration, retirement migration, skilled work migrants moving to countries in the global south as well as to other Western countries, backpackers, and working holiday makers and gap-year migration. This scholarship examines the difference between ‘migration’ and ‘mobility,’ and between ‘migrant’ and ‘expatriate,’ as well as who is placed in what category and why. Just like the intimate migration literature, this is a fairly straight and heteronormative scholarship: in my readings, I have only found one text specifically dealing with queer (or, in this case, gay) identified privileged migrants. This is Dana Collins’ (2009) article on homonormative mobility and lived experience among male gay expatriates in the Philippines.

Unpacking (Queer) Privileges

Defining privilege in migration is not an entirely straightforward process, and, to an extent, this whole dissertation is an attempt to discuss what privileged migration means and who can be considered as privileged or as having privileges, and in what situations and contexts. As I write in the introductory chapter, privileged migrants are voluntary migrants, that is, they choose their migration and are not forced to leave the country they live in to survive. Rather, migration usually adds value to their lives, and the span of what could be considered voluntary migration is thus wide. In my research, a voluntary migrant is someone who can quite readily be exemplified by Timo in the narrative that I opened the chapter with: someone who chose the migration because of experiencing a ‘pull’ from something in the country of migration rather than being pushed away from the country they currently live in.

Already this position is privileged. However, as I add in the introductory chapter, and as the previous section alludes to, privileged migrants are defined as coming from countries in the global north, and are often white, often educated, and often middle or upper class.

Many of the interview participants included in this study fit this description, and their understanding of their migration processes is very similar to that of other privileged migrants in the privileged migration scholarship.

However, the argument could be made that a queer position cannot be a privileged position, that it is always the position of an outsider, which would mean queer migrants cannot be privileged migrants. Also, several of the narratives I have included in this dissertation discuss Sweden as the only country where the couples could apply for a residence permit to regularize the migrating partner's stay. The question that begs to be asked is how privileged it is to have no choice in destination country and to be a national of a country that does not recognize one's intimate relationship for migration purposes.

My argument, however, is that privilege is complex, and while a queer position in many instances is an unprivileged position, this does not mean a queer individual cannot enjoy other privileges connected to, for example, race, nationality, class, and education. Also, as I show through some of the narratives in the dissertation, a 'same-sex' – a lesbian or gay – position in a Swedish context, if coupled with whiteness, a Western nationality, middle-classness, and a monogamous two-partner relationship, rarely means that the individual cannot enjoy the same rights and freedoms as straight individuals who share similar positions. An individual with a non-normative gender identity is, on the other hand, much more likely to be brought out of line in the sense that they are viewed as being outside the norm and so stopped in different ways. However, a queer position in and of itself does not necessarily equate with 'not-privileged.'

Also, a partner migration to Sweden is a privileged type of migration, particularly when the non-migrating partner is a majority Swede and a Swedish citizen, which was the case in all narratives I gathered.¹² I argue this because partners of Swedish citizens are

12. One non-migrating partner grew up in Germany with one German and one Swedish parent and moved to Sweden in her mid-twenties. All other non-migrating partners were majority Swedes who had grown up in Sweden.

entitled to residence permits if the two partners are married or have cohabited for a period of two years or more outside Sweden (Swedish Migration Agency 2015a). Partners who are neither married nor cohabiting at the time of the application, but are planning to either marry or cohabit once the migrant partner arrives in Sweden, *can* be granted a residence permit (Swedish Migration Agency 2015b); however, this permit is generally granted as long the Migration Agency interprets the relationship to be ‘serious.’ This, in addition to the non-migrating partner being fluent in Swedish and at least having some understanding of Swedish bureaucratic systems, means the administrative migration process certainly can be understood as privileged compared to many other types of migration processes. Timo in the narrative that opened this chapter, is, for example, not necessarily included in the definition of privileged migrant outlined above in that zhe has a gender non-normative identity, is black, and from an African country. However, zhe takes part in a migration process that bestows privileges on hir relationship. I discuss this in more detail in the chapter on belonging.

The Creation of (Non-)Migrant Identities Based on Race, Nationality, and Cultural Belonging

Those studies that have been the most relevant to my research are studies that ask critical questions about what migration is and who is a migrant. These include Eric Cohen’s (1977) classic study of ‘the expatriate’ and the expatriate community; Heidi Armbruster’s (2010) study of German migrants in Namibia who view their migrations as practices of self-realization and an individual choice, and who position themselves both as different from and independent of Namibia(ns) while feeling a “moral duty” to “develop” Namibia; Anne Coles and Katie Walsh’s (2010) examination of British expatriate discourses and practices in Dubai, where research participants tell of separate socializing practices and limited opportunities to spend time with Emirati nationals; James Farrer’s (2010) study of Westerners in Shanghai who negotiate an outsider-insider position within the Chinese society, and who in their narratives try to position themselves

as economically contributing global/urban citizens while ignoring the nation-state; Ulrika Åkerlund and Linda Sandberg (2015) whose interviews with Swedish lifestyle migrants in Malta show how their mobility is a “lifestyle project” that gives new meaning to their marriages and identities as well as creating multiple place attachments; Katie Walsh’s (2006) study of British expatriate belonging in Dubai and the research participants’ feeling of foreign-ness due to race, ethnicity, nationality, and class at the same time as they experience the world as open to them to move around in as they wish; Pauline Leonard’s (2010) study of white British expatriates in Hong Kong, which explains notions of hierarchy and social order framed by the colonial imagination, and how being confronted by the Hong Kong ‘otherness’ means expatriates attach themselves to ‘traditional’ understandings of whiteness and Britishness; Mari Korpela (2014) showing how migrant children growing up in Goa, India, and whose parents claim their children are “growing up cosmopolitan,” are indeed multilingual and flexible in adopting to life in different places but simultaneously have a very limited engagement with India; Ingemar Grandin (2002, 2005, 2007) in his studies of the “white diaspora” in Kathmandu, Nepal, discusses how the world is unquestionably open and available to Westerners, in the sense that migration and mobility are viewed as taken-for-granted opportunities waiting to be seized; Caroline Knowles’ (2005; see also Knowles & Harper 2009) study of how British migrants in Hong Kong make whiteness in a context where empire still matters, creating various forms of entitlements as well as a feeling of choice and opportunity; Catrin Lundström’s (2010a, 2010b, 2012, 2013, 2014) study of white Swedish migrant women in the US, Spain, and Singapore, in which she shows how race and nationality shape migration, and discusses the concept of ‘the migrant’; and Sam Scott (2006), studying British middle-class skilled migrants in Paris and arguing for a broader contextual and conceptual framework to include this type of migration. A common denominator in these studies is how race, ethnicity, Western nationality, colonial histories, and cultural belonging create specific migrant identities that allow the migrants to position themselves as not-migrants in different ways or resist inclusion in the society and country they are living in.

As I discuss throughout the dissertation, privileged migration is as complex as other types of migration and an individual who is privileged in one particular context or situation (such as in the residence permit application process or by being white in a white context) may experience being stopped and brought out of line for other reasons linked to their migration. However, it has been crucial to understand this particular migration perspective for me in order to analyze many of the participant narratives I have gathered.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter has been to contextualize my research and position it in relation to those academic scholarships in which I situate this study. These three scholarships – queer migration, intimate migration, and privileged migration – are quite different, but together they contribute to my analysis of queer partner migration to Sweden.

The queer migration field intersects migration studies with theories of sexuality and heteronormativity, making it highly relevant in order to understand how sexual orientation and gender identity influence migrants' migration decisions as well as migration policy. This is important when interpreting how interview participants position themselves in their narratives in relation to their queerness and the way it intersects with migration. This scholarship, however, does not engage to any large extent with questions of emotions and feelings in migration (an exception is White 2010, 2014). The queer partner migration literature, to which my study contributes, tends to focus on the actual migration process: how to practically secure residence in the country of migration and how queer couples make their relationships intelligible and understood as 'genuine' by migration authorities.

The intimate migration scholarship, on the other hand, takes feelings, emotional bonds, and sexuality as its main point of departure. This literature is of great relevance in order to understand how emotions structure queer partner migration processes, and also how partner migrants need to position themselves in relation to discourses of romantic love. The heteronormativity of the straight

partner migration literature, however, means it fails to theorize or critically examine relationships other than straight marriages, as it does not generally take other types of intimate relationships into account. This makes it difficult to base my research in this scholarship only, but in combination with the queer migration scholarship, it is possible to ask pointed questions about partner migration.

I make the argument in this chapter that queer and straight partner migration (or ‘same-sex migration’ and ‘marriage migration’) need to be analyzed as practices that share many basic tenets rather than as separate phenomena, as issues such as the importance of a ‘genuine’ relationship and performing the ‘right’ kind of love are at the core of both types of migration. By understanding the two as related, sometimes nearly identical practices, it is possible to gain new understandings of how social processes of power such as race, nationality, sexual identity, gender identity, class, and age influence discourses of partner migration and intimate relations in general.

Finally, I discussed the privileged migration scholarship. The part of this literature I draw on in my research is in particular that which asks critical questions about what migration is and who is a migrant. By bringing together race, ethnicity, colonial histories, and cultural belonging with Western nationality, this scholarship examines how migration is discursively understood and, in particular, how migrants themselves conceptualize migration, position themselves as migrants (or not), and why. Because a number of interview participants are hesitant to position themselves in their narratives as the kind of person they understand a ‘migrant’ to be, the privileged migration scholarship is highly relevant as I examine how participants narrate their lives in relation to their migration processes.

In this chapter I have also made a number of theoretical points that inform the remaining analysis and have started to situate my research theoretically. In the next chapter, on theoretical frameworks, I continue this by introducing the theories that underpin my research.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Frameworks

FELIPE AND KRISTER'S STORY

I meet Felipe and Krister in the apartment they have shared for five years, ever since Felipe moved from Nicaragua after having met Krister two years earlier while on a work exchange in Sweden. Felipe is forty years old while Krister is fifty-nine, and they have been married for three years when I interview them. They both have tertiary educations and are professionals in different fields. Felipe, however, is currently studying to supplement his Nicaraguan education in order to eventually be able to work in his profession in Sweden.

Both Felipe and Krister are cisgendered, and they firmly position themselves as 'gay' rather than queer in their narrative. Fluid gender identities, non-normative masculinities and femininities, and queer sexual practices such as non-monogamy have limited place in what they, in particular Krister, refer to as "the family" and "the gay movement," and they remain perplexed by what they call "Pride glitter gays." To position themselves as 'normal, only gay,' is thus an important aspect of Felipe and Krister's narrative.

CHAPTER 3

Soon after returning to Nicaragua from the work exchange in Sweden, Felipe was forced to leave his job, most likely because he is queer. He was never explicitly told why he was fired, but he knew that word had slowly been getting out, in particular after some of his colleagues understood he had met a man while in Sweden. He says: “I did a good job, but they wanted to get rid of me.” However, Felipe had already decided by this point to “stop [his] life as homosexual,” and he says:

I didn't have the energy to try to fight for my homosexual life anymore. I just wanted to do what they [his family and people around him] wanted me to do, I felt like I was dying. But then I met Krister, and he is someone who really wanted someone to love him, and I recognized myself in him. So it just happened. I wanted to meet someone, I wanted something proper, I didn't like and I still don't like to be with more than one person.

Having no job and no partner, and living with his parents, Felipe felt he had nothing left. When Krister found out Felipe had lost his job, he suggested Felipe come to Sweden to visit him for a few months, saying, “I figured he might as well, and we could try things [meaning the relationship] out, to see if we worked out together.” To this Felipe responds: “So I said to Krister, if you want to try things out, you can try with someone else. If I go there, I have to stay with you, I said. I got so angry with him, how was he going to try me out? Try it out...!”

Feelings in general, but love in particular are a central theme in Felipe and Krister's narrative. They describe how they immediately *felt* something when they met each other: Krister mentions “sparks” while Felipe says he was “warm” and “burning.” The anger Felipe describes at being asked if he wanted to “try things out” is related to their joint understanding of love and feelings as a driving force of their migration process. Love should just ‘be,’ it does not need to be ‘tried.’ Simultaneously, in Felipe and Krister's narrative this is also connected to moral values and what makes a ‘good’ person, in particular a ‘good’ ‘gay’ person. Felipe and Krister position themselves in their narrative as

morally 'correct' by emphasizing, in particular, their monogamy and their marriage, but also their cisgenderedness, how they do not drink and party, and the fact that they are 'normal, steady homosexuals' rather than what Krister calls "the freaks who dress up once a year and look like the Statue of Liberty in the Pride parade." They connect this morality to the love they feel for each other.

Krister, who has had relationships with men who lived in other countries than Sweden previously, says some partners wanted 'Sweden' rather than him. This meant he asked himself, "Does this person love me or do they want to get away from something?" when he met Felipe. However, Krister says that when Felipe came to visit him in Sweden after having lost his job, he came with only a small cabin bag, no other luggage, for what turned into a six-month stay. When Krister asked if Felipe had more luggage, Felipe responded: "I came travelling with a dream," meaning he needed no worldly possessions because he travelled with a dream of love and a relationship. Krister describes how this "went straight to [his] heart," and proved Felipe's love for him.

Love in Felipe and Krister's narrative is 'forever,' and sex can never be love, rather, one 'makes love' while sex "happens in the street" as Felipe puts it, and he continues: "We have never had sex, we have love. [*laughs*]" This spills over into Felipe and Krister's understanding of marriage, which, for them, is the ultimate symbol of love. However, marriage also creates a feeling of safety for Felipe in Sweden: by being married to Krister, he feels he has an undeniable right to live in Sweden. For Krister, the registered partnership that was available to same-sex couples instead of marriage before the introduction of gender-neutral marriage in Sweden, was never an option; he did not want what he calls "second-rate partnership." Three months after the law on gender-neutral marriage was passed, Felipe and Krister got married.

Being open with their sexual identity and letting others know that they are queer is very important in Felipe and Krister's narrative. However, to have a Swedish husband and to let others know this is, for Felipe, I would argue, not only an act of 'openness,' but a way to normalize his right to be in Sweden. At the same time, it also works to normalize his sexual identity by way of emphasizing that Krister and he only 'happen' to be queer, but that they are 'normal' otherwise.

Love and being married are important tools in the sense that it helps to make them ‘like everyone else.’ To a great extent, Felipe and Krister position the purpose of being open in their narrative as not about being able to live a queer (or ‘gay’) life, but rather about educating straight people (or as Felipe and Krister put it, “society”) to see that queer people are just ‘normal’ people.

Taking cue from Felipe and Krister’s migration narrative, and especially how they relate to what migration *feels* like, and what feelings do in their shared and separate experiences, this chapter outlines the theoretical frameworks I use to make broader sense of narratives in this dissertation. Throughout the sections in the chapter I also on occasion return to Felipe and Krister’s narrative to illuminate how to put the different theories I discuss to work.

UNDERSTANDING QUEER PARTNER MIGRATION THEORETICALLY

Theory is that which holds an academic narrative together and guides the analysis. I use a number of theories and theoretical frameworks to analyze the queer partner migration to Sweden that I have studied. These theories are connected in the sense that they are all part of larger feminist, queer, and/or critical race and whiteness theoretical frameworks.

I start the chapter by outlining theories of affect, emotion, and feeling. This is where I explain how I understand and separate these three notions and discuss how I apply affect theories in the dissertation. In particular, I explain my use of Sara Ahmed’s (2004a) approaches to the cultural politics of emotion, and what feelings ‘do.’

Ahmed’s (2006) concept of queer phenomenology, and particularly her use of the notions of orientation and alignment also play a central role in the analysis of the narratives I have gathered. Given the importance of narrative to this study, I also emphasize and discuss the connection between orientation and alignment, on the one hand, and the concept of narrative, on the other.

Finally, I outline how I make use of three theoretical frameworks, which operate to frame the historical and cultural contexts that

the interview participants' narratives and this dissertation exist in. These three frameworks – entanglement, intimate citizenship, and homonationalism – are present throughout the dissertation, but particularly in the final, concluding chapter as theoretical perspectives framing the analysis.

UNDERSTANDING AFFECT, EMOTION, AND FEELING

This dissertation operates in a framework of feelings, and I use affect, emotion, and feeling as a way to analyze and understand what happens in migration processes. As Kristyn Gorton (2007) as well as Carolyn Pedwell and Anne Whitehead (2012) have noted, feminist theorists have engaged with women's emotional lives since the 1980s, and among central theorists are Arlie Russell Hochschild (1983), Audre Lorde (1984), bell hooks (1989), and Alison M. Jaggar (2009). According to Pedwell and Whitehead, one reason for this is that feminist theory “has long recognised the critical links between affect and gendered, sexualised, racialised and classed relations of power” (2012: 116). Those feminist theorists who can be considered part of the ‘affective turn,’ an intellectual shift emerging in the mid-1990s, recognize this as well, and, according to Gorton, their works “place importance on the way in which feeling is negotiated in the public sphere and experienced through the body” (2007: 334). They also have “a concern with how power circulates through feeling and how politically salient ways of being and knowing are produced through affective relations and discourses” (Pedwell & Whitehead 2012: 116).

There is a growing body of work on affect, emotions, and feelings, and as Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth point out, as such, there exists “no single, generalizable theory” (2010:3). I make use of affect theories in ways that I see as useful for my research rather than trying to situate myself as a follower of any particular school. Nonetheless, the body of work I draw on here is clearly grounded in and linked to feminist theory, and I use a feminist approach in the analysis of the narratives I have gathered.

Separating Affect, Emotion, and Feeling

I understand the concepts of affect, emotion, and feeling to signify different aspects of ‘something that feels.’ Affect can be recognized as something that *affects* you. It is the physical reaction of that which feels: the tears, the blushing, the sweating, the fainting. Emotion, on the other hand, is structural, social, and cultural. It is shared, and is part of what orientates and aligns us (Ahmed 2006), as well as of the larger narratives that individuals are connected to and connect with. Finally, feeling is an individual, subjective experience signifying a particular, and personal, story. In a way, affect becomes feeling because of social and cultural emotions.

This means that for my research, affects and feelings are not necessarily interesting on their own. Rather, what concerns me is how what one feels resonates in the social as well as what this says about how the world is affectively constructed. However, throughout the dissertation I generally do not use the term ‘affect,’ but only discuss emotion and feeling.

What Emotions Do

Jennifer Harding and E. Deidre Pribram (2009) argue that affect is integral to the process of meaning making. Emotions, in particular, *do* rather than *are* (see also Ahmed 2004a): they are social and cultural practices giving social formations their meanings and power. Harding and Pribram view them as “collective cultural and historical experiences” (2009: 2). Emotions must therefore be considered within the specificities of the historical context they occur in. Harding and Pribram argue that by examining how emotions work, in social and cultural terms, we can also understand how they produce and reproduce social identities and unequal power relations in an everyday context. They further argue that emotions are ordinary: they are there in our everyday lives as well as in exceptional events, and it is exactly because they are ordinary that they are important to study. They also operate relationally: they exist in, interact with, and affect people’s everyday lives.

In this dissertation I draw on Ahmed's (2004a) theoretical approach to the cultural politics of emotion. As I write above, emotions as well as feelings *do* rather than are, meaning they carry out different kinds of work in individuals' lives. In Felipe and Krister's narrative that opened this chapter, the anger that Felipe feels when Krister suggests that Felipe comes to Sweden to visit so they can "try out" whether they will "work out together" works to establish the boundaries of their relationship. What Felipe's anger does is create the perimeters of what it means for Felipe and Krister to be a couple, which is either 'everything,' that is, full dedication to one another, or nothing. Love is otherwise the most prominent feeling in Felipe and Krister's narrative, and this they share with most of the interview participants in the study. The feeling of love carries out different kind of work in different narratives, but in the case of Felipe and Krister, it, amongst other things, works to position Felipe and Krister as a particular type of people: married, monogamous, and morally upstanding. Ahmed argues that "emotions are relational: they involve (re)actions or relations of 'towardness' and 'awayness' in relation to [specific] objects" (2004a: 8). Love in the case of Felipe and Krister involves a relation of 'towardness' to certain moral values that they uphold in their narrative.

According to Harding and Pribarm, emotions are important "for their capacity to circulate meanings, to transmit social relations and to constitute subjectivity" (2009: 18). The emotions themselves circulate; as Harding and Pribarm state, "that is what they *do*" (2009: 18), and Jennifer Biddle, in her discussion of the emotion of shame, describes emotions as "contagious" (2009: 116). However, according to Ahmed, who does not view emotion as something that is 'there,' something that can be 'had,' emotions cannot themselves circulate. Rather, emotions stick to certain surfaces – signs, objects, bodies – so that these become "sticky, or saturated with affect, as sites of personal and social tension" (2004a:11). The emotions then move through the circulation of these bodies and objects. The feelings are in you, how *you* feel, but the social emotions move, creating feeling in you and moving your feelings around the room.

Ahmed calls stickiness “an effect” (2004a: 90), meaning that that-which-sticks does so differently depending on the surface of the sign, object, or body in question. As a consequence, some surfaces become saturated with affect (Ahmed 2004a: 11). Ahmed also differentiates between stickiness where “some forms are about holding things together,” which she exemplifies by how “one can stick by a friend,” while other forms “are about blockages or stopping things moving,” such as “get[ting] stuck in traffic” (2004: 91). This means that when something gets sticky it can either function to bind or ‘block’ other ‘things.’ This is an important aspect for the study, in particular in relation to the feeling of love and the notion of ‘migrant hate’ (Ahmed 2004a). As I show throughout the dissertation, the interview participants try in various ways to make love stick to them, as love makes their relationship come across as a ‘genuine’ and ‘true’ relationship, that is, the stickiness helps to keep love and sincerity together. Migrant hate, on the other hand, sticks to (some) migrating bodies and stops them from moving.

Feeling Migration Processes

Feelings are the means by which social institutions and cultural discourses are embodied. This means it is possible to ask what migration processes *feel* like. How does one feel migration in one’s body? When does one feel migration? What feelings are created through migration, and what do those feelings do? Moving from one cultural context to another can cause vast and obvious shifts, but it can also cause very small micro shifts that nonetheless are extremely important. It is important to point out here, however, that what migration feels like and what feelings do in migration processes are not necessarily the same. My aim with this study is to combine the two by asking what the feelings that queer partner migrants feel in their migration processes do in those processes, and, by extension, to the interview participants’ relationships.

In this dissertation I analyze three specific emotions in relation to migration processes: love, loss, and belonging, and I explain in more detail in the next chapter, that on methodology, why I chose

to concentrate on these particular emotions. By analyzing specific emotions, it is possible to discuss how they inform a particular identity or understanding of subjectivity (Biddle 2009; Butler 2009), how meanings are shaped and changed in the relational exchange between emotions and identities, and how these meanings are struggled over and contested. As I go on to outline below, Ahmed (2006) uses the notions of ‘being in line,’ ‘being out of line,’ and ‘being stopped,’ and I ask what it means and what it feels like when migration brings one in or out of line, or stops one outright. To be in line – to feel in place and like you belong – is a very different feeling from being out of line – off path, sometimes off the map, present but yet not there.

QUEER PHENOMENOLOGY: ORIENTATIONS AND ALIGNMENTS

Queer phenomenology is Ahmed’s effort to fuse queer theory with phenomenology, and she makes it clear that this intent starts with “feminist, queer, and critical race and whiteness scholars [who] have shown us how social differences are the effects of how bodies inhabit spaces with others” (2006: 5). Ahmed points out that just like phenomenologists, feminist theorists such as Audre Lorde (1984), Donna Haraway (1988), and Patricia Hill Collins (1998) ask us to situate ourselves and start from a ‘point,’ to direct ourselves in the world from a particular location. She argues that how a specific body is orientated depends on how it is ‘allowed’ to take up space. Phenomenologists see bodies and objects as ‘pointing’ to each other, or being orientated toward each other. This orientation varies depending on which body and which object, meaning different bodies and different objects inhabit space differently. In particular, Ahmed examines “how bodies are gendered, sexualized, and raced by how they extend into space” (2006: 5). In this dissertation I primarily use Ahmed’s queer phenomenology to examine the narratives I have gathered in order to understand how feelings operate in interview participants’ narratives.

To Find Your Way

An integral aspect of Ahmed's queer phenomenology is orientation and alignment, and whether one's body is extended by the room or not. To be orientated can be thought of as *finding the way*. According to phenomenological approaches, we might know where our body is, but we can still be lost and not know which way to go, that is, *where* we are going. Orientation is therefore also about the familiarity of the world. Being familiar gives the body the capacity to orientate itself alongside and towards that which it knows.

According to Ahmed, orientation is, however, perhaps less about finding our way and more about *feeling at home*; if we recognize the space we are in, we can find our way forward. In a familiar room, our body is extended. If you reach out and touch something, you will recognize it and know which way you are facing. Orientation, Ahmed contends, is about aligning body and space: only once you know which way you are facing – where you are – can you know which way to turn – which way to go. Also, an unfamiliar room can have a familiar form: if we find a wall, we can recognize it as a wall and follow it to a door, which we can open. Despite the unfamiliarity of the room, we know what to do and which way to turn because we recognize certain aspects of the room. This means we can find our way in unfamiliar environments, “given our familiarity with social form, with how the social is arranged” (2006: 7).

In this dissertation I argue that for the interview participants, being a migrant in a new place is much like being in an unfamiliar room: you are lost in the face of the new. You may recognize the surroundings in the sense that you are familiar with “how the social is arranged,” but it may be different enough that you do not know which way to go. However, Ahmed reminds us, being lost and going in the ‘wrong direction’ also gets us somewhere. This, too, is a way of inhabiting space, only we register what is *not* familiar instead of what *is* familiar. And, being lost can become a familiar feeling in itself: as I show in the empirical chapters, the interview participants in this study often are or have been lost in various ways, to the point that being lost *is* the familiar feeling.

Starting Points and (Dis)Orientation

I mentioned above that orientation is also a question about our starting point. Ahmed (2006: 8) quotes Husserl who argues that the ‘here’ point is the zero point of orientation. This point is from where the world unfolds and is what makes ‘there’ over ‘there.’ At the same time, the ‘here’ is also the ‘where’; the body is always *somewhere*, and it is affected by its surroundings. In response to where it is located, the body orientates itself. These orientations repeat themselves over and over again, with the effect that the orientations leave a kind of impressions on the skin. This way bodies are both shaped *by* their dwellings – the ‘where’ – as well as take the shape *of* them. Being orientated, then, is extending the body into a space where familiarity is shaped by the ‘feel’ of the space, or by how spaces ‘impress’ on bodies. It is an act of inhabitation: you are not just *in* the familiar space, but you are also shaping the familiar by repeated actions. The body is extended by the space.

However, spaces also do not always extend and orient bodies. Disorientation can occur instead as the body fails to extend into the space because the space is unfamiliar. We might be used to occupying space a certain way but are suddenly required to occupy it differently, perhaps because we have not encountered this particular space before. This can happen when migrating, and Ahmed writes that “we learn what home means, or how we occupy space at home and as home, when we leave home” (2006: 9). As I show throughout this dissertation, it is when we experience disorientation that we notice orientation; interview participants notice it as something they no longer have. In these cases, space disorientates instead of extends.

Following the Lines: The Alignment of Bodies

Noticing disorientation makes the body seem out of place, which may or may not be an uncomfortable feeling. Orientations depend on the point of view taken, what the ‘there’ is. From ‘here’ to ‘there,’ there is a line directing us, telling us where to go, and we follow it.

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Ahmed asks us to think of these lines as paths; in order for there to be a path, it must be walked on, and in order to walk on it, there must be a path.

By following the lines, some things become available to us while others become unreachable and excluded from us. Everything – every object, every occasion – cannot be available along every path, meaning each body does not have access to ‘everything.’ Following one line means missing out on things only available along other lines. What the body travelling along the line does have access to depends on one’s starting point and where the lines from that particular point lead. Some objects and occasions, some *lives*, are available to those on some lines while others, on other lines, can access other objects and occasions, other lives to live.

We are usually not aware of the direction we go in, that is, the line available to us to follow from the ‘here’ we are at. However, according to Ahmed, the lines available are not a casual matter but should be thought of as organized. There is a collective direction in any given community, and there is a requirement that we turn one way or another. The lines function as a way to be in line with others, and “we are ‘in line’ when we face the direction already faced by others. Being ‘in line’ allows bodies to extend into spaces that, as it were, have already taken their shape. Such extensions could be redescribed as an extension of the body’s reach” (Ahmed 2006: 15). To be in line, then, functions as a way of ‘being in place,’ to be part of a space. The lines from the ‘here’ to the ‘there’ are a form of alignment, and they function as a way to be in line with other bodies.

We may not always feel at home in the lines, however. Ahmed (2006: 17) points out that there is a social investment in following the collective direction; we might turn the way we are expected to for the sake of ‘fitting in,’ as this will likely bring a ‘promise’ of return if we do. Other times we feel a “social pressure to follow a certain course, to live a certain kind of life, and even to reproduce that life can feel like a physical ‘press’ on the surface of the body” (Ahmed 2006: 17). Felipe, in the narrative that opened this chapter, tells the story of having decided to not “try to fight for [his] homosexual life anymore” and that he “just wanted to do what [others] wanted [him]

to do.” To be queer in Felipe’s narrative is to be out of line, and he feels the “physical ‘press’” “to live a certain kind of life” that Ahmed describes. To be in line for Felipe, to face the direction others face, would have meant living a straight life.

Also, events in life can cause us to be ‘knocked off’ the lines, to be brought *out* of line: life takes a turn in a way that makes us either fall off or choose to step off and orientate us differently, along other lines. These changes, the deviation and re-direction, can be felt as a gift or experienced as a moment of deep anxiety and stress. For Felipe, his re-orientation away from the straight lines he has tried to follow is narrated as a gift: after his migration, Felipe is able to start from a different ‘here,’ one that requires that he is open with his queer sexual identity. As I will show numerous times throughout the dissertation, living a queer life in an otherwise mostly straight world is one way a body can be brought out of line, as is being a non-white person in white contexts, or just being a migrant.

Being (Un)Comfortable: The Inhabitation of Spaces

Ahmed uses two concepts I find helpful when examining ways that migration, race, and queer sexual identities and genders can bring bodies out of line. These concepts are *being (un)comfortable* (and, in particular, the notion of the comfortable chair) and *being stopped*.

Ahmed argues that certain bodies are allowed to be comfortable in spaces that make other bodies feel out of place. This can be thought of as the room we walk into always coming first, before the body, that is, the room is never neutral when the body enters. Through repeated acts the room can extend certain bodies more than others, and as these bodies are extended in most rooms, they feel more at home in the world in general. Ahmed (2007: 159) uses the metaphor “a sea of whiteness” to describe a room filled of white bodies, which makes a non-white body entering the room both invisible because it is only one in a ‘sea,’ simultaneously as it is made hyper-visible because of its inability to ‘fit in.’ In this dissertation I argue that trans bodies in cisgendered spaces are similarly invisible and hyper-visible. To inhabit

spaces that extend your body's shape is comfortable, and Ahmed compares this to sitting in a comfortable chair. You sink into the chair, you are comfortable to the point that "it is hard to distinguish where one's body ends and the world begins" (2004a: 148). To be comfortable, Ahmed suggests, is to be orientated and "at home in the world" (2007: 158).

However, an individual's feeling of discomfort, that *you* and not someone else is uncomfortable, is not about you personally. Rather, it is about how your body is extended by the room or not. If you are uncomfortable, the room – or the chair – was not made for you: the fact that *you* are uncomfortable is about the history of the room or the chair, that the body that is expected to be in the room or sit in the chair is not your body.

Being comfortable (or not) and at home in the world (or not) are aspects discussed by all interview participants in this study as the migration process re-orientates both the individuals in the relationship and the relationship itself. However, if and how one falls off line and what it feels like differs depending on such as aspects as race, gender identity, and the nationality of the migrating partner. Some bodies have never been particularly comfortable, while others have rarely or never noticed their relative comfort before, and are shocked when it is disrupted by way of their migration process. As Ahmed argues, comfort is not noticeable until it disappears or is interrupted. Only when we are disorientated and out of line do we notice how the room used to extend our bodies.

Being Stopped: The Blocking of Bodies

To be stopped is the opposite of being comfortable. Being stopped can be a physical stopping, as in the personal story Ahmed (2006: 140) offers of how she is stopped because of her Muslim last name and brown body when arriving at the US border with her British passport; how she is a body 'out of place.' But, as I will show in this dissertation, 'stoppings' can also be more subtle. The question "Where are you from?" may seem harmless, but when repeated

again and again, it becomes evidence of not fitting in, and creates a feeling of not-belonging. Similarly, being asked about one's 'wife' when one's partner, in reality, is a 'boyfriend' is another way that effectively stops an individual and brings them out of line. According to Ahmed, "stopping is both a political economy, which is distributed unevenly between others, and an affective economy, which leaves its impressions, affecting those bodies that are subject to its address" (2007: 161). In this study I consider these different theoretical notions – to be in or out of line, to be comfortable or uncomfortable, to be stopped or not – mainly from an affective point of view, asking what it *feels like* to be brought out of line or to sink into the comfortable chair, and what those feelings do to migration processes.

The Orientation of Narratives

Finally, I want to make a connection between Ahmed's queer phenomenology and the concept of narrative. In the introductory chapter I discussed the notions of the retroactively told narrative as well as the dissertation as a narrative, and I discussed how the telling of a narrative is also the *creation* of that narrative. By creating a narrative, narrators orientate and align themselves in their story as well as orientate the listener, making Ahmed's concept of orientation and alignment useful for understanding the importance of narratives and what they do.

When the interview participants tell me their narratives, they also participate in a type of 'alignment work.' In their narratives, they are able to decide on the starting point from which the story will unfold, that is, from where they orientate themselves, as well as the 'there' the story is moving towards. In this process, they are able to align themselves, both as individuals and as a couple involved in an intimate relationship. The telling of the narrative simultaneously aligns the narrative. Felipe and Krister, whose narrative opened this chapter, choose their starting point as that of the 'normal homosexual,' positioning themselves as 'everyone else,' only they 'happen' to be queer. By making romantic love and their love for each other one of the most central aspects of their narrative,

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they also align themselves along the line of ‘good’ and ‘correct’ love (Nordin 2007). I discuss this further in the first empirical chapter of the dissertation.

In addition, as narratives are retroactively told, they also help structure the past. By structuring the past, the narrator is orientated in their life as it unfolds now, allowing them new starting points, new lines to follow. This is not meant to say that by telling me their narrative, an interview participant is able to change ‘what happened’ or ‘what will happen,’ that they are suddenly at liberty to freely choose their starting point and lines to follow. But it means that they are forced to organize how they travelled along different lines in a coherent fashion so that I, the listener, understand. As we tell a story, we are also made aware of those places where we fell off line. In this, participants can choose to orientate themselves differently in the narrative told, and also, perhaps, realize, that they want to orientate themselves differently in the ‘here and now.’

As the interview participants orientate themselves in their narratives, they also use their narratives to orientate the listener in different ways. By telling the listener a certain narrative, the listener is aligned along the line of how the narrator wants their story presented.

Finally, as I also mentioned in the introductory chapter, my writing of this dissertation is a similarly retroactively organized narrative, and, as such, it, too, serves to orientate and align the narratives I have gathered into a new or, at least, different narrative. Through the way I orientate the dissertation, participant stories are aligned with different theories and ways of reasoning. I bring the narratives in line by orientating them towards relevant research, this way aligning the narrative I tell the reader. By introducing orientation and alignment like this I want to show the reader how narratives (including this dissertation) aim to orientate the listener, but also serve to align the narrator. I use Ahmed’s concepts as metaphors for narrativity, and I draw on them in the empirical chapters as a way to describe how narratives are told.

I will now go on to outline the three theoretical frameworks which frame the empirical material of the dissertation. The first such framework is entanglements.

ENTANGLEMENT

The purpose of the three theoretical frameworks I outline in this last part of the chapter is to situate the narratives in a particular historical and cultural context. I use them throughout the dissertation to lift individual narratives to a structural level in order to make the narratives examples of larger processes. In particular, I come back to the frameworks in the final and concluding chapter, where I use them as a lens through which I examine the results of the study. However, having just stated that these frameworks mainly operate to make individual narratives examples of larger processes, I also use the first framework, entanglement, more actively when examining the narratives I have gathered.

Entanglement is used in the dissertation to paint a picture of narratives as inherently complex, and as consisting of more aspects than are possible to name and, perhaps, even know. In order to achieve this, I have chosen to employ Karen Barad's (2003, 2007, 2010; see also Juelskjær and Schwennesen 2012) notion of entanglement, which stems from her theory of agential realism, which, in turn, brings together quantum physics with feminist theory and the philosophy of science. Entanglement is only one part of this theory, and I do not claim to make use of agential realism in this dissertation. However, I find that using Barad's notion of entanglement creates a useful framework in which to analyze narratives because it allows for the inclusion of 'more' than 'just' social processes of power, such as race, sexual identity, gender identity, and class in the analysis. I outline this in more detail below.

According to Barad, there is no world already 'out there'; the world 'becomes' or is 'made' when *intra-action* occurs. Intra-actions are constantly ongoing, and this is a process where meanings and material beings are produced through the material discursive practices of the intra-actions. Meanings and material do not precede their interaction (or 'intra-action') with one another and with other objects, but, rather, 'objects' become apparent, or emerge, *through* intra-actions as phenomena come to matter "in both senses of the word" (Barad 2003: 817). As such, it is through these agential intra-actions

that “boundaries and properties of the ‘components’ of phenomena become determinate and that particular embodied concepts become meaningful” (Barad 2007: 139).

Entanglement, then, is the intra-actions taken together, in the words of John Shotter, “a reality of continuously intermingling, flowing lines or strands of unfolding, agential activity, in which nothing (no thing) exists in separation from anything else, a reality within which we are immersed *both* as participant agencies *and* to which we also owe significant aspects of our natures” (Shotter 2014: 306; italics in original). This means that entanglements are more than a web or a knot of connected ‘objects,’ ‘categories,’ ‘contexts,’ ‘relationships,’ or ‘processes.’ Rather, *everything* is entangled with everything else, *nothing* exists separately. An entanglement spans all-that-is and tangles ways of knowing and knowledge practices such as scientific, historical, religious, philosophical, economic, and geopolitical discourses with historical and local specificity, context, time, and space, as well as with identities and subject positions, but also with emotions and feelings. I understand entanglement to be the strands of that which an individual *is*, everything that has brought the individual in question to where they are, everything that makes up the individual *at this very moment*. Entanglements are not external to the individual but, rather, they *produce* (in my case, affective) subjects.

I imagine an entanglement to be much like Donna Haraway’s (2004) metaphorical ball of yarn: a large knot that cannot be unknotted or disentangled. However, it is a knot that shifts and moves as different strands of the entanglement become more or less important depending on context. Some strands are more prominent and affect the individual more than others at different times, yet they continue to be knotted with *all* other strands, meaning the whole entanglement affects the individual: it produces the subject as well as the capacity for action available to the individual in different situations. This means it is not possible to choose to step into or out of the entanglement; rather, you are ‘caught’ in it. While there is no one ‘doing’ the ‘catching,’ there is power inherent in the strands in various ways as they limit or open up for different actions.

This does not mean that the individual caught in the entanglement is powerless, or that the entanglement cannot be affected; individuals can certainly negotiate their various positions through, for example, political-change processes, or by countering the effect of one strand by drawing on another. Individuals are this way able to shift the entanglement they are caught in and, by extension, how they are able to orientate themselves in the world. However, the way the entanglement one is caught in moves function to dictate from what ‘here’ the individual is able to orientate themselves (Ahmed 2006), which lines are available to follow as a result, and, by extension, how one is understood by others.

Given that an entanglement does not consist of separate entities but rather connects everything with everything, it cannot, according to Barad, be untangled. It means that the only way to observe part of an entanglement is through a temporary, agential cut. As an actual separation of what Shotter in the quote above calls “continuously intermingling, flowing lines or strands of unfolding, agential activity” is not possible, this cut momentarily defocuses everything except for the phenomenon that is created through the cut. This allows time to study what shows up in the cut of the entanglement.

Barad’s entanglement is, for me, a way to visualize interview participant narratives, and to think about the complexity of narratives when analyzing them. That is, an entanglement is a metaphor for all that produces an individual, all that the individual ‘consists’ of at the moment the interview participant creates and tells their narrative. This entanglement cannot be understood by choosing certain strands to follow: without *all* the strands unfolding and entangling the way they do, leading up to *this* particular situation, *this* moment in time, then this individual, this narrative could not exist. It means it is not possible to actively choose to include some strands and not others in an analysis. Rather, the analysis needs to take as much of the full entanglement into consideration as possible, given that every individual is caught in their entanglement: for example, the historical or geopolitical specificities of a specific entanglement affect the individual whether we choose to include these specificities or not. That is, ‘things’ ‘happen’ in our lives, as well as before our lives even

begin, which nonetheless impact our lives today, and these ‘things’ get entangled in one another as they ‘happen,’ creating that which are our lives. When we create narratives of our lives, these entanglements show in the narratives. However, while the aim must always be to include as much of the entanglement as is possible, in reality, neither I, as the researcher, nor the research participant, ever know the ‘full story,’ meaning a ‘full entanglement’ is an impossibility.

For Felipe and Krister, the entanglements they are caught in, which create that moment that is now, and from which they need to orientate themselves, include, amongst other strands, Latin American colonialism, geopolitical discourses of the global north and the global south, migration policies, historical and religious specificities relating to sexuality and sexual practices, and economic discourses of development, but also social processes of power that more obviously affect the individual such as gender identity, sexual identity, race, nationality, class, age, and education. For the purpose of the analysis, I, the researcher, identify the strands that are part of interview participants’ entanglements. This identification is based on their narratives as well as on my knowledge of which knowledge practices, historical, philosophical, economic etc. discourses, historical and local specificities, and so on, are likely to be part of a specific entanglement. This means the entanglement will be imprecise, as no one has full knowledge of ‘the world,’ but it is the best I can do, as a researcher, in an attempt to take into consideration how larger structural processes, knowledge practices, and so on affect the individual interview participant’s life. Also, as I point out above, all the strands intra-act to create one another. This brings me back to the point that I made in the beginning of this section, which is that the notion of entanglement consists of more aspects than are possible to name or possibly even know: in a sense, it is what makes up the ‘story’ of Felipe and Krister as I see it, based on what they tell me. Neither Felipe nor Krister can disentangle themselves from these strands that entangle or ‘catch’ them and their relationship.

Depending on where we place the cut to analyze the entanglement, we will find different strands and different knots that create different experiences and, thus, different narratives. Using the term entanglement becomes a way to point out the complexity of

narratives and lives. This also means that narratives are the place where entanglements become spelled out; they are a place to examine entanglements to understand what they produce, making it a way to reach a more nuanced understanding of the queer partner migration I have studied.

INTIMATE CITIZENSHIP

The second theoretical framework I read the narratives I have gathered through is intimate citizenship. It is a concept introduced by Ken Plummer (1995, 2003) to cover *both* gender and sexuality as well as all aspects of intimacy, and it works at the intersection of feminist citizenship and sexual citizenship. Plummer defines intimacy as “a complex sphere of ‘inmost’ relationships with self and others. Intimacies are not usually minor or incidental (although they may be transitory), and they usually touch the personal world very deeply” (2003: 13). He maintains that intimacy may be found “in the doing of sex and love, obviously, but also in the doing of families, marriages, and friendships, in child bearing and child rearing, and in caring for others. In these instances, intimacy is likely to have close links to particular kinds of gender, body projects, and feeling work. Bodies, feelings, identities, relationships, interactions, even communities – all are central elements to doing intimacies” (2003: 13).

The very core of this dissertation consists of intimate relationships that “touch the personal world very deeply,” to use Plummer’s words. But intimate citizenship is more than that which is intimate: it is an analysis of how private intimacies melt together with the public. Sasha Roseneil et al. define it as being “concerned with the processes, practices and discourses that regulate and shape the exercise of agency in intimate life: both the laws and policies enacted by states and polities and the social relations between individuals and groups within civil society” (2012: 42). This merging of the private and the public is connected to the choices available to people of today in relation to their intimate lives, choices that were not available and in many cases unthinkable, say, fifty years ago. Plummer emphasizes that these choices are not open to everyone, but stresses that the

possibility of choosing one's intimate practices increased in many parts of the world during the second half of the twentieth century. 'Modern' intimacies emerged, and their appearance is linked to the individualization of society. In extension, our intimate lives have become more autonomous, and we are expected to make individual choices rather than merely follow already-decided-on paths (see also Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 1995; Giddens 1992; Illouz 1997).¹³

The choices available to us cause what Plummer calls 'intimate trouble.' Examples of such troubles are various forms of publically recognized 'family life,' such as divorces, adoption, living alone without a partner, and queer relationships. It also concerns choices relating to sexuality, for example, sexual orientation, cybersex, non-reproductive sex, and the sex life of teenagers; choices relating to gender, both in terms of traditional understandings of femininities and masculinities and of women and men, but also positions such as genderqueer, intergender, and transgender; as well as choices relating to infertility and child bearing such as surrogacy, in vitro fertilization, and egg donation, but also abortion and choosing not to have children at all (Plummer 2003: 5-7). This is in no way an exhaustive list, but it exemplifies what intimate citizenship can entail. It also indicates that this type of citizenship is about practices, as well as discourses and dialogues around these practices.

This dissertation engages with particular types of intimate trouble. Intimate citizenship is, just like the focus of my research, about *doing intimacy*. This doing is about the individual as well as the social relations between individuals, but it is equally related to laws and regulations of intimate life. For this study, the starting point is the

13. However, as Khatidja Chantler (2014: 20) points out, "much of the key literature in the field [...] is dominated by Western notions of intimate relationships and practices." In particular Giddens (1992) and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995), but also Illouz (1997), theorize from a Western perspective, which cannot be transferred and applied, cookie-cutter style, to any other cultural context. While Plummer (2003) stresses the differences in choices available to different people in different parts of the world, I would argue that his concept of intimate citizenship is more applicable in a Western context.

possibility of choosing a non-heterosexual relationship in the first place. This relationship must also be publically acknowledged as a possible relationship, and, in particular, *legally* recognized, because migration policy must identify queer relationships as ‘actual’ intimate relationships in order for queer partner migration to be possible. In addition, policy recognition is linked to access to marriage in those countries that recognize marriage as the only intimate relationship for partner migration purposes. The public and private blend together.

Intimate citizenship also concerns the organization of relationships. In my research on queer partner migration, this is closely connected to the notion of the couple, as a partner migration assumes a relationship but simultaneously limits the relationship to only consist of two individuals. If more than two are included, Migration Agency case officers implementing Swedish migration legislation may deem the relationship ‘insincere.’ This is important, as only ‘serious’¹⁴ relationships are ‘rewarded’ with residence permits for the migrating partners. As such, queer partner migration relationships are intimate trouble zones because of the public discussion around what intimate practices should be allowed, and what is considered morally acceptable. Certain types of intimacy can be chosen, such as queer intimacy, and it can even be connected to migration rights, while other intimacies, such as romantic and sexual relations with more than one person, make the initially accepted intimacy ‘insincere’ and void.

As a theoretical framework, intimate citizenship works to structure how the intimate relationships I discuss in this dissertation are perceived of publicly and legislatively. It ties the private – the feelings, the relationship, the partners’ sexual identities and gender identities – to the public, and acts as a bridge into legislation and public discourse. This also makes it part of the entanglement that

14. Partners of partner migrant relationships are in most countries required to prove that the relationship is ‘real,’ that is, it has not been entered into for other purposes than the relationship itself such as, for example, helping the migrating partner secure residency. Different migration authorities use different terms to define a ‘real’ relationship. The Swedish Migration Agency uses the term ‘serious relationship.’

creates the particular situations that the interview participants find themselves in as part of their migration processes.

HOMONATIONALISM

The third and final theoretical framework is that of homonationalism. This framework takes national exceptionalism as its point of departure, which is a type of ideology in which one's own nation is positioned as fundamentally different from other nations in ways that makes the own nation surpass and outshine other states. Jasbir Puar describes it as “gestures to narratives of excellence, excellent nationalism, a process whereby a national population comes to believe in its own superiority and its own singularity” (2007: 5). Swedish exceptionalism is based on ideas of Sweden as democratic, advanced, and modern, where gender equality and progressive ideas on sexuality as well as the lack of a colonial history and the notion of a society free of racism are important ingredients in the creation of this national self-image (Gilroy 2014; Habel 2008, 2012a, 2012b; Jansson, Wendt & Åse 2011; Lennerhed 1994; McEachrane 2014; Towns 2002).

Swedish exceptionalism is present in many of the interview participant narratives I have gathered. For example, several migrating partners from countries in the global south and their non-migrating partners mention that people they meet in Sweden often assume that the migrating partner preferred moving to Sweden to staying in the country they lived in, and that moving to the country of the migrating partner was never an option for the couple. This points to others understanding Sweden as the only country of the two in question in which a queer couple could possibly live.

Homonationalism as a concept was developed by Puar (2007, 2013) as an analytical category or a conceptual frame as Puar, who writes from a US location, had grown frustrated with a feminist and queer discourse maintaining that the state is heteronormative and the queer subject is always an outlaw. She wanted to show that sexuality had “become a crucial formation in the articulation of proper U.S. citizens across other registers like gender, class, and race,

both nationally and internationally” (Puar 2013: 336). She argues that as a result of a particular sexual and gender exceptionalism, which is only available to and in the West¹⁵, an idea of Western countries as particularly queer-friendly emerges.

Homonationalism is an analytic used to understand a structure of modernity (Puar 2013: 337). It builds on Lisa Duggan’s (2003) concept of homonormativity, which is a critique of the embracement of neoliberal agendas by gay liberation politics, and the failure of this politics to challenge heteronormative institutions. Don Kulick understands homonationalism as “the form that homosexual identities and discourses about homosexuality have been developing in the global north during the past thirty years,” continuing that it is “an understanding and enactment of homosexual acts, identities, and relationships that incorporates them as not only compatible with but even exemplary of neoliberal democratic ethics and citizenship” (2009: 28).

Homonationalism concerns an understanding of gender and sexuality as a fundamental part of Western countries’ modernity narratives. Gay and lesbian liberal rights discourses in countries of the global north have participated in the production of these modernity narratives, which has helped to widen the concept of citizenship, resulting in citizenship becoming accessible to certain privileged homosexual subjects (Puar 2007, 2013). These subjects are mainly white, middle class, and homonormative in that they embrace and want to be included in, rather than challenge, heteronormative institutions. It is also informed by geopolitical power relations, and is a brand of ‘national homosexuality’ that “operates as a regulatory script not only of normative gayness, queerness, or homosexuality, but also of the racial and national norms that reinforce these sexual subjects” (Puar 2007: 2). Rather than being automatically excluded from nationalist formations, homosexual subjects – along with

15. Puar mainly focuses on what she calls US sexual exceptionalism and argues from a mostly American point of view, but homonationalism is applicable to the Western world in general, and the Nordic countries in particular.

feminism and gender equality – are included. Also, this sexual exceptionalism “occurs through stagings of [Western] nationalism via a praxis of sexual othering, one that exceptionalizes the identities of [Western] homosexualities vis-à-vis Orientalist constructions of ‘Muslim sexuality’” (Puar 2007: 4).

Through this process, ‘modernity’ and ‘tolerance’ – which include being queer-friendly – stick to the Western nation, making it possible to divide nations into ‘gay-friendly,’ that is, those perceived as ‘modern’ and accepting of a certain type of homosexual subject, vs ‘homophobic,’ or ‘backward,’ nations ‘lagging behind.’ Modernity becomes “defined as sexual freedom, and the particular sexual freedom of gay people is understood to exemplify a culturally advanced position as opposed to one that would be deemed premodern” (Butler 2008: 3). Tolerance of homosexuality thus becomes a Western notion not available to non-Western countries, positioning the non-Western Other as always and already assumed to be both heterosexual and homophobic.

As Swedish exceptionalism becomes entangled with a homonationalist discourse, the entanglement produces a space in which queer partner migration could not *not* occur. Including queer partner migration in migration policies becomes self-evident, as excluding it would disrupt Sweden’s image of itself as accepting of gender and sexuality, on the one hand, and its discourses of democracy and equality, on the other. This includes not only partner migration, but all migration where sexual identities and sexual practices are central. However, more than anything, recognizing the queer relationship as an accepted intimate relationship positions Sweden as ‘modern.’

Homonationalism also connects to intimate citizenship. Just as intimate citizenship works to structure the intimate relationships in this dissertation, homonationalism works to frame those relationships’ migration processes. It is present in particular in relation to the narratives of those relationships where the migrating partner is from a country in the global south, but also in those relationships that are in line in Sweden terms of the partners being white, cisgendered, middle class, and educated, and it influences how queer partner migrants and their non-migrating partners experience their migration process. Using homonationalism as a frame to place this particular migration

in helps me discuss how queer partner migration is produced as something ‘Swedish,’ and how this affects the interview participants.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, this dissertation draws on theories originating in feminist, queer, and critical race and whiteness theories, and focuses on affect, emotion, and feeling. I use affect theories to analyze what emotions and feelings *do* in queer partner migration processes, and, in particular, I draw on Sara Ahmed’s (2004a) approach to the cultural politics of emotion. Emotions and feelings have the capacity to circulate meanings (Harding & Pribarm 2009), and they also carry out work, that is, they *do* ‘things’ (Ahmed 2004a) in the interview participants’ lives. Emotions and feelings are important to study because they are ordinary, they operate relationally, and power circulates through them (Pedwell & Whitehead 2012).

I further use Ahmed’s (2006) notion of queer phenomenology to explain how emotions and feelings are felt, and what they do, in queer partner migrant couples’ lives. Ahmed refers to the notions of orientation, alignment, being in line and out of line, as well as being stopped, and I use these in the analysis of the narratives I have gathered to explain how individuals in queer partner migration processes find their way through these processes. As one finds one’s way, one also feels different feelings, and it is from this point that I analyze what feelings do in the narratives. I also connect, in particular, orientation and alignment to narrativity, showing that Ahmed’s theories can also be used to illustrate how retroactively told narratives can both structure the past and orientate the listener to understand the narrative to follow certain lines.

In the last third of the chapter I introduce three theoretical frameworks that frame the context that the study and the narratives exist in. The notion of entanglement draws on Karen Barad’s (2003, 2007, 2010) theory of agential realism and describes a large knot which cannot be disentangled. In studying queer partner migration processes, entanglements serve to show how various discourses, knowledge practices, historical and local specificities, time, space,

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identities, social processes of power, and so on, that is, everything that makes an individual who they are, and that makes particular lines available to the individual to follow.

The second theoretical framework, intimate citizenship, is a concept introduced by Ken Plummer (1995, 2003) and covers sexuality, gender, and intimacy. It relates to how private intimacies melt together with the public, such as laws, policies, and social relations between both individuals and social groups (Roseneil et al. 2012). This type of citizenship is about particular sexual and gendered practices, including those most relevant for this dissertation, such as gender-neutral marriage, the legal possibility of queer partner migration, and gender-identity positions such as transgender and intergender, but also the discourses and dialogues around these practices and positions.

The third theoretical framework is homonationalism, which, according to Jasbir Puar (2013) who coined the term, is an analytic to understand a structure of modernity. Through homonationalism, generally white, middle class, homonormative (Duggan 2003) lesbian and gay subjects are, alongside feminism and gender equality, incorporated into the Western nation. As modernity comes to be defined as the sexual freedom of gay people (Butler 2008), Western countries are created, as an effect of their presumed modernity and tolerance, as 'gay-friendly,' while non-Western countries simultaneously become not-modern and, thus, homophobic. The three frameworks of entanglement, intimate citizenship, and homonationalism create a frame through which to read and understand the narratives of the dissertation in order to make them examples of larger processes.

From here I move to the next chapter, in which I introduce the reader to the methodology underpinning the dissertation, and the methods used when gathering and analyzing the empirical material that forms the basis of the study.

Chapter 4

Creating Knowledge about Queer Partner Migration

There is still a popular fantasy, long since disproved by both psychoanalysis and science, and never believed by any poet or mystic, that it is possible to have a thought without a feeling. It isn't. When we are objective we are subjective too. When we are neutral we are involved. When we say 'I think' we don't leave our emotions outside the door. To tell someone not be emotional is to tell them to be dead.

Jeanette Winterson (2011: 211)

LISA AND BEA'S STORY

Lisa moved to Sweden from a Western European country just over two years before I meet and interview her and her Swedish girlfriend Bea. Lisa is thirty-one and Bea thirty-two, and they are both cisgendered. I interview them in their one-bedroom apartment that is situated in a neighbourhood that consists of what Bea calls "others in our category." They laugh, and Lisa says, "It's a white, highly educated, middle-class neighbourhood with lots of people in their thirties without kids."

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Lisa and Bea met while on holidays when they were in their late teens. They kept in touch sporadically, but did not meet up again until Lisa came to visit Bea in Sweden about ten years later. Things felt great as soon as they met the second time, although Bea says: “I had never been in love with a girl before so that was new for me. I didn’t really know what kind of feelings they were. At first I just thought it was great we were getting along so well.” Lisa, who had just left a nine-year relationship with another woman, laughs and says: “I recognized my feelings pretty quickly!” After a year and a half of travelling back and forth between the Western European country and Sweden to visit each other, Lisa moved to Sweden.

The interview with Lisa and Bea is pleasant and relaxed. They are happy to share information about their relationship and their life together, and the interview is full of jokes, banter, and laughter. One reason for the relaxed and happy atmosphere is their easy migration process, or, as they mainly see it, their process of moving in together. As I show in this brief version of their narrative, the fact that they are both aligned in Sweden according to race, nationality, gender identity, education, class, and even language makes their migration process quite comfortable, and it is so easier to relax and laugh when talking about it.

Two different aspects stand out in Lisa and Bea’s narrative. The first is the importance of being open with one’s sexual identity, of always being ‘out,’ and of not ‘hiding,’ which is similar to Felipe and Krister, whose narrative opened the previous chapter on theoretical frameworks, and their position on being open with their sexual identity. For Bea, meeting Lisa meant experiencing romantic and sexual feelings for a woman for the first time. It has also meant reflecting on society’s heteronormativity for the first time, and she is annoyed that she is made invisible as queer. However, she also feels that other queer people make themselves invisible. She mentions a colleague “who told me after a year that she had a wife, and I had been asking loads of questions about her husband and about them getting married, and she didn’t correct me. So I almost got angry, like why couldn’t you tell me that? Did you think I would think it was a bad thing?”

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When I ask how they talk about themselves with others, Lisa says, “I never use gender neutral terms like ‘partner’ when talking about Bea with other people,” and Bea chimes in:

Me neither, then people will think you’re trying to hide it. It’s sad when people do. I feel in a way that I want to take that responsibility to be open because there’s always a colleague whose kid is coming out and they’re having a hard time with it, and then they can notice there are ordinary gay people, like, I want to broaden things...

To this Lisa adds: “Yes, I agree. You have to educate people a bit. If you know that, well, my friend or my cousin Lisa is a lesbian but she’s normal. Or weird in her own way. There’s nothing weird about being homosexual.”

Being (able to be) out and open about their sexual orientation and their relationship is linked to the second aspect that stands out in Lisa and Bea’s narrative, and that is the absence of their migration process. Their migration narrative is more of a narrative of moving in together: whose stuff should go where, how should the closets be organized, whose habits should be adopted, and so on. The main reason the migration process is absent from their narrative is that they did not need to apply for residency for Lisa: as an EU citizen who had secured a job in Sweden before moving, she was not required to make a residence permit application. Her only points of contact with any type of administrative authorities was a visit the Tax Agency to apply for her civic registration number and registering for social insurance at the Social Insurance Agency, both which she describes as “impersonal – I took a queue ticket and waited for a case officer to see me.” In this way, Lisa, and in particular Bea, have been able to view the process as a move rather than a migration, as their lives have not been, as they have experienced it, incorporated into migration systems.

While Lisa shows that she is aware of the migration requirements for EU citizens by saying, “It was easy because I had a job when I got here. It doesn’t just happen like that [*snaps her fingers*], you need a job or money to move,”¹⁶ Bea does not seem to know of these requirements, equating Lisa’s easy administrative process solely with her EU citizenship. To them, the migration was their choice, and not something that was administered or permitted by an outside entity. Of course, in reality their lives are very much entangled with EU policies on migration, but as they benefit from these policies, the policies are not noticeable, and thus the migration is invisible. Also, neither of them has any knowledge of the usual residence permit process for partner migrants and are fascinated (and ask me several questions about the process) when they understand that other partner migration couples are, for example, required to attend interviews at the Migration Agency.

Given that they view Lisa’s move to Sweden as their choice, and because of Lisa’s whiteness and nationality, Lisa does not ‘need’ to be considered a migrant in Sweden, and she is generally not, neither by Bea nor by others. Having a (good) job waiting for her on arrival, and so immediately being part of a context, as well as being financially independent reinforces this. This, in combination with Lisa and Bea’s whiteness, cisgenderedness, middle-class position, and high education, means they are comfortably aligned along almost every line. This allows the migration to fade into the background, at the same time as it brings sexual identity to the center of their narrative as the only place where they are stopped.

However, when Lisa says the move from the Western European country has caused her to think differently about ‘immigrants,’ and ‘us’ and ‘them,’ the following exchange occurs between Lisa and Bea:

16. In those cases an EU citizen is either studying or can support themselves financially because they are working or have sufficient assets they are not required to apply for a residence permit in another EU country. However, had Lisa not had a job offer, she and Bea would have been required to apply for a residence permit for Lisa based on their relationship.

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Lisa: I have always seen immigrants as ‘them’ and now it’s ‘we.’ I’m an immigrant, even if I roughly belong to the same culture as Swedish people I’m an immigrant here, and in some ways I feel more of a connection to, like, Iranian immigrants who might be considered more real immigrants. Who have a different culture and background.

Bea: [*breaks in, in very doubtful voice:*] But do you really?

Lisa: [*with emphasis:*] Yes. Much more.

Bea: [*in questioning voice:*] Nooo. Don’t you feel culturally more like your Swedish friends?

Lisa: [*breaks in:*] Yes, of course. But I still feel some kind of connection.

Bea: Mmm. But I wouldn’t... I mean, if I lived in the Western European country, I don’t know that I would have felt more... Oriental than what I would have felt-

Lisa: [*interrupts:*] No, I don’t feel Oriental. I feel a connection, that we share something. That we’re in the same position.

In this exchange, Lisa positions herself as a migrant, while Bea contests this. For Bea, ‘immigrants’ are not white, Western Europeans like Lisa. She thinks of migrants in cultural terms, not in terms of crossing national borders. However, it is also clear from this exchange that being a migrant is not a position Lisa *has* to claim, and it is not a stopping point for her the way she seems to assume it would be for, for example, Iranian migrants in Sweden, whom she uses as an example.

At the same time, it is important for Lisa to pass as Swedish; she wants to be able to make the decision herself when she ‘is’ a migrant. Speaking nearly fluent Swedish, she says: “I think I have a great need to fit in in Sweden. I’m a super perfectionist about Swedish. I don’t want anyone to hear I’m not Swedish. I think it’s a pain to sound like an immigrant for example. Because I still associate it with... like, I know you sound stupid when you speak a broken language.” Lisa can

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choose to pass because she speaks good Swedish and is white; she can choose to not be stopped by navigating around stopping points in a way that is not possible for someone who is not as neatly aligned as she is. This helps Lisa and Bea's migration process to become invisible.

In this chapter, I use Lisa and Bea's narrative to exemplify and discuss the design and methods – the 'hows' and 'whys' – of the study. I start with a short discussion of feelings and knowledge production in order to situate the methodology in a framework of emotions, and the Winterson quote that I started the chapter with sums up at least part of my approach: that having a thought without a feeling, that being objective without being subjective, is impossible.

As I show in this chapter, I have been highly promiscuous and practical in terms of how I designed the study in order to arrive at a place that makes methodological sense to me, but also to this particular study. The first part of the chapter details how I located interview participants and who the participants are. As this is an ethnographic interview study, I then spend some time outlining the role of ethnography to the project before moving on to examine participation, power, and ethics in the research process, as well as the methodological challenges and differences when carrying out both couple interviews and individual interviews in the same study.

In the second part of the chapter I introduce the reader to narrative analysis and how I make use of it in the study. I also outline how I connect narrative analysis to creative analytical practices (CAP) and how writing can be used as a way to analyze research material.

In the final part of the chapter I describe the fieldwork I carried out and make points about how it could have been improved in order to create more knowledge about queer partner migration. I outline my process of analysis in more detail, and explain how I analyzed the gathered narratives in order to understand important themes and which narratives to center the empirical chapters around.

The importance of emotions and feelings to the research process come back throughout the chapter, and I start by discussing ways to understand emotions, feelings and knowledge production.

FEELINGS AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

As Nancy Naples points out, “the methods we choose are not free of epistemological assumptions [...] [and] the questions researchers ask are inevitably tied to particular epistemological understandings of how knowledge is generated” (2003: 5). Naples, together with other feminist scholars such as Sandra Harding (1986), Donna Haraway (1988), and Dorothy Smith (2003), have influenced my understanding of epistemology and how knowledge is produced. Throughout the research process I have, however, been mainly interested in the ways that emotions and feelings come to be important for knowledge production and the work they do. I discussed theoretical understandings of affect, emotions, and feelings in the previous chapter, and here I outline how I understand emotions and feelings to be important also for knowledge production.

Alison M. Jaggar (2009) considers feelings to be learned and culturally appropriate reactions. They are, she argues, values experienced, which means they involve judgements as we need to know how to react and feel in order to react ‘correctly.’ The necessary conclusion is, then, that if we observe something (as one does when doing research), how we select what to observe and how we interpret it is influenced by our emotional attitudes. Research has traditionally aspired to be ‘objective,’ that is, rational and uncontaminated by ‘subjective’ values and emotions. However, if emotions are judgements of commonly understood concepts and values experienced, it is not possible to be ‘objective’ as one “cannot eliminate generally accepted social values. These values are implicit in the identification of the problems considered worthy of investigation, in the selection of the hypotheses considered worthy of testing, and in the solutions to the problems worthy of acceptance” (Jaggar 2009: 58).

Reason and emotion are, according to Jaggar, not oppositional but mutually constitutive. The myth of the dispassionate investigation fulfils ideological and political functions: emotions shape social processes of power by reason being associated with dominant groups and emotions with subordinate groups. Jaggar further argues that in the process of learning emotions, we also internalize our society’s

standards and values, including, for example, racism and homophobia. Dominant values are seen as gut-responses: we are disgusted by this while delighted by that, and that is how it should be, it is ‘normal.’ As such, we understand these gut-responses as natural rather than socially constructed.

The gut-responses also blind us theoretically, which means we are unable to imagine other possible ways of living; we become too ruled by the norms of the society we live in to be able to conceive of other types of lives, which of course affects the questions we ask in and from our research. But, Jaggar argues, there are also “outlaw emotions” (2009: 61), which are the emotions we feel when we do not experience the conventionally acceptable emotions. These outlaw emotions can assist in bringing about change. Jaggar’s model is an alternative epistemological model where our emotional responses to the world change when we conceptualize the world differently, leading to new insights.

To lead to new insights, theory must be self-reflective. It cannot only focus on the world outside, but must also include “ourselves and our relation to that world, to examine critically our social location, our actions, our values, our perceptions, and our emotions” (Jaggar 2009: 63). Analyzing emotions and understanding their sources is not, according to Jaggar, about ‘dealing with’ our emotions so they can be cleared away in order to not influence our thinking. Rather, emotions are necessary to theoretical investigation, and it is necessary for political activity that we re-educate our emotions. “Critical reflection on emotion is not a self-indulgent substitute for political analysis and political action. It is itself a kind of political theory and political practice, indispensable for an adequate social theory and social transformation,” according to Jaggar (2009: 64).

I concur with Jaggar that our values influence what we consider to be both ‘worthy’ research and ‘proper’ knowledge production, and her arguments have been important in order for me to justify the importance of emotions in the research situation to myself. Understanding the interplay between reason and emotion, as well as the historical explanations as to why reason has become the only accepted way to approach research, and the knowledge that objectivity

fulfils ideological and political functions has helped me use emotions not only theoretically – what role do emotions play and what do they ‘do’ in queer partner migrants’ narratives, for example – but also take seriously and understand how the emotions inherent in research design, fieldwork, and analysis contribute to the production of knowledge.

Emotions situate us as researchers because they are, as Jaggar writes, part of our link to the world and our relation to that world. These emotions are carried into our research as part of our values and judgments, affect our research, and must therefore be part of our reflective work. Also, emotions and feelings are integral both to how we approach research and how we analyze it, and I show in this chapter how emotions and feelings were relevant in my research process in a number of ways.

However, first I will outline how I designed the project, and, in particular, introduce the interview participants as a group.

THE INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

I carried out fifteen interviews with a total of twenty-three interview participants for this study: thirteen of these participants were migrants, while ten were non-migrating partners. All participants were in or used to be in a queer cross-border relationship, and in all cases except three, the migrating partner was required to apply for permanent residency in Sweden because of the relationship. As I noted in the introductory chapter and go on to detail below, migrating partners come from different parts of the world. Also, how the partners met varies. However, the common denominator is that they all belong to one particular migrant group, where the non-migrating partner was present as well as established in Sweden when the two met, and the migrating partner moved to Sweden because of the relationship, making them a reasonable group for the kind of questions this study asks.

Two migrating partners were Nordic citizens¹⁷ and, as such, exempt from requirements to register their stay in Sweden as a result of the agreement between the Nordic countries that allows Nordic residents to move to and reside in other Nordic countries unconditionally. The third participant was Lisa, whose narrative I start this chapter with, who as a citizen of an EU country and having secured a job in Sweden before moving, was not required to apply for residency. The remaining ten partners, nine of whom were neither EU nor Nordic citizens and one an EU citizen, were required to apply for Swedish residency.

Locating Participants

Finding interview participants for the study turned out to be quite easy. I started by sending the participant invitation through my own networks, which prompted eight participants (or, differently put, four couples) to contact me. Another two or so participants contacted me after I posted in different online forums aimed at specific migrant communities in Sweden as well as in other, more general, online forums for migrants in Sweden. The remaining participants got in touch with me after I forwarded the participant invitation to all twenty-six local chapters of the Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights (RFSL, *Riksförbundet för homosexuellas, bisexuellas, transpersoners och queeras rättigheter*), asking if they would post my research participant invitation on email lists, websites, notice boards, etc., and to the chapters of the Swedish Federation of LGBTQ¹⁸ Students (SFQ, *Sveriges förenade HBTQ-studenter*) at ten universities.

This meant I primarily got in contact with two types of queer migrants and non-migrating partners: those who actively seek out

17. The Nordic countries consist of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden.

18. 'Lgbtq' is written in lower case when part of the text, but in upper case when referring to organization or community group names.

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queer communities and spaces, and those migrants who identify with their nationality or identify as migrants and pursue contact with other migrants living in Sweden. However, queer partner migrants are like ‘everyone else’ in that there are no places ‘in particular’ where they converge and can ‘be found.’¹⁹ All selections have their limitations, and needless to say, I do not aim for in this dissertation to generalize or speak for all queer partner migrant relationships in Sweden.

In all, I was contacted by twenty-seven potential participants, of whom I interviewed twenty-five. Twenty-three of these participant narratives are included in the dissertation,²⁰ and a list of these participants is included at the end of the book. Because I assumed that nationality and which country(ies) the migrating partner had roots in would entail different experiences and stories of migration, I strived to include a multitude of nationalities and countries. The countries the migrating partners identify that they are ‘from’ are Canada, Chile, Denmark, England, Iran, Nicaragua, the US, one unspecified Western European country, and two unspecified African countries. All but one of the non-migrating partners were born and grew up in Sweden; the only non-migrating partner with roots in another country grew up in Germany with a Swedish mother and a German father, and moved to Sweden as an adult. All non-migrating partners were Swedish citizens.

Migrating for a Relationship

All migrating partners stated that they had migrated because of the relationship with their Swedish partner; none of them expressed that they were forced to leave the countries they lived in, and no one was

19. In the chapter on loss, I examine the lack of communities specifically for or by queer partner migrants in Sweden.

20. I chose to exclude one narrative as the migrating partner had applied for residency on other grounds than the couple’s relationship, and their migration process therefore differed too much for me to feel that their narrative could be analyzed alongside the other narratives gathered.

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initially a refugee or asylum seeker who had had their asylum claim in Sweden denied and then applied for residency based on their relationship. This could have been the case, but no participants with such a migration background contacted me, partly perhaps because of how I formulated the call for participants and the channels I went through to circulate it. However, my delineation of the study was that the participants should, in those cases participants were not required to apply for residency, such as Nordic citizens or EU citizens who had secured a job in Sweden, understand the migration to have occurred mainly because of the relationship, or, in those cases the participants had applied for Swedish residency, that the application had been based on their relationship.

In all cases except two the migrating partner moved to Sweden *after* meeting the non-migrating Swedish partner. In these two cases the migrating partners were in Sweden temporarily for studies. All interview participants lived in Sweden at the time of the interview, but one couple was planning a move to the country the migrating partner had roots in the year following the interview, and several brought up wanting to possibly move at some point.

With the exception of two individuals, all interview participants were also still in the relationships that the migration occurred in. Because my aim was to understand how migration processes affect queer partner relationships and how queer relationships affect migration processes, it was not required that both partners of a couple participated in the study. I assumed that joint and individual narratives would offer different angles on how to understand the narration of relationship stories, meaning individual narratives would be as relevant as joint narratives. For the most part, both partners participated, but a handful of participants took part in the study on their own. This was either because their partner was not interested, or they were no longer in the relationship the migration occurred in and were not interested in participating together with their former partner.

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Length of Time in Sweden

The length of time migrating partners had spent in Sweden by the time of the interview varied. Eleven participants were in relationships in which the migrating partner had lived in Sweden between two and three years. The remaining twelve participants were fairly evenly dispersed between the migrating partner having lived in Sweden for four years up to nine years; the only one who stood out was a participant who had lived in Sweden for twenty-one years when I met him.

Those participants who had lived in Sweden for the shortest length of time were all still in the relationship that had brought about the migration, and they also expressed to be more actively 'living with' the migration process than those three participants (all migrating partners) who had lived in Sweden for seven years or more. Two interview participants, both migrating partners, were no longer in the relationships that had brought them to Sweden, and had stayed after their relationships had ended.

A Diverse Participant Group

The interview participants not only diverge in terms of the countries the migrating partners moved from. They also differ greatly when it comes to how they identify their sexual orientations and gender identities; ways they are racialized or not; their jobs and professions; their social class; and whether their queer position is a conscious part of their daily lives (for example, whether they are involved in various queer communities or activist groups, or deliberately seek out queer friend groups). The only defining group characteristic is the fact that the participants are overwhelmingly well educated, which may partly be an artifact of my recruitment channels: twenty-one of the twenty-three have at least some university studies, the majority having completed their degrees, and many have master's degrees. One participant had a doctoral degree at the time of the interview, while another was working towards the completion of theirs.

The only identities I specifically asked about in the interviews were sexual and gender identities. Some participants readily embraced

certain labels, mainly 'lesbian' and 'gay,' but most stated that how they identified depended on the context and the person asking. Four participants, all migrating partners, did not identify as cisgendered. Several participants expressed that they did not feel a connection at all to any of the letters in the lgbtq abbreviation, and while they indicated that they understood that in the eyes of society as well as by most people around them, they were seen to be in a 'same-sex relationship,' many were quite uncomfortable having to define and label themselves in any particular way. Others were not able to because they felt none of the definitions offered fit.

The majority of the participants, seventeen in total, were what would be read as white in a Swedish context. Of the remaining six, four specifically positioned themselves as people of colour and discussed their experiences from a point of view of being racialized and considered non-white in the eyes of 'Swedish people,' even if they may not have interpreted themselves as non-white before their move to Sweden. In terms of nationalities and 'countries of origin,' a handful of the migrating partners had roots in more than one country, and some even had dual citizenships. As I noted in the introductory chapter, this is the reason I chose to use the term 'roots' instead of 'country of origin,' as 'country of origin' does not adequately reflect the emotional roots and bonds these individuals had in and felt with more than one country.

Everyone I interviewed was either working or studying, but a number of the migrating partners would have preferred a different type of job than the one they had or expressed that they were studying even though they would have preferred to be working. Nine participants were, at the time of the interview, working in professional occupations, while fourteen were either students or employed in relatively insecure positions. By 'insecure positions' I mean, for example, that their jobs were not permanent or that the number of paid hours of work they carried out in a week varied from week to week. Some of the participants with precarious terms of employment were professionals with university degrees, and while they held professional positions many had short-term contracts and did not know whether these would be extended after a specific date. They had, in addition, often worked and completed several such short-term contracts over longer periods of

time, which meant they experienced a certain vulnerability in relation to (the lack of) job security.

Having described the composition of the participant group, I will now move on to examine the ethnographic aspect of the study.

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEW STUDY

I ground this study in ethnography because of ethnographers' ability to bring people of flesh and blood to the forefront of their writing at the same time as they show how 'small' personal stories are part of and constitute the larger social story. I am particularly influenced by feminist ethnography (e.g. Ambjörnsson 2004; Bremer 2011; Brennan 2004; Constable 2003; Dahl 2004; Kennedy & Davis 1993; Nordin 2007), because of feminist scholars' attention to power in the research process and their reflexive approach to research.

Ethnographic Encounters

I call this an ethnographic interview study, as I draw on ethnographic methods and the interviews I carried out also produced what Dina Pinsky calls "incidental ethnographic encounters" (2015). Pinsky argues that "our general approach to interviewing is constrained by a positivist legacy in which the interview interaction is seen as the singular locus for data production" (2015: 281). However, as both Pinsky shows and as I found during the fieldwork, a qualitative interview situation creates possibilities for a number of interactions between researcher and participant, although this fact is paid little attention in the literature on qualitative interviews. Even when not doing participant observation, a qualitative interview includes what Pinsky terms "observational interactions."

My research design did not include participant observation, because what I was interested in studying does not lend itself to being easily observed. As I discuss further in the chapter on loss, there are no queer partner migration communities organizing meet-ups or activities that I could participate in as an observer. The

intimate relationships I wanted to study take place between two individuals, usually in their home, and short of moving in with the participants to study their interactions as they went about their daily lives, conducting interviews was the only way I could access the information I was interested in analyzing. However, as Pinsky (2015) points out, an interview study includes observation as well. I exchanged phone calls, text messages, and emails with participants both before and after the interviews, and these encounters are such observational interactions. I sometimes spent five or six hours with participants, in essence, ‘hanging out’ with them, often sharing a meal, sometimes two if I stayed for a long time, which meant I observed them outside the interview situation. Given that the majority of interviews took place in participants’ homes, this also meant I observed their living spaces. I wrote field notes after each interview, and following Pinsky (2015), I interpret not only the interviews but also these incidental encounters and my field notes as my research material. As I learned about the contexts of the participants’ lives, I gained a fuller picture of them as complete people.

However, I was ambivalent about how to use the incidental ethnographic encounters, feeling, in Pinsky’s words, “as if I was reducing all of our pleasant social interactions to data” (2015: 289). At the same time, it was difficult to ignore information participants offered outside the ‘actual’ interview or things I clearly saw when sitting in their home. Because I, like Pinsky, understand interviews to be interactional events that cannot be undertaken according to a positivist model by a distanced researcher if the participants are to feel comfortable enough to share intimate parts of their lives with the interviewer, I carried out interviews that were more like conversations than interviews following a rigid and predetermined guide. Following Pinsky, I have chosen to include these incidental ethnographic encounters as a form of participant observation, because, as Pinsky writes, “conversation becomes data along with observations of home and style and personality. The individual becomes a full person in a way that is not possible in a two hour [sic] time slot. So in that sense, any contact beyond the interview itself as well as the mundane communication involved with organizing and setting it up becomes

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data” (2015: 289). As I discuss in the next section, these encounters were often filled with a certain type of emotions and feelings that allowed me to carry out the interviews the way I did.

Ethnography and Emotions

Naples points out that “emotions are always present in personal interactions in ethnographic work” (2003: 63). I found this to be particularly true in that the incidental ethnographic encounters created feelings in me in a different way than did the recorded interviews, and I would assume, in the interview participants as well. Outside the recording, I was ‘just another person,’ not (only) a researcher, and these encounters created a certain intimacy that carried into the interviews. Without these encounters, and the ensuing intimacy, I would most often not have been able to ask the questions or steer the interviews in the directions I did. As Sabine Gruber writes, a “participating researcher is something of a prerequisite in order to access the context to be studied. It is through the participating position that ethnographers establish rapport with informants and legitimize their own presence in the field” (2011: 25; my translation). To participate, to be involved, necessitates feelings.

I also participated in the fieldwork in the sense that I, too, have experiences of queer partner migration processes, and I used myself and my own experiences extensively (cf. Cvetkovich 2012; Dahl 2012; Frankenberg 1993). Using her interview study with Jewish feminist women as an example, Pinsky (2015) discusses the intimacy that is created in research where taken-for-granted notions of what it means to be, in my case, queer and having experience of partner migration processes are produced in the interaction between researcher and participants. Just like Pinsky, I was “imagined to share multiple identities with my interviewees” (2015: 287), and many participants made assumptions about what I personally had experienced and therefore understood in relation to queer partner migration. For example, Lisa and Bea, whose story I started this chapter with, included me in a queer ‘us’ at the same time as they positioned straight people as ‘them,’ and did not bother explaining or

giving the context of this queer ‘us’ on the assumption that I would follow their thinking. Linn Egeberg Holmgren calls this “co-fielding,” when “the positions of interviewer/interviewee are similar, sometimes overlapping, and [...] there is a common language and knowledge at hand in the interview situation” (2011a: 366).

Lisa and Bea were in some sense atypical of the interview participants I met when it comes to sharing identities. Because Lisa and Bea never had to apply for residency for Lisa, we did not share this experience, and there was no co-fielding in regards to this. With most other participants, I shared feelings relating to the administrative migration process. Participants would, for example, mention the Migration Agency and the impossibility of getting hold of one’s case officer on the phone, and we would all laugh knowingly or make a sarcastic remark about the Agency, because we had all been in this position and recognized it. Or, if residence application procedures were mentioned, someone’s rolling of their eyes would signal the assumption that everyone in the room understood what those procedures were like, and create a shared feeling of frustration. Similarly, and this included Lisa and Bea as well, the majority of interview participants correctly assumed that I understood, and included me in, feelings of longing, waiting, and missing during those times they had been separated from their partners. All of these emotions contributed to the “web of communications” (Pinsky 2015: 289) between the participants and myself that comprise the study, and entailed that I received more information than I otherwise might have. However, as I go on to discuss later in this chapter, there are also ethical considerations when co-fielding occurs and feelings are assumed to be shared.

Approaching the Interviews

According to Hanna Herzog (2005), interview location plays a central role in qualitative research. Building on my reasoning above, I understand the interview to be not only a technique to gather data, but an emotional and relational interaction. As such, location matters, and not for logistical reasons only, but as Herzog writes, interview

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location “should be examined within the social context of the study being conducted; [...] the location should be seen as part of the interpretation of the findings [...] and the interview location plays a role in constructing reality, serving simultaneously as both cultural product and producer” (2005: 25). In my study, the participants decided where they would like to meet with me, and while I met a handful of participants in public places such as cafés or parks, the vast majority chose to meet in their own homes. This of course influenced how at ease and comfortable participants could be in the interview; being quite literally ‘at home,’ they were put at an advantage in relation to me, the ‘guest,’ compared to if we had carried out the interview in, for example, my office.

I believe the fact that all interviews were conducted in places chosen by the participants, which I have to assume were places they felt comfortable in, meant participants relaxed and opened up more, resulting in more detailed and personal narratives. In terms of Lisa and Bea, the interview took place in their apartment on a Friday evening. They had prepared dinner and we all ate together during the interview. This meant the interview became more of a conversation between three people over food than a strict interview, contributing to the feeling of intimacy. After we finished eating, we moved into the living room where we had beer and snacks, replicating, from what I could understand, a quite normal Friday evening in Lisa and Bea’s life together, except, as they joked, they talked to me instead of watching *Skavlan* (a popular talk show).

While some participants had a business-like approach and sat me down right away to get started with the ‘actual’ recorded interview, as I described when discussing incidental ethnographic encounters above, others greeted me as a guest and were in no hurry to start. Sometimes I would be shown around the home, or we chatted while participants prepared snacks they wanted to serve during the interview. Pinsky points out that additional, non-interview interactions “can be mutually informative both for researcher and participant” (2015: 289), offer participants an opportunity to pre-screen the researcher, and also “provides an opportunity for [participants] to feel more in control of their interactions with the researcher” (2015: 290). This is

an accurate description of the feeling I got from participants as to why they engaged me in conversation or showed me around: they wanted to get to know me a little and establish some kind of relationship before we got started ‘for real.’

I covered a number of topics in each interview, but I did not bring up the topics in the same way in every interview. These topics related to how the partners met; how they decided the migrating partner would move to Sweden; experiences with the Migration Agency and other government agencies in relation to their migration; and questions relating to sexual and gender identities, nationality, and race. My thematic guide also changed over time as I became more aware of what issues were relevant to participants and learned the best ways to approach these issues in order to get participants talking. Following certain themes rather than asking specific questions meant the interviews were relatively open conversations that went in the directions the participants wanted to take them, with me steering the conversation towards the topics I wanted to cover. Participants were also welcome to bring up other issues in relation to their migration processes that they felt I had overlooked. I used my own experiences of migration as well as examples from my own past and migration relationships to exemplify the questions I asked. I did not believe that participants’ experiences were identical or even similar to mine, but it was a way to get them thinking about the issue at hand and reflect on their own experiences. Most of the time this worked very well, and it helped me receive a number of stories that I do not think I would have been told otherwise. However, at other times it did not; some participants were intent on telling their story only, and I read the situation as them preferring me to take the role of the more disengaged researcher, which I then did.

The Power of Language in Interviewing

All interviews were carried out in either English or Swedish, some in both languages. Most interviews in English were interspersed with Swedish terms and words. I asked participants to choose the language they preferred to speak in, which sometimes meant that in the same

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interview, one participant spoke English and the other Swedish. It also meant that I switched languages several times in the same interview.

However, having said that interview participants chose which language to speak, for reasons I do not really understand when I think back, in one particular interview I asked if we could do the interview in English. The migrating partner's first language was English while the non-migrating partner's was Swedish, and when speaking to each other at home, they usually alternated between the two languages. When listening to the interview – which we did carry out in English – it is obvious that the non-migrating partner sometimes struggles to express themselves in English, and that they talk less than the migrating partner. The fact that they were less talkative can well be due to the two partners' different personalities, but in hindsight I should of course have asked them to speak in whatever language that they felt comfortable with. This way I both ended up taking away the interview participants' choice and wound up with a potentially qualitatively inferior interview because the non-migrating partner did not contribute as much to the interview as they otherwise might have.

Language also matters for other reasons, such as it being easier to create an intimate feeling in those cases where two speakers speak the same language well. There are also hierarchies present in language; if I speak a language well or fluently, but you do not, I automatically have more power over the conversation.

From here I will now move on to discuss power and ethics in the research process, starting by examining the situated researcher.

A SITUATED RESEARCH PROCESS

This is a feminist study, and as I have mentioned previously, scholars of feminist theory and methodology have developed reflexivity as a central aspect of research. In her influential essay "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," Donna Haraway discusses objectivity in science and that "the only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular" (1988: 590), that is, to situate knowledge. Haraway

argues that knowledge is always produced from a particular location and that a universal, impartial view of an invisible researcher who sees “everything from nowhere” (1988: 591), what Haraway calls the “god-trick,” is impossible. Traditionally, the narrator of scientific (positivist) knowledge has tended to be faceless, all-knowing, and objective. In order to make clear the location from which the knowledge is produced, the faceless narrator must be replaced by a narrator who is present in the text, and the narrator’s location needs to be examined. Rather than listing my various social positions as a way to describe my location(s), I ask questions, problematize, and make myself visible in the text, reflecting on how I understand as well as how I influence the material.

Being the non-migrating partner of a partner migrant and a previous migrating partner has meant that from the start of the project I have thought about my own situatedness and my location(s) in relation to my research. Having a personal connection to the topic also means a different kind of involvement in and approach to the research; not necessarily a better or ‘more true’ involvement and approach, but a different one. Given the impossibility of the god-trick, time, place, context, and the individuals involved make for different ways of telling the same narratives, and may also trigger different stories all together: the fact that it is me doing an interview with one particular couple at one specific moment in time is important, and who I am, my background, and my experiences impact on the research and the knowledge created. This also caused the co-fielding (Holmgren 2011a) I discussed earlier.

PARTICIPATION, POWER, AND TRANSPARENCY: ETHICS AND THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The fact that participants often correctly assumed, and also had confirmed as we were speaking, that I had personal experience of queer partner migration often meant a certain intimacy was created. Using my own experiences was a way to use knowledge already available to me to produce more knowledge. It was also a way to create a more equal research situation in which I did not only take

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very personal stories, but also gave participants parts of my own stories. However, using my own narrative this way has also been a way of creating rapport, something that I believe is possibly ethically problematic.

Ethnography as Emotional Manipulation?

As Gruber (2007: 45) points out, the fact that ethnographic methods explicitly aim to create conditions that make participants share (in my case) private and intimate stories is also an ethical dilemma in that participants most often have no possibility of affecting the researcher's scientific work. Sometimes this feels like a kind of emotional manipulation, and I have partly tried to counteract this by sharing my own migration stories and answering questions about my life to the extent that the participants have been interested in hearing. That said, establishing rapport and being 'emotionally manipulative' needs to be put in the context of the research at hand. In my case, all participants actively contacted me to let me know they wanted to participate; it was a wholly voluntary participation process, which is quite different from a participant observation situation in, for example, a school or another more public space (Gruber 2007).

All qualitative researchers engaging in ethnographic methods or interviews turn, through their analyses, participant narratives into something very different than the original conversation or event, perhaps to the point that parts of the narratives are unrecognizable to the participants. Researchers have the power to leave participants feeling various forms of 'bad' in ways that the participants can never make researchers feel: the participants generally have no power over how they appear in the text, how their stories are used, or what kind of analysis the researcher does. Knowing that one is anonymous is likely of little comfort to someone who may feel they were almost tricked into telling intimate and personal accounts of their lives if these accounts turn out to be treated in ways they feel uncomfortable with when they read the subsequently produced text.

As I discuss more below, a large number of the participants explicitly

told me they enjoyed the interview. However, being a privileged migrant, a position that most participants inhabited at certain times (although not at others), and enjoying being interviewed about one's life does not mean a participant cannot feel vulnerable or that an interview brings only enjoyment. Given the intimate interview situation I consciously tried to create, and which often produced a sense of 'us' rather than 'researcher and interviewee,' I noticed that several participants perhaps said more than they had meant to because they simply forgot the context our conversation was taking place in and the fact that they did not actually know me. During the interviews there could sometimes be an almost palpable feeling of connection and a very intense atmosphere; I strongly perceived that many participants 'opened up' and 'let me in.' Of course I cannot know what a participant might have chosen to not tell me, but based on the stories and narratives that I *was* told, I was told a lot. However, once the interview was over and the intense atmosphere disappeared, some participants were brought 'back to reality' in a way that I sensed made them feel quite uncomfortable. Regardless of social positioning, everyone has stories that makes them feel vulnerable, and, for many of the participants, those were the stories I asked to hear. Seen this way, the interviewing I did could reasonably be considered emotionally manipulative on some levels.

(Not-)Vulnerable Research Participants

However, I want to point out that the fact that the participants of this study are 'not-vulnerable' compared to other researched populations or communities does not mean there is not power inherent in the research situation and the research process. By 'not-vulnerable' I mean that the participants generally have access to a wide variety of resources to help them understand and navigate their migration process. These resources are tied to class as well as the Swedish non-migrating partners' possession of knowledge of Swedish social codes and Swedish society. As I noted earlier and go on to discuss below, the interview participants of this study are also overwhelmingly well educated, and they are used to making their own decisions and speaking for themselves. As a general rule,

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they are not marginalized or lack a voice, that is, they are not structurally vulnerable.

That said, opening up to someone is an emotional risk, as one can be made to *feel* vulnerable. This is a different kind of vulnerability that may arise in the meeting with another person, one that we all risk being exposed to when we interact with others. While acknowledging that the interview participants are not structurally vulnerable, I have sometimes refrained from making a point in my analysis of their narrative that I know would make an individual participant feel violated. I have also left out certain sensitive discussions about participants' relationships from those interviews in which only one of the partners participated when I have sensed that these were thoughts participants had not shared with their partners (cf. Tolich 2010: 1608). As a researcher, I have the power to make these decisions, and I believe them to part of 'common research decency,' as I go on to discuss more below.

Because the vast majority of interview participants had university educations, they were often quite aware of what 'research' is and what a 'research process' looks like. Lisa and Bea, whose narrative opens this chapter, made us all laugh when Lisa said to me at the end of the interview: "You were pretty professional. It makes me more confident that the book [dissertation] will actually happen." To this Bea added: "My first thought was – will she finish?!" meaning she had enough knowledge of research processes to know that they are long and do not always result in a final product. They also talked about their interview and my study from a point of view that made it clear that they understood that their narrative was one of many, and that it would be used "to test hypotheses," as Lisa put it. Several other participants expressed similar sentiments.

Further, as I noted earlier, many participants explicitly expressed that the interview had been rewarding for them, both in that they had enjoyed it, but also in that it had forced them to think about issues they had not previously considered; the term 'couple therapy' was mentioned by several participants after interviews. It was obvious that many participants had never taken the time to reflect on their migration processes, and that they appreciated having been given the

chance to do so now. As I discuss further in the empirical chapters, many of the participants have most often not had to position themselves as ‘migrants’ in the way that many other types of migrants are forced to. This means they have not had to construct a ‘migration story’ to tell and re-tell, making the interview a somewhat new and exciting situation.

Carrying Out Transparent Research

According to Naple, how we define “the nature of the relationship between researcher and researched [...] depends on one’s epistemological stance” (2003: 4). I went into this study wanting to include the participants as much as was possible. This was an effect and outcome of my interest in feminist methodology, in which discussions about power between researcher and researched are constantly present (cf. Haraway 1988; Harding 1986; Naples 2003). Language is part of this: me labeling the ‘informants’ or ‘interviewees’ of this study ‘interview participants’ was an active choice. While they are not ‘research participants,’ because they had no influence in terms of planning the research or the direction it took (cf. Cornwall and Jewkes 1995; Huisman 2008), neither do they merely ‘inform’ the study (cf. Larsson 2015). Within the limited space that interview participants have had available to them I have wanted to make this space as inclusive as possible. One of the ways I indicate this in the text is by referring to them as ‘interview participants.’ This emphasizes their participation to the reader throughout the dissertation, and stresses their importance to the research.

Another aim with my dissertation is to make the participants come across as living, breathing people in the text. This means participant narratives are present in different ways than if they had simply ‘informed’ my analysis, and I want the reader to get to know as many participants as possible. The result is that some participant narratives, particularly those in the empirical chapters, are described in detail in order to allow the reader to get closer to the participants. As I noted earlier, this means I have had to be careful with how certain analytical points I make affect how the person in the narrative

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comes across in the text, because the individual whose narrative I am analyzing is not simply an anonymous ‘anyone,’ they are a specific individual the reader gets to know.

Also, as I discuss in more detail below, I asked participants to choose the names they would like me to use in the final text. By doing this, I meant to make the research process both more inclusive and transparent. As participants know the name representing their narrative, they can find their own quotes and stories in the dissertation and, in extension, see exactly how I have interpreted and analyzed their narratives. Norman K. Denzin argues that “we must remember that our primary obligation is always to the people we study, not to our project or discipline” (1989: 83). As I have already touched on, the baseline is that researchers must observe common research decency.

Part of this common research decency was, for me, to ensure that the interview process was very transparent. This included giving a good deal of information prior to starting the recording, including explicitly telling participants that this information was offered so that they would feel comfortable in participating and would know enough about me, the study, their own participation, and how I would use their narratives.²¹ All interview participants were also informed several times (in the call for participants; in the more detailed information letter I sent once a participant had confirmed their participation²²;

21. After finishing the interview, many participants said, without me prompting, that they had appreciated receiving the initial information. However, one participant got visibly annoyed while I was going through the information, sighing loudly before declaring, “It’s like being read your Miranda rights!” I can appreciate this reaction; I gave a lot of information. At the same time, I found it more important that those who were not used to a research situation and had not considered what could happen to the information they shared with me had all the knowledge they needed to make informed decisions about their participation.

22. Part of my pursuit for transparency included mentioning in the information letter that my study had been approved by the relevant research ethics board. However, at the behest of said ethics board, and for reasons I never fully understood, I was asked to remove this information from the information letter. Because I found it important that participants knew that the research was ethically approved, I ignored this. In reality I believe that the feminist discussions on power

and at the beginning of the interview) that they could withdraw from the study at any point without stating a reason. I also brought up during the interview as well as in my follow-up email after the interview that if we happened to bring up something that participants did not want included in the study, I would either exclude it while transcribing the interview or remove it from the material once they let me know. A number of participants did tell me stories they wanted to offer as context but that they did not want me to use in the study, and they were subsequently left out.

Making Research Decisions

However, having made this strong case for respecting participants in the research process, I also want to point out that I have approached the participant narratives with the understanding, as I outlined earlier in the chapter, that participants took part in the study voluntarily, that they knew they could pull out of the study at any time, that all migrating partners were in possession of their Swedish residencies (meaning there was no risk that their participation could affect their applications), and often enjoyed their participation. They understood the basic premises of research and were in a position to decide on their participation, and I have treated their narratives in accordance with this understanding. I have also made many decisions that the participants could not influence. One such decision was based on the fact that I view an interview as a conversation that happened at a particular moment in time, with the assumption that any interview would likely turn out quite differently if it took place at another time. Participants could add to the interview at a later date but they could not replace something they had said in the interview with something

and knowledge creation that this study is part of are much more complex and reflective than guidelines by research ethics boards. However, this approval was the only tangible thing I could show the participants for them to know that they were not subjected to only me, one sole researcher, but that several researchers had read my research proposal, and examined and commented on the ethical aspects of this proposal.

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else. Other such decisions concern anonymity and the analysis of the participant narratives, as I go on to examine below.

While the narratives participants have shared with me have become the material of my dissertation, it does not mean that the actual stories belong to me. Rather, they are lent to me, as well as created for me and together with me, for a specific purpose: to gain an understanding of queer partner migration and queer intimate lives. As such, I believe that I owe it to the participants to show how their narratives were ‘used.’ This does not mean I ‘hold back’ when analyzing or that I do not include analyses I believe participants may disagree with: just as a participant owns their narrative, I own my analysis. However, I agree with Martin Tolich who, writing in the context of autoethnography, advises against “publish[ing] anything [you] would not show to the other persons mentioned in the text” (2010: 1605; see also Medford 2006). Kari Lerum uses a similar approach that she calls “the ‘gossip test’ method; that is, when I am writing and talking about my ‘subjects,’ would I say these things to their faces?” (2001: 475). I hope that by being transparent and explaining my thinking behind the research, both participants and other readers will understand why I have made decisions and choices, and how I have reached certain conclusions.

CHOOSING NAMES, ANONYMIZING PLACES: MAKING CHOICES ABOUT REPRESENTATION

Sweden is a small country with a population of just under 10 million, meaning it is also home to a quite small queer community. Queer migrants and their partners are an even smaller group within this larger group. Depending on the roots of the migrating partner, there may be very few migrants from a particular country, let alone queer migrants, living in Sweden. Letting participants decide themselves how their country(ies) should be described has been a way of letting participants determine degrees of anonymity. This means that Lisa, whose narrative introduced this chapter, is described as coming from a Western European country, while Felipe in the previous chapter

is described as being from Nicaragua, for example. Not using a country name at times means some countries are lumped together in unfortunate ways, in particular ‘Africa,’ as two participants have chosen that their countries only be mentioned as ‘an African country’ in the dissertation. Africa is in Western media and public discourse often referred to as ‘a place’ rather than a continent consisting of more than 50 culturally, ethnically, linguistically, and geographically very different countries. My intention is not to refer to Africa as ‘a place,’ which I hope is reflected throughout the dissertation. Rather, I aim to respect the decisions of the participants who have chosen to not have their countries named, and who instead have chosen ‘Africa.’

‘Participation’ or Ethically Problematic ‘Choices?’

Whether allowing participants the choice to determine degrees of anonymity should be understood as ‘participation’ or ‘handing over responsibility’ is an ethical discussion. Leaving decisions to the participants cannot only be interpreted as participatory. It is also problematic, because it means I partly wash my hands of participants’ anonymity, leaving it up to them to make a decision I may be more competent to make in the sense that I, for example, know better than the participants do in how much detail I re-tell their narratives (and so how likely they are to be recognized by someone who knows them). I cannot say whether doing one or the other is more correct; it depends on how one understands ‘participation’ and the importance of anonymity.²³

23. The importance of anonymity relates to whether it matters if one is recognized in an academic text if nothing tangibly ‘bad’ results from the recognition. Are we reflexively assuming that anonymity is required in qualitative research? For example, Caroline Knowles and Douglas Harper (2009) in their photo ethnography of mainly British expats in Hong Kong made the decision to include both names and photos of their participants, supposedly because they understood the participants to be privileged to the point that they were not in need of anonymity. It begs the question whether anonymity is required in those cases participants are not part of an ‘at risk’ population.

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Also, a handful of participants wanted to use their real names in the dissertation, something I decided against because I judged that the sense of vulnerability one may experience when one's narrative is picked apart and analyzed critically may be quite uncomfortable. Academic writing is different from having one's relationship featured in a magazine article, for example, exactly because one's story is not just re-told as one told it to the listener but critically examined and deconstructed. I have anonymized participants as far as has been possible by changing names and omitting professions, fields of study, names of cities and regions, and so on. That said, this does not guarantee that the participants will not be recognized by readers who know (of) them and have heard their migration stories before, which is something I discussed with the participants in the interviews.

Representative Naming

I found it important that participants' names were representative of the individuals, which is one reason apart from the participatory aspect that I asked participants to choose their own names. Given that the participant group was so diverse in terms of ethnicity, language, gender identity, and class, it was difficult for me to know what a representative name would be if participants were to feel comfortable with the names they were given. Further, in one of the first interviews I carried out, when I had not yet decided how names would be assigned, the couple interviewed asked me whether they would get to choose their own names. When I told them I did not know yet and asked them their opinion, the migrating partner, who had a quite fluent gender identity, said, "It doesn't matter to me. I'm okay with you choosing. As long as it's not a Swedish girl name." This stayed with me, because I realized that, at least for this participant, it was important to be represented as the person she understood herself to be – not Swedish and not a girl – when her story was being told to an audience. For reasons of power, participation, and ethics, this is important.

Consequently, participants were asked to choose their own names.²⁴ Sometimes I was informed about the reasons for picking a particular name, other times not. The chosen names sometimes surprised me: for example, the participant who did not want a “Swedish girl name” chose a name which to me is both Swedish and female. However, as she explained to me, to her the name represents her different ethnic origins.

Choosing one’s own name is also a queer practice. For example, some participants had already chosen other names than the ones they had been assigned at birth, names that they felt better suited their gender identity and the person they were. As such, my asking the participants to choose a name could also be seen in the light of this practice.

THE CREATION OF MIGRATION NARRATIVES: INTERVIEWING COUPLES, INTERVIEWING INDIVIDUALS

Participants who were still in the relationship in which the migration occurred and where both partners of the couple participated in the study were asked to decide between themselves whether they wanted to be interviewed together or separately. The vast majority, eighteen participants, chose to be interviewed together. I did not follow up with questions on how the couple had reached this decision, but there could be many reasons why so many couples decided to participate together. While my invitation letter was quite vague in terms of what my research focused on, apart from queer partner migration experiences in general, it did point to the fact that I was interested in

24. Only two participants explicitly stated that the names chosen to represent them did not matter to them and that they wanted me to choose. One other participant did not respond to my email where I asked for a name, while two participants took so long to answer that I chose working names for them in order to be able to start analyzing their interview, names which the participants subsequently decided to keep. The remaining eighteen participants chose their own names.

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how all parties of a relationship are affected by one person migrating because of the relationship as well as migration processes as they relate to relationships rather than individuals. In the light of this, I can understand the wish to present 'our' story as the two partners would perhaps not interpret the story as 'complete' if they were to be interviewed separately.

Being a Considerate Partner in the Interview

When interviewed together, participants could (and often did) check their narrative with their partner while talking; if the partner did not agree, they could re-phrase their statements or discuss with their partner until they arrived at a narrative both agreed on. If interviewed separately, the situation could arise that they brought up issues or re-told stories that their partner felt uncomfortable with being shared, but also that they held back certain stories because they were unsure as to how their partner would feel about the story being told. This could be avoided if their partner was present, and several times during couple interviews, one partner turned to the other and said, "Is it okay if I tell her [me] about the time when this or that happened?" Another reason for suggesting an interview together could simply have been time efficiency and ease; but also in those cases where couples stated that "it seems easier to do the interview together," I strongly sensed that talking about one's relationship was something most participants preferred to do together, if they had the choice.

Differences Interviewing Couples and Individuals

There were of course several differences between interviewing couples and individuals. The individual interviews tended to be more focused and intense as the individual participant had the opportunity to concentrate on themselves only, rather than taking into consideration how their partner felt about or interpreted what they told me or how it was told. On the other hand, several couple interviews were similarly intense, but these were also often more lively, as a conversation in a

group often is, with participants interrupting each other, laughing, and finishing each other's sentences.

However, in the individual interviews it was easier for me to become an equal participant in the conversation; the couples were more likely to be a 'unit,' at least initially. They had less need to be equal conversation partners because, as one part of a couple, they were already part of something. This often changed some time into the interview, and in most cases the 'unit' would dissolve, making us three individuals engaged in a conversation, rather than a couple unit and one individual. This was, interestingly, highly dependent on how we were sitting during the interview. Couples sitting close together on a couch, perhaps touching as they were speaking, were less likely to 'dissolve' their 'unit' than couples who, for example, sat across from each other at a table, meaning physical proximity was important for whether couples stayed a 'unit.'

Couple interviews also had one clear advantage in that couples often started interviewing each other. This was very much the case in the interview with Lisa and Bea that I started this chapter with. If one them was dissatisfied with the other's answer, they would re-phrase the question to the other, and prompt for elaboration. They would also ask new questions of each other if one of them said something the other had not heard them express before, asking each other to clarify. Another advantage was that couples thought out loud more than individuals, probably because the other person could confirm or refute what they were saying; they did not need to put forward finished thoughts because their partner could fill in the blanks for them. This both increased the amount of information I received and allowed me to observe how the couples created and negotiated joint migration narratives, and I have tried to weave these affective and complex ways to create joint stories into the participant narratives in the dissertation. A number of emotions and feelings are produced as part of the creation of the narrative, and their presence 'does' 'things' to the narrative as well as the relationship. An example of this is the exchange between Lisa and Bea at the beginning of this chapter, where Lisa states that she experiences an affinity with other 'immigrants' and Bea strongly questions this. Feelings are produced

when one partner realizes that the other partner sees themselves as belonging to something the first partner has never considered their partner to be part of, this way ‘doing’ something to the relationship as well as the joint narrative. This is important as participants often wanted to create a narrative of love and affinity that also came across as coherent and as a joint narrative rather than two individual ones.

I will now leave the interview participants, the interviews, and the design of the study. In this second part of the chapter I will turn to the analysis of the narratives I gathered. First I discuss narratives and stories as a way to organize experience, a discussion I continue from the introductory chapter. I then explain the method of narrative analysis and connect it to writing.

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

What does it mean to analyze something? When does the ‘analysis process’ start? Many researchers (e.g. Gruber 2007; Larsson 2015; Sohl 2014) have pointed out that what on paper seems very straightforward – gather material; analyze; write up – is not a linear process at all. In reality, one might do all three concurrently throughout the whole research process. In this section I aim to outline my analytical process even though it is somewhat challenging, precisely because there was nothing linear about this process.

Stories as a Way to Organize Experience

In this dissertation on the feelings of migration, I draw on narrative analysis (Coffey & Atkinson 1996; Elliot 2005; Phoenix, Smith & Sparkes 2010; Sparkes & Smith 2008; Riessman 2008) inasmuch as it offers support to think about what ‘stories’ are and how to analyze the ‘stories’ I have gathered. As Cassandra Phoenix, Brett Smith, and Andrew C. Sparkes write, this method is like many qualitative analysis methods difficult to define as “there is no single narrative analytical method. Rather, there is a multitude of different ways in which researchers can engage with the narrative dimensions of

their data” (2010: 3). As I go on to outline here, I use narrative analysis together with creative analytic practices (CAP), in a process where writing is essential to the analysis and the arguments that this dissertation offers.

The term ‘narrative’ can be and is understood in many different ways, depending on discipline (Phoenix, Smith & Sparkes 2010; Riessman 2008). As Jane Elliott (2005) points out, there is a difference between the literary narrative, of which there is a long tradition, and the more recent use of the term in the social sciences. The defining elements of a narrative, according to Elliott are that ‘a narrative can be understood to organize a sequence of events into a whole so that the significance of each event can be understood through its relation to that whole. In this way a narrative conveys the meaning of events’ (2005: 3). Elliott then goes on to outline three key features of narratives: first, they are *chronological* as they represent sequences of events; second, they are *meaningful*; and third, they are *social* in that they are constructed with a particular audience in mind (2005: 4). This is how I understand and approach the notion of narrative in this study. However, I would like to add to Elliott’s key features that narratives *become* chronological when I, the writer and researcher, re-create the narrative in order to analyze it. When a narrative is told by an interview participant, it may be sequential, but this does not necessarily mean it is chronological.

Phoenix, Smith, and Sparkes (2010: 2) consider narrative analysis to be both a systemic task *and* a form of writing. What makes narrative analysis compelling to me is that the various forms “share a commitment to viewing identities as constituted through narratives, emphasizing that we are relational beings, and taking seriously the storied nature of our lives and lived experiences as they unfold in time” (Phoenix, Smith & Sparkes 2010: 2; see also Sparkes & Smith 2008). There are no certainties in narrative analysis, and narratives are not “understood as a transparent window into people’s lives [...] but rather as an on-going and constitutive part of reality” (Phoenix, Smith & Sparkes 2010: 2).

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The fact that people tell stories about their lives and construct stories about themselves as a way to organize their experiences, tells us that stories are important. Stories can also act as counter-narratives that challenge the dominant story (Phoenix, Smith & Sparkes 2010), which is another reason I find narrative analysis useful. For example, I found that many of the interview participants who could reasonably be labeled ‘privileged migrants’ told stories that in many cases challenge the ‘easy’ migration that their entangled privileges of being white, of Western nationality, cisgendered, middle class, and well educated ‘should’ have helped them ensure. By focusing on emotions and narratives, that is, using this particular method to analyze this particular empirical material, I am able to show the complexity of these migration processes.

Further, the importance of affect, emotions, and feelings in my research makes narrative analysis interesting, because, as I noted in the introductory chapter, a narrative can create feelings also in the reader. According to Phoenix, Smith, and Sparkes,

because stories are ways of knowing, are a reflexive way of encouraging people to think critically about their habitual worlds, and can engage and move people emotionally and cognitively, in and through their bodies, stories may challenge and change [people]. [...] Thus, narrative holds pedagogical and personal and social transformative potential.

(2010: 3)

For example, while joking about it, Lisa and Bea, whose narrative opened this chapter, showed that they understood the interview, and so the stories they had told me, to have the potential to challenge and perhaps change them. When I told them I would be in touch in a week or so after the interview to check in to see if they had any questions or comments, Bea immediately pretended to be me and that I would ask, “Are you still together?” to which Lisa added, playacting a response to this pretend-me on behalf of her and Bea:

“There were major fights!” This example also says something about shared storytelling and emotions in that Lisa and Bea are aware that feelings can be conjured in the individuals by the telling of their shared story, and that those feelings ‘do’ something to intimacy and the couple’s understandings of their relationship, such as creating arguments and break-ups.

In addition, learning about other people’s experiences through a narrative can be very moving. Getting close to stories and understanding the person behind them, can lead us to change how we perceive certain issues. This does not mean that narrative analysis will always lead to change or that “everything should be reduced to stories” (Phoenix, Smith & Sparkes 2010: 3), however, narratives have the potential to let us paint a more complex picture.

Narrative Analysis and Creative Analytic Practices (CAP)

Narrative analysis is, then, a technique that takes the story as its object of inquiry, asking both *how* things are said and *how* the story is told as well as *what* it includes (Coffey & Atkinson 1996; Phoenix, Smith & Sparkes 2010). Phoenix, Smith, and Sparkes (2010) present a typology in which they offer three different types of narrative analyses: structural analysis (“exploring the *whats* of narrative”), performative analysis (“analysing the *hows*”), and combining the *whats* and the *hows* with creative analytic practices (CAP). Put differently, Phoenix, Smith, and Sparkes argue there are story analysts, who are interested in either the *whats* *or* the *hows*, and there are storytellers, who are interested in the *whats* *and* the *hows*. Storytellers differ from story analysts in that “for storytellers, analysis *is* the story” (Phoenix, Smith & Sparkes 2010: 7; italics in original). The *hows* and *whys* are intertwined and alternatively shown. While the two should not be collapsed, over the writing process the writer shifts back and forth between what is said to how it is told.

The term CAP ethnography was coined by Laurel Richardson (2000), and Richardson argues it is a way to write qualitative research “differently,” in this context meaning ‘less like traditional academic

writing.’ This ‘difference’ can take many forms, and Richardson lists, among others, autoethnography, fiction-stories, poetry, drama, conversations, and layered accounts. What these practices producing CAP ethnography have in common is that they are “*both creative and analytic*” (Richardson 2000: 930; italics in original), and CAP ethnography and ways to “writ[e] academic texts differently” (Lykke 2014) has influenced me throughout the writing of this dissertation (e.g. Adeniji 2008; Behar 1995; Bochner 2000; Brearley 2000; Dahl 2012; Gambs 2007; Gillies 2006; Hearn 2012; Jago 2002; Kim 2007; Kleinsasser 2000; Lerum 2001; Livholts 2012; Richardson 2000; Richardson & Adams St. Pierre 2005; Sedgwick 1998; Valentine 1998; Wolf 1992; Öhman 2012, 2014).

For Richardson, CAP is various ways of writing and the analytical processes that writing (also) consists of, as I go on to discuss later in the chapter. She argues that while CAP can be understood as ‘experimental’ ways of writing qualitative research, it is really just a different way of representing the social world. Her point is that scientific writing does not have to look the way scientific writing has traditionally looked and that there is no such thing as “getting it right’, only ‘getting it’ differently contoured and nuanced” (2005: 962).

CAP Writing, Narrative Writing

Throughout my writing I did CAP-inspired writing exercises (Lykke 2014; Richardson 2000; Richardson and Adams St. Pierre 2005). The point was to see if this would change the way I interpreted or understood interview participants’ stories, and if it could help me write the analysis in a different and clearer ways or in ways that helped open up the narrative to the reader. These exercises did help me both get closer to the participants’ stories and start the analysis in a more organized fashion. They also sharpened my writing and made me reflect over why I chose to write the way I did, and what kind of writing my material required (Öhman 2014). However, in the actual dissertation my writing style is quite traditional scientific writing.

CHAPTER 4

The empirical chapters consist of narratives. While there are different ways to write a narrative, my approach in this study consists of presenting long, direct participant quotes. I try to create a feeling for how the participants behave while they are telling their stories by including, for example, hesitations, silences, laughter, gestures, and also *how* the story is told. Differently put: I try to convey the feelings captured in the storytelling. This is the main reason I try to stay close to the actual interview quotes, as it means I can include how the participant actually spoke in order to convey the feeling and give the narrative more depth those times a participant, for instance, had difficulty expressing themselves, was searching for words, or laughed a lot while recalling a particular story. That is, I am not only interested in *what* the narrative includes but also *how* it is told.

However, participant quotes are not always direct quotes. Sometimes I have cut out sentences that do not necessarily add to the narrative in order to make the storyline more succinct and the quotes shorter. Other times I have added words to make a sentence flow more smoothly when it is obvious what a participant means. I have also edited in those instances it is not significant to know exactly how the participant was talking, taking away a number of “like,” “ehm,” “you know,” and half-finished sentences in order to create a more easily read text. Some of these are, however, left in the text to generate a feeling for how the participant speaks and the feelings this conveys. I use square brackets in quotes to signify either something a participant does during the interview or something I have added as a point of clarification: square brackets and italics, for example, [*laughs*], indicate that the participant laughed while talking, while only square brackets, for example, [at his boyfriend’s house], indicates text that I have added in order to clarify to the reader where this particular story is taking place.

However, writing is not only about communicating the research. Following Richardson (2000), I also understand it as part of the analytical process, which I will now go on to discuss.

WRITING AS ANALYZING

As I noted in the introductory chapter, and as should be clear from the previous section, the act of writing has been very important throughout my research process. This includes how to write accessibly, how to make interview participants people of flesh and blood for the reader as well as how to write “differently” (Lykke 2014). However, writing, for me, has also been one of the main methods of analyzing the research material, and Richardson uses the notion of “writing as a method of inquiry” (Richardson 2000; Richardson & Adams St. Pierre 2005; see also Öhman 2014). To Richardson, the process of writing is as important as the written product. She states that “I write because I want to find something out. I write in order to learn something that I did not know before I wrote it” (2000: 924). Writing and analysis this way becomes intricately intertwined. The writing *is* the thinking and the analysis, and it is impossible to separate the different processes from each other (Richardson & Adams St. Pierre 2005).

Writing together with Richardson, Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre describes how she considers all kinds of data – “dream data, sensual data, emotional data, response data, and memory data” (2005: 970) – as part of her research. This is similar to how I think of my material for this project, and which I think does not really differ compared to how many researchers work, but perhaps without detailing it in their writing. For example, when writing field notes or reflection notes, something ‘happens’: when I sit down to write down what happened, what might have happened between the lines, how I felt, how the interview participants might have felt, what thoughts flew through my head at what point, why and when things got emotional, what the space I was in looked like, how I clicked or did not click with the interview participants and why, as well as everything and anything else that happens in the research situation, I am able to draw new conclusions and analyze the situation differently than had I only analyzed interview transcripts. It is a way of collecting more data, but from one’s own head.

However, as Adams St. Pierre points out, this material disappears if it is not written down, it is “collected only *in the writing*” (2005: 970; italics in original). She continues by saying that she wrote herself “into particular spaces [she] could not have occupied by sorting data with a computer program or by analytic induction” (2005: 970). I similarly write my way towards an analysis, making it difficult to exactly put the finger on *how* the analysis occurs. While I think this is similar to how many researchers write and analyze, I find it important to point out that writing, too, is a method of analysis, and that it needs to be allowed to take time and to be thought of as a method.

Having done so, I will now move in to the final part of the chapter where I discuss my own analytical process in more detail.

MESSY FIELDWORK

Before describing the analysis process, I will briefly examine my fieldwork outside my meetings with the interview participants, because how I carried out this fieldwork had implications for my analysis of the material gathered. This is because I set off to do my fieldwork without thinking much about what I needed to do once I had carried it out. I did not consider the importance of setting aside time directly after each interview to write field notes, and I did not think about what it might mean to do one interview a day, three or four days in a row, in cities I had never been to before, working in hotel rooms and on trains. In short, when I planned my fieldwork, I did not consider the effect it would have on me, only on the interview participants.

I carried out my interviews all over Sweden: because some participants lived quite far away, I had to stay overnight, and if several interview participants lived in the same area, I tried to schedule the interviews with these participants so I could meet them during the same trip. I tried to be away for as short periods as possible and limit the number of times I went away, because being away affected my own life and my home life negatively. However, this meant the time away became very intense and crammed.

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The travelling also had other consequences. As I came to realize, I need at least a couple of nights in the same place to sleep well, but as I usually only stayed one night before moving on, I often ended up not sleeping well several nights in row. I also found out that I had difficulties reading and writing on trains because the movement made me nauseous, meaning I spent most of the travel time doing nothing. In addition, I felt removed from my everyday life and, as an effect, from my own thoughts.

After the first couple of interviews, when I became aware of that I needed to sit down and write my field notes right after each interview, I also realized that I did not really have anywhere to do so, except in train stations and other public places. Or, if I was staying the night, I had to find my hotel and somewhere to eat, and *then* sit down to write the field notes. But what was most striking was how tired, how absolutely *exhausted* I would be by then: after three, four, five hours of focused and emotionally intense conversation and then the disorientation of a new place, I had nothing analytically sound to say. I was completely drained of energy.

Missed Analytical Points

How I approached the fieldwork and how I subsequently felt about it affected how I came to analyze the material. It also influenced how I felt about certain interviews and interview participants, which, I am sure, affected how I approached my analysis of those interviews. Because writing was the way I made sense of the research process and the analysis, not scheduling time for writing at the fieldwork stage meant I lost certain analytical points that I could have made, had I written them down at the time of the interviews. Also, had I approached each individual interview as separate (rather than a particular fieldwork trip as a block of interviews) and as something I needed to ‘think through’ and start analyzing before moving on to the next one, I would have been able to build on each interview and more clearly see the directions the interviews as a whole were taking. I would then have been able to adjust the next interview accordingly (Persson 2010).

To a certain extent, I did do this; as I mention earlier in this chapter, my thematic guide changed between interviews because of what participants brought up and what they focused their interviews on. But had I started a more structured analysis of an interview right after I had carried it out, I would have been able to see the ways in which I tried to position interview participants in ways they resisted (such as trying to emphasize their gender identities at the expense of race, for example) or how I, together with the interview participants, sometimes created comfortable spaces where we could choose not to approach more controversial topics (see Ahlstedt 2015 for a more detailed discussion). I missed out on knowledge I might have produced by paying closer attention to what was happening in and around the interviews as they happened.

Also, because my field notes did not follow a script, I just wrote what came into my head at the time. It would likely have helped me to follow a type of outline (cf. Emerson, Fretz & Shaw 2011; Wolfinger 2002). However, even an outline would not have been able to push me through the exhaustion or the fact that I often had very little time to write the notes because of how I had organized my schedule. I had no headspace to reflect on my interviews in any systematic way or to stay with them for any length of time. Despite having done fieldwork before, I did not reflect thoroughly beforehand on what it would entail and the amount of energy fieldwork takes. I did not take myself and my own feelings very seriously.

LISTENING, WRITING, AND ANALYZING

However, despite this messy, open-ended, and ever-changing nature of doing research with people and drawing on one's own body (of flesh and knowledge), I managed to be present and completely focused in the actual interviews and ended up with amazingly rich and vivid material. Once I had a number of interviews and there was a break in travelling, I spent a lot of time listening to the interviews. While listening I wrote down what I found the most interesting: what the participants emphasized, what they did not mention, the parts that were the most emotional for them, and so on. Anna Adeniji (2008;

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see also Berg 2007) discusses the importance of listening to one's interviews, and the listening allowed me to remember the interviews better, to take an audible mental picture of them, in a sense. I could hear what happened in a different way than when I was carrying out the interview (during which time I was too focused on being present and 'in the now' to get a clear overall picture), and it also helped me later when reading the interview transcripts: I remembered the tone of voice a participant might have used, the way two participants interrupted and talked over each other, how and where participants were sitting, the gestures they used when telling a story, how they changed their voices when telling me something that someone had said to them, and so on. All of this helped me get a fuller and more complete narrative to analyze.

'Coding'

It was also while I was listening that I started the analysis of the narrative, as I wrote down my interpretations of what was being said. The questions I asked myself while listening (although they were not as clear to me then as they became later) were: How do the participants talk about their or their partner's migration? What do they think of as part of their 'migration story'? How do they describe the migration in relation to their lives? This way of listening and taking notes was not structured in any particular way, but the more interviews I listened to, the more I noticed and wrote down patterns and commonalities between interviews as well as gave labels to certain reoccurring themes. I wrote these patterns, commonalities, and themes down in notebooks, on the whiteboard in my office, or anywhere I could find something to write on when I thought of something I found important. Once in a while I would sit down and write reflection notes into which these little notes and thoughts were often incorporated. The reflection notes in many ways resembled journal entries where I reflected on my work situation or anything that was going on in my life at the moment, including different themes I found in the material (cf. Pinsky 2015).

Given that much of my analysis was done through writing, much of my initial analyzing can be found in my reflection notes. This was a way of coding the material, although I did not think of it as such. The fact that ‘codes’ are not necessarily as systematically created as methodological literature can have us believe is emphasized by Linn Egeberg Holmgren who, just like me, is “not too strict about differentiating between different types of research notes” and emphasizes that this type of strict coding is “not a sustainable strategy for analysis in everyday research” (2011b: 84; my translation; see also Sohl 2014: 71).

All but two of the interviews were transcribed by professional transcribers. The reason I transcribed these two interviews myself was that I judged it would be too difficult for the transcribers to hear what was being said in the recording. Once I received the transcripts from the transcribers, I went through them and corrected any mistakes as well as added anything I found important in order to remember the interview situation better: silences, laughter, tone of voice but also body language, gestures, and any interruptions to the interview. While some researchers describe how they, while transcribing, keep a document next to them in which they, in effect, start a more structured analysis (Holmgren 2011b; Larsson 2015; Sohl 2014), I did not. I tried, but found this complicated and taking away from ‘being’ in the interview, which I found much more helpful in moving the analysis forward.

Instead, I decided to approach the interviews as ‘wholes,’ which was the main reason I first turned to narrative analysis. I read each interview carefully and wrote down and labelled themes I came across, in a way similar to when I listened to the interviews right after I had carried them out, but now in a more systematic way than before. These themes were written down in a simple grid in a Word document, with the labels written horizontally at the top and each interview listed vertically to the left below the labels. Next to the participants’ name and under each label, I listed the number of times a particular theme occurred in the interview and the page number. This helped me get an overview of *what* the interviews consisted of and what interview participants brought up more and what they talked about

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less. I also included any repetitions, and tried to read between the lines to discover silences and things not said. Simultaneously, I also took notes on what I found most clearly represented the participants' narratives as well as what in their narratives spoke to me in some way.

I should note that I found this process of labelling confusing and that I got lost in it several times, labelling the same sections with different labels, creating sub-labels that made no sense, and sometimes just had a kind of 'whatever' approach when I could not decide under which label a particular statement should go. Nevertheless, out of this, my research questions crystalized.

Writing Stories to Find Stories and Feelings

Based on these notes and the Word grid, I then wrote a one to one and a half page synopsis of each interview in order to be able to get a sense of what the interview 'was about': what was interesting about this interview?²⁵ The synopsis exercise also allowed me make clear to myself *how* participants presented their narratives, not only what was said in them. Building on the synopsis and the notes, I also wrote 'participant stories' for a number of the interviews. These were longer and used many quotes from the interviews in question. Where the synopses were my interpretation of the narrative in which I started to problematize that particular narrative, the participant stories were 'objective' summaries of the narratives: if the participant(s) whose narrative it was had read it, my hope was that they would have felt that it represented their story as they had told it to me, albeit put together chronologically. The participant stories were a way to make the interview material more manageable by creating more coherent narratives.

The Word grid helped me find the most important themes of the narratives I had gathered. Using the synopses and the participant stories I was also able to see which narratives would be interesting

25. I am grateful to Anna Adeniji for suggesting this.

to analyze in more detail in the dissertation, and how these were connected to the different themes I had found. However, it was when writing and re-writing synopses and participant stories that I started realizing that what participants mainly structured their narratives around was how they felt and what these feelings did to their migration processes, their relationships, and their lives in Sweden. I started paying attention to what kind of emotions and feelings I could find in the narratives. Love was an obvious feeling as nearly all participants used love as the foundational emotion underwriting their migration, making it important to include in the analysis.

A large number of participants also expressed feeling loss, and I found this an interesting emotion to center on because it was experienced in vastly different ways depending on the entanglements a particular narrative was part of. Also, both migrating and non-migrating partners experienced loss, but from different positions.

Finally, I chose the emotion of belonging because of how participant narratives constantly grappled with this emotion. Queerness, migration, and the Swedish context got entangled in the narratives to create very particular feelings of belonging that I found important to examine.

In each empirical chapter I then chose to focus on one emotion or feeling while analyzing two narratives in detail. I chose these narratives because I found I could make interesting arguments about the emotion or feeling the chapter centered on with the use of the narratives. I also considered the entanglement the participants were caught in when choosing narratives, in particular in relation to participants' sexual and gender identities, race, and nationality. Different entanglements make feelings 'do' different 'things,' and I found it important to show how emotions and feelings could be experienced differently and that what they do can depend on how a relationship is situated in relation to entanglements. Throughout this whole process, writing was how I came to my conclusions and decisions: I literally wrote my way to finding the larger stories to tell, and the feelings inherent in them.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has outlined how I went about creating knowledge about queer partner migration. I started the chapter with a quote by Jeanette Winterson, who asserts that it is not possible to be objective without being subjective, and that “to tell someone not be emotional is to tell them to be dead” (2011: 211). I understand research to always be subjective, that the god-trick of the impartial researcher (Haraway 1988) is an impossibility. As Winterson writes, emotions are part of this equation: research is, of necessity, emotional, because humans experience emotions. Research is always situated, and the importance of emotions to and in research runs through this chapter.

The first part of the chapter centered on the design of the study. I introduced the interview participants, explained how I located them, and who they are. I show that they are a quite heterogeneous group whose unifying characteristic is being (or having been) in some type of queer relationship and partaking in a migration process to Sweden because of that relationship. I also outline how I understand ethnography and in particular incidental ethnographic encounters (Pinsky 2015) in relation to my study. While interviews are often viewed as *the* place where data is located, I follow Dina Pinsky’s (2015) claim that this is a positivist legacy and that we need to understand interviews and any interaction connected to our interviews as observational interactions that should be included in the analyzed material. These interactions offer a fuller picture of the interview participants and should be treated as similar to participant observation.

Emotions are inherent in ethnographic encounters, and it is also through emotions that researchers establish rapport. Having feelings makes the researcher another human being that the interview participant can relate to. My own experiences and thus feelings of queer partner migration was an important tool used to create the kind of intimacy that allowed interview participants to narrate their own experiences. However, creating feelings of intimacy can also be interpreted as a kind of emotional manipulation. This made it important for me to approach participants’ narratives with care, and I have deliberately left out some analytical points that I could sense from the narrative

would make the participant feel violated. My approach is that while I do not consider the interview participants a vulnerable population, and while all interview participants have made an active and voluntary decision to participate in the study, I also acknowledge that I have all the power over how they are represented in the text.²⁶ Following Kari Lerum (2001) I have used the “gossip test” method, meaning that I have asked myself whether I would say the same thing I am writing to the participant’s face.

I have attempted to be both as transparent and allowed as much participation by participants as possible in my research, but I acknowledge that this, too, can be ethically problematic. While I have made many decisions over which participants have no choice, I have also handed over some decisions in an attempt to make the research more participatory. I explain how I reached certain decisions, and discuss how there are advantages and challenges inherent in each position.

In the second part of the chapter I explain my understanding of narrative analysis, and how I follow Cassandra Phoenix, Brett Smith, and Andrew C. Sparkes (2010) in considering the method to be both a systemic task and a form of writing. I chose narrative analysis as the main method of analysis of the gathered narratives because it

26. In some ways, this is comparable to reality TV, something I thought about several times when writing this chapter. Reality TV participants in shows such as *Big Brother*, *Real Housewives*, or *The Bachelor* participate wholly voluntarily, and, it would seem from interviews and statements, mostly enjoy their participation. At the same time, one criticism by former participants is how editors of the shows choose to edit the available material to create a persona out of a participant (Springer 2007) by omitting material where the participant in question is not acting according to this persona, rather than representing the participant as a multifaceted person. Research is of course different in the sense that researchers are (hopefully) trying to catch the complexity in a narrative or an individual’s interview rather than creating a stereotypical persona. However, as a researcher I have power similar to that of reality TV editors in terms of how I represent a participant in the text that I write, and I have tried to be careful when writing the detailed narratives that make up the empirical chapters to not only include aspects of the narratives that make them come across as less complex than they are.

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takes seriously how people organize their lives in and through stories, how narratives include emotions and feelings, both in relation to the narrator and the listener or reader of the narrative, and its connection to writing. I also discuss the importance that writing holds in the dissertation by introducing creative analytic practices (CAP) writing as connected to narrative analysis. For me, writing has been a way to analyze the material as I, like Laurel Richardson (2000), write to find something I did not know was there.

In the third and final part of the chapter I describe the fieldwork I carried out in more detail, and discuss how the fieldwork affected me, the researcher, emotionally and how this, in extension, affected the material in various ways. I also connect writing to fieldwork, and how I approached the analysis of the narratives through writing. Writing the narratives several times but in different ways also made me realize that the narratives centered on feelings, which consequently led me to focus the dissertation on emotions and feelings. Writing also allowed me to find and determine the three central emotions and feelings of the dissertation: love, loss, and belonging.

In the next chapter, which is the dissertation's first empirical chapter, I analyze two participant narratives in more detail, and from the perspective of that first feeling: love.

Chapter 5

Love

*...the basis of romantic love – you + me against the world.
A world where there are only two of us. A world that doesn't
really exist, except that we are in it.*

Jeanette Winterson (2011: 119-120)

When I started this dissertation, I initially referred to partner migration as 'love migration.' I changed the term fairly soon because as I felt uncomfortable assuming that love was always part of such a migration.²⁷ However, the interview participants mostly understood their migration in terms of love: they had *fallen in love* and initiated a migration because they *were in love*. They saw love being the reason they went through the life-changing event that a migration process can be, and the love they felt for each other caused them to undertake often hard emotional labour in order to make space in the relationship for the migration experiences. In Jennifer Harding's

27. I have later found that many (straight) partner migrants refer to themselves as 'love refugees' (*kärleksflyktingar*) in social media and in magazine interviews. None of the interview participants in this study used this term, although some referred to themselves as 'love migrants' and to their migration as 'love migration.'

(2009) research with refugees, she noted that her participants use fear as the foundational emotion behind their migration. Fear is part of the vocabulary through which her participants constitute and recognize themselves as a certain kind of subject, and it is also how they understand themselves in their relations to others. The interview participants of this study similarly use (romantic) love as the foundational emotion behind migration and as the emotion through which they understand themselves and their migration.

Despite this, love is rather invisible in the words the participants use. At the same time, while only a few explicitly talked about or even mentioned love, love is often assumed at every twist and turn of their narratives, and participants also presumed that I understood their migrations as rooted in stories of love. Participants generally did not give me their ‘love story’ when telling their narratives, nor did they define what that story was. However, the assumption of love ran as a strong undercurrent through their narratives.

This chapter focuses on how the feeling of (romantic) love becomes manifested in these narratives, and, in particular, what it means when love and migration are brought together in Sweden. The chapter discusses not so much the love the participants feel towards each other as love as part of a partner migration process and how participants are required to negotiate their love in order for it to be intelligible to both themselves and others. It is also about living up to the expectations of what love ‘should’ look like, which in Sweden is strongly influenced by perceptions of equality, and how it should be practiced to pass the test of migration legislation.

In this chapter I analyze the narratives of Nelly, a non-migrating partner, and of Alejandro from Chile and his partner Fredrik, and examine them in the light of romantic love.

LOVE AND PARTNER MIGRATION

How love is perceived depends on the historical and cultural context in which it occurs, and Sweden is no exception. Romantic love today is, in the words of Eleanor Wilkinson, “almost always invoked as an

unquestionable good, a signifier of all that makes life worth living for, the most important feeling on earth. To love, and to be loved, is a cherished ideal that almost everyone is believed to aspire to. Love is seen as the foundation of society and essential to community” (2010: 47). Wilkinson describes the importance of love in the contemporary (Western) world today, and I will start this chapter by briefly outlining this love and how it is understood.

Love and the Autonomous, Free Individual

Niklas Luhmann (1986) and Eva Illouz (1997) both discuss love as embedded within the rise and dissemination of modernity. The “passionate love” we are used to and practice today is, according to Luhmann (1986), a result of the dramatic social changes, including the Enlightenment and industrialization, that Europe started experiencing in the 1600s. These changes also affected how people understood and practiced love and relationships. In response, a new “symbolic code” was required to communicate about love and make sense of love when talking about and participating in it (Luhmann 1986: 8).

This symbolic code was closely tied to individualism, and, according to Wendy Langford, “for the first time, a passionate involvement with one other person began to be constructed as a primary ground for identity formation, rather than wider kinship networks or social position” (1999: 2). Illouz argues that this romantic love “celebrated moral individualism, a value of paramount importance to the worldview of industrial capitalism” (1997: 9). Romantic love and individualization became intricately intertwined, as romantic love has continued to be “the cornerstone of a powerful utopian vision because it reenacts symbolically rituals of opposition to the social order through inversion of hierarchies and affirms the supremacy of the individual” (Illouz 1997: 10).

Anthony Giddens (1992), Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (1995), and Luhmann (1986) have all contributed to the debate on love and individualization and, in particular, to the discussion on the *democratization of love*, or the idea that love is freely

available to, and can be chosen by, each individual.²⁸ Beck and Beck-Gernsheim calls post-traditional love (what I refer to as ‘romantic love’) “a radical form of democracy for two, personal responsibility in its purest form” (1995: 192). They view modern love as being negotiated between those who participate in it, a kind of emotional contract that can be re-negotiated when necessary. Giddens (1992), on the other hand, considers the *relationship* itself democratized. With an increased emphasis on intimacy as well as the separation of sexuality from reproduction, Giddens argues that a “pure relationship” has emerged. This pure relationship is “a social situation entered into for its own sake [...] and which is continued only in so far as it is thought by both parties to deliver enough satisfactions for each individual to stay within it” (Giddens 1992: 58). The outcome is, according to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, and Giddens, that modern individuals *choose* love as well as *choose to leave* a relationship when the love is no longer present; people continue relationships only so long as these relationships are “emotionally satisfying” (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 1995). Love is practiced by free and autonomous individuals, which is also how love is understood in much public discourse.

Khatidja Chantler (2014) and Eileen Muller Myrdahl (2010) both discuss how love relationships, as opposed to arranged marriages, for example, are conceptualized as the only fully valid intimate relationship in dominant Western discourse today precisely because love relationships are assumed to be entered into by choice. The assumption of the free autonomous individual as positioned by Luhmann, Giddens, and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim starts from the notion that individuals are free to choose and free to act on love. However, I agree with Chantler (2014) and Langford (1999), who criticize this position from a feminist perspective, arguing that the assumed autonomous individual is loosened from all hierarchical social relations such as gender, class, or national

28. As I point out in the chapter on theory, this literature is dominated by Western notions of intimate relationships and practices (Chantler 2014), meaning it should be understood in this context rather than as exploring universal notions of love.

belonging at the same time as “love itself is not seen as productive of power relations” (Langford 1999: 10). Chantler also points out that this way of viewing love and relationships completely overlooks the impact of the outside world, such as “the salience of economics” and the “interrelated nature of the private and public spheres” (2014: 22). Langford further has difficulty reconciling the democracy ideal of love, according to which individual, autonomous subjects negotiate emotional contracts based on reason and rationality, with dominant discourses of love as a mysterious, unconscious, unstoppable force. “How,” she asks rhetorically, “can emotion beyond reason [...] be tamed by reason beyond emotion?” (1999: 19).

Love and relationships are individualized notions in today’s Swedish society: it is assumed that relationships are entered into freely as an expression of love, which is also an expression of individual freedom and autonomy. In addition, our partner, the person we are in love with, has become much more important in our lives than they historically were. The couple relationship in the modern Western world is, according to Langford, “invested with an unprecedented range of meanings in respect of our desires for personal identity, emotional fulfilment, sexual satisfaction and existential security” (1999: 1). This relationship is our main emotional attachment, and this one person (because in dominant discourse on love, a relationship cannot consist of more than two individuals) is meant to fulfil close to all our emotional needs.

Love and Migration Legislation

Love plays an important role in legislation as well, although legislation generally does not mention ‘love’ as such (Andersson 2011; Melby et al. 2006). However, as Myrdahl (2010) shows in her research on Norwegian family-reunification legislation, romance-based love is viewed as the only valid basis for a relationship in Western migration policy. Her analysis shows that while non-love-based relationships (e.g. arranged marriages) are acknowledged in Norwegian migration legislation, they are simultaneously not seen as equally valid as relationships based on romantic love.

While Myrdahl studies a Norwegian, heterosexual context, her conclusions can easily be applied to a queer, Swedish setting. She argues that romantic love is the cornerstone of the legislation, because:

while the contours of other trajectories towards marriage remain, the dominant Western public is thoroughly educated in the premises of heterosexual romantic love as the basis for marriage. In its idealized version, heterosexual romantic love signals an interior landscape of affect, one that is independent of the social, economic, or other attribute of the individuals. This independence is not incidental: it signals the ‘trueness’ of the love, as well as the autonomy – the liberal, modern personhood – of each individual in the couple.

(2010: 103)

Myrdahl shows that Norwegian migration legislation and public discourse do acknowledge and tolerate relationship practices such as arranged marriages.²⁹ However, at the same time, these relationship practices also threaten “the Norwegian self-image as a space marked by autonomous, liberal and liberated subjects” (2010: 113) in which a relationship based on love “is not only the optimal model, it is the only model the nation – and the state – fully accepts” (2010: 107).

29. Swedish legislation similarly acknowledges non-love-based relationships in that partners of relationships-to-be are able to apply for residency. This is, incidentally, also how all interview participants of this study applied for the migrating partner’s residence permit. The vast majority of those who had to apply for residency were not married, nor had they lived together outside Sweden for two years or more at the time of application, which is the requirement for non-married partners to be considered equal to married partners in the application process and not to be in a ‘newly established relationship.’ This meant their applications were processed as ‘future spouses or common law spouses’ (Swedish Migration Agency 2015d).

Myrdahl maintains that “putting in place legislation that explicitly aims to hinder the fulfilment of heterosexual marriages based in love is socially, culturally, and politically unthinkable in present-day Norway” (2010: 113), showing the importance of love to both migration legislation and public discourse.³⁰

Swedish partner migration legislation – like most Western family-tie legislation³¹ – is based on the capacity of the applicants to show the ‘seriousness’ of their relationship, in particular if the relationship is newly established. It is the applicants’ responsibility to “make probable that the prerequisites for a residence permit are fulfilled” (Swedish Migration Agency 2015c: no page number), that is, to show that theirs is a genuine relationship. That said, the Swedish family ties application differs from other countries’ in that it is less specific when it comes to proving one’s relationship.³² For example, it does not ask for ‘evidence’

30. I argue that this is also the case in a Swedish context. However, in Denmark, for example, where very strict migration laws have made family reunification difficult, this is much more contentious (Myong & Bissenbakker 2016; Wagner 2015a, 2015b).

31. The Migration Agency uses the terms ‘family ties’ and ‘family reunification’ interchangeably to translate the Swedish term ‘anhöriginvandring.’ In this dissertation I tend to use the term ‘family reunification’ when discussing actual reunification, that is, partners and/or other family members who were separated but want to reunite, rather than partners in ‘newly established relationships,’ which is the category the interview participants of this study are placed in by the Migration Agency.

32. As an example, Immigration New Zealand asks partners to submit the following with their partner migration application: “Evidence of partnership may be provided by: marriage certificate (if married); civil union certificate (if in a civil union); proof of shared residence (such as joint mortgage or tenancy agreements or rent book); financial dependence or interdependence (proof of shared income or bank accounts, or accounts that show money transfers to or from your account to your partner’s account); birth certificates of your children; any documents showing public or family recognition of your relationship; correspondence (including postmarked envelopes) to you and your partner at the same address; photographs of you and your partner together; evidence of the duration of your relationship; the degree of commitment to a shared life; evidence of communication between you both; evidence of you being committed to each other emotionally and exclusively, such as evidence of joint decision making, an exclusive sexual relationship, and the sharing of household duties, parental responsibility, and spare time” (2010; italics added).

of partners' commitment or emotional and sexual exclusivity although it does suggest that the partners submit evidence in the form of, for example, tickets to show they have visited each other.

The Importance of 'True' Love and Equality

While Wilkinson, in the quote at the beginning of this chapter, refers to romantic love as the "unquestionable good, a signifier of all that makes life worth living for" (2010: 47), Myrdahl states that "true love, of course, is celebrated as a cosmic mystery over which the parties have but little control" (2010: 113). If there is love, a relationship is always serious, and residency should not be denied by migration authorities, because the presence of love means the relationship can be neither fraudulent nor forced. Also, I discuss in this chapter that if the relationship consists of 'true' love and intimacy, it is accepted and recognized as a genuine relationship by others, not just by the Migration Agency, and is understood by others as 'worthy' of being 'rewarded' with a residence permit (D'Aoust 2013; Fredriksen & Myong 2012; Myong & Bissenbakker 2016; Myrdahl 2010; Nordin 2007). Keeping apart two individuals in love, then (although never more than two, as 'true' love is only positioned to exist in monogamous two-partner relationships, meaning more than two individuals would instead demonstrate that the relationship is not 'serious'), borders on inhumanity.

If 'true' love means the possibility to migrate, in Sweden the concept of this 'true' and, thus, intelligible love is, as I discuss in this chapter, tightly connected to various equality discourses: in order to be intelligible, love needs to be, above all, equal, which, in Lissa Nordin's (2007) words makes it 'right' or 'correct.' Speaking with Sara Ahmed (2004a), the feeling of love 'sticks' differently to different bodies depending on how 'equal' they are perceived to be. Some bodies, when put in relation to other bodies, create what are understood as unequal relationships, and thus have a more difficult time making love stick to them. If love does not stick, it is more difficult for the partners of the relationship to make their relationship come across as 'genuine,' which results in suspicion. In

partner migration relationships, this particularly means the suspicion that the relationship was entered into because the migrating partner wanted to find a way to live in Sweden or because the non-migrating partner specifically wanted to find a migrant partner, either because they were unable to find a Swedish partner or, more cynically, because they want a vulnerable partner whom they can abuse (Flemmen 2008; Flemmen & Lotherington 2008; Lotherington & Flemmen 2007; Hedman, Nygren & Fahlgren 2009; Nordin 2007).

As gender equality is the overriding equality discourse in the Swedish context, a heterosexual couple is presumed to be less equal than a queer couple. This does not mean love cannot stick to heterosexual couples; quite the contrary. However, heterosexual relationships are presumed to contain an inherent inequality (Dahl 2005), and this is compounded by other possible inequalities such as age, nationality, and race. Anne Britt Flemmen (2008) outlines an economic inequality tied to nationality in her research on marriages between Norwegian men and Russian women that is equally applicable to a Swedish partner migration context (Nordin 2007). Flemmen shows that both legislation and public discourse are concerned with the economic imbalance in these couples which:

is assumed to operate at three levels: the individual (she is poor, he is rich), the nation state (she is from a poor country, he is from a rich one) and the global (she is from a less developed part of the world [...] he is from the front line of progress and prosperity). These factors are judged to create structural conditions for inequality placing the Norwegian man in the more powerful position, thus undermining parity.

(2008: 121)

An equal couple, whom love always sticks to, would need to consist of a couple perceived as equal in terms of nationality, race, class, economic status, and age – for example, two white individuals of Western nationalities and of similar age and class background.

However, in those cases, inequalities make it difficult for love to stick to them; individuals whose relationships are brought out of line for reasons of race, age, nationality, and so on must *show* that they are the autonomous, liberal, modern individuals in love who have *chosen* this love, which Myrdahl argues is required in order to “signal an interior landscape of affect” (2010: 103).

Having set up this theoretical backdrop, I will now move on to introduce Nelly and discuss her narrative in the light of notions of love and Swedish equality.

NELLY’S STORY: AN UNEQUAL LOVE TO BE BROUGHT IN LINE

Nelly and I meet on a warm summer day, and we carry out the interview sitting on a lawn in a leafy, green outdoor area between low apartment buildings in a neighbourhood not far from where Nelly lives. She comes across as a thoughtful but also open and talkative person, and she takes my interview questions seriously and thinks carefully before she answers. Nelly is thirty-one years old, and her partner migrated to Sweden a couple of years ago so that they could be together.³³ While Nelly is white and cisgendered, her partner is a trans person of colour from a non-Western country, which is of great significance for her narrative.

As I note in the introduction to this chapter, as a general rule, interview participants only briefly mentioned love in their narratives. At the same time, it was made obvious through small remarks such as “I wouldn’t have cared if we lived in a shoe box, I just wanted to be with her, I’d been happy to live anywhere!,” “I was *very* taken in!,” and “This was the best thing I had ever experienced,” that love was

33. In cases where a partner or former partner did not participate in the study, I have chosen to be very brief in terms of the information I provide about the non-participating partner, meaning I generally exclude their age, the country they moved from, and so on, choosing to only include information necessary to understand and analyze the participating partner’s narrative.

present as a very important feeling in participant narratives. However, this love is not always obvious in the transcribed interview as it was something that participants co-constructed with me in the interview situation, leaving it a kind of undercurrent in their narratives. In the methodology chapter I introduce Linn Egeberg Holmgren's (2011a) concept of *cofielding*, which refers to interviews in which researcher and interview participant share a common language as well as knowledge. Researcher and participant together produce a certain closeness, a "sort of spoken sameness" (Holmgren 2011a: 367) as the story offered by the participant is transformed into an experience shared with the researcher. Nelly was able to tell her narrative without articulating the love she saw as a self-evident part of her story. As Holmgren writes, "in the moment of the interview, I totally '[got] it'" (2011a: 366), and I believe this was evident to both Nelly and me.

Also, as Lissa Nordin (2007) draws our attention to, narratives of love are rarely about *love* but about the relationship where the love is supposed to be realized. Nordin argues that we have mainly moved away from dominant narratives of the 'good family' to that of the 'good relationship,' where certain relationships are considered to be 'good' because they 'develop' the individuals in the relationship, and where the starting premise is an understanding of a "shared determination to explore and understand each other" (2007: 71; my translation). As I point out in my analysis of Nelly's narrative, her story needs to be understood in this context. While Nelly speaks of her relationship, rather than of love, her narrative works to align her relationship along the lines of romantic love, and this is important because, as I will go on to show, very little else in Nelly's narrative brings her relationship in line. This means that being 'correctly' in love becomes important, as it shows that her relationship is 'right,' despite its being out of line in many ways.

The Importance of Autonomy

Describing her background, Nelly says she grew up "with two parents – a mom and a dad – and a sister," showing with her choice of words that she is aware of and inclusive of non-normative families

not consisting of two parents or straight parents. She says that hers was a “working-class family that didn’t have that much. We never had any economic difficulties but we have... well, my parents don’t have academic backgrounds or know anything about anything. [laughs] Like politics or anything like that, we never really had conversations like that in our family.” Positioning herself as working class and so never having considered tertiary education, she describes ending up at university somewhat by fluke as a result of being interested in feminism and human rights. Having these interests led her to hang out with people who “talked about studying and university and it was like absolutely nothing that had existed in my life. But they sat there with university catalogues and talked about applying, and I was like, what are they doing? [laughs] What’s happening? And then I understood that maybe I too could do it, since it seemed like that’s what you should do. [laughs]” When we meet, Nelly has had what she describes in a slightly ironic voice as her “first real qualified job in an office” for about six months.

Nelly met her partner when he visited Sweden for a few weeks as part of an activist organization exchange, and a few months later she went to visit him in the country he has roots in. She stayed for about a month, and during this time they decided to apply for her partner’s Swedish residence permit. Nelly says about her visit:

It was really intense. I stayed with him, with his family... and he had a *very* small room there [laughs], we were really on top of each other [laughs]. And he lived in a poor neighbourhood so it wasn’t like I could go out and, oh, have fun and go for walks and do independent things, but I was kind of stuck there in the house. I couldn’t go anywhere on my own so then... we were really together twenty-four hours a day that month or however long it was.

Nelly does not speak much about what else happened when she visited her partner; she only remarks that going for walks and doing other “independent things” were not possible. However, it indicates how she positions herself in relation to independence and autonomy

in romantic relationships. The fact that she mentions the lack of independence she experienced during her visit shows it is something she still reflects on, three years later. As I will go on to show, Nelly's narrative focuses on the importance of being an autonomous individual as the underlying requirement in order for the relationship to be, in Nordin's (2007) words, "good." For Nelly, equality is not possible without autonomy and independence, in line with Myrdahl's (2010) arguments that I outline at the beginning of the chapter.

Spontaneity and Impatience as a Sign of Love

Nelly says about the visit that "it just went really fast and it felt like we knew other so well and we... I don't know, there was something special about my partner. [*laughs*] It felt like we were working really well together." This feeling grew, and they started planning for Nelly's partner coming to visit her in Sweden "for a few months, so we could live together, see how it worked out." But the closer they got to Nelly's departure date from her partner's country, the less appealing it seemed that her partner would visit and then leave. They started reasoning that it would "be really hard to be apart like that. We were thinking, isn't it better if we apply for a residence permit and if it doesn't work out to live together, then you [her partner] can go back again." This started what Nelly describes as a mad scramble to get a residence permit application together to get her partner to Sweden as soon as possible.

Nelly's love for her partner is made clear by her saying things like that they "work[ed] really well together" and that it would be "hard to be apart." She assumes that I understand that this is how love 'works.' She also positions herself in her narrative as someone who wants things to happen fast and who *makes* them happen when they do not, describing herself as "the kind of person who gets stuff done and sorts stuff out." Talking about making the decision that her partner would move to Sweden, she says it "went really fast." They did not plan the move, and, says Nelly:

We were very, like, spontaneous. Sometimes when I think back I wonder... I mean, it was a *huge* change for him, an *extremely* big decision. It was for me too but it was still much more... my life was much safer than his. I was going to stay in the same place regardless. I didn't have to leave anything but he kind of had to leave his whole *world*.

Despite this, she positions her partner's migration to Sweden in her narrative as the only obvious step because they wanted to continue their relationship: "We felt that if we're going to stay together, we had to do this. And I felt that this was the best I had ever experienced in my whole life, so I was ready to put everything at stake, give everything. Sink or swim." This feeling of "the best [...] ever" prompts Nelly (and her partner) to make life-changing decisions very quickly. The love Nelly feels is something she *needs* to follow, and it is a force that she will make sure is not stopped by administrative hassle. She gives an example of how she "gets stuff done" by saying:

Well, I called the Migration Agency and the embassy in [city] and the consulate in [the country her partner is from], I called and called and called.

Sara: So they knew who you were eventually.

Nelly: They most definitely did! [*both laugh*] And then I'd call the Migration Agency asking, "When do I find out who my case officer is? I need to be assigned a case officer!" And finally I got a case officer, so I called this case officer repeatedly. I mean, I think that's why my partner was able to come to Sweden this fast, otherwise it would probably have taken a while.

Nelly positions herself in her narrative as impatient in the face of the administrative migration process, but she understands this impatience as a result of her being in love. Bryan Turner argues that in the modern world, love is "the only real or legitimate reason" for

choosing a partner or continuing a relationship (2000: 25). Also, if one is in love, one should want to be together and one should make it happen (Nordin 2007). In her narrative, Nelly does not explain or justify why she and her partner want to live together in the same country; it is a given that this should occur, as they are in love.

Nordin defines two versions, or narratives, of love (see also Swidler 2001), where the narrative that Nelly writes herself into is one where “to be ‘really in love’ [...] [is] a feeling that just happens or even strikes us. It is usually a revolutionary, deeply felt, embodied and true experience that eschews rational explanations and analyses but is something we just ‘feel’” (2007: 58; my translation). This is in line with love as the “unquestionable good” (Wilkinson 2010:47) and a “cosmic mystery” (Myrdahl 2010:113) that just ‘happens’ to people. Nelly is ready to “give everything,” including participating in decisions that have vast impacts on both her and her partner’s lives, and making these decisions very fast because of being in love. As Nordin argues, “perhaps it is even the case that this spontaneously perceived feeling, that which just happens, is required in order for love to be perceived as authentic and genuine” (2007: 58; my translation). I mentioned earlier that Nelly’s relationship is out of line in many ways, something I will come back to throughout the analysis, meaning that love sometimes has a difficult time sticking to her relationship. This makes it important for Nelly to position herself in such a way in her narrative that this ‘spontaneously perceived’ love is obvious and present as it brings her relationship in line.

To Do Anything for Love

Being the person who “gets stuff done” also means that Nelly was and is the one who organizes the administrative tasks inherent in the migration process. This includes everything from contacting the Migration Agency with questions to registering her partner with the Tax Agency to obtain a civic registration number. She says about taking on this responsibility:

I don't understand how I could have handed it over, practically speaking, because it doesn't work, or it's ridiculously difficult. Lots of forms weren't even available in English, I mean... it's completely impossible. Plus all the communication with government offices, if he had called, they would just have been like, "Sorry, we can't help you." Because... because of racism, I think, because they would have heard... he doesn't speak fluent Swedish. But if you call as a Swedish chick, at least you're taken more seriously. Yes... it's a very unequal situation in our relationship in terms of administration and who sorts out what. [*short laugh*] Lovely.

In this quote, Nelly positions herself as "a Swedish chick," something she does several times in her narrative, particularly in relation to how her partner is perceived by others, and I will come back to this later. She does this in order to bring their relationship as well as her partner in line. By being perceived as a not-migrant, that is, a person aligned 'correctly,' Nelly can receive information her partner cannot because he is read as a migrant, that is, a person out of line. If making a cut in the entanglement that Nelly is caught in, in order to analyze the kind of situations she describes above, the cut helps to focus on how Nelly's whiteness, non-migrant background, fluent Swedish, cisgenderedness, and knowledge of Swedish social codes show up as the most prominent. These are the strands that make certain actions available to her but not to her partner.

Nelly also indicates in her narrative that she was prepared that she would have to take on the kind of responsibility she outlines in the quote above:

A friend said to me, "Are you prepared for this relationship, you know, do you know what this will entail?" It was sort of from the point of view that she had been in some kind of similar situation but wasn't prepared for... to have a relationship with someone where she would... well, where

that person would be dependent on her. Based on that she asked, “Are you prepared to give...” And I was like, yes, I’m ready to give everything, there’s like no hesitation. I also told my partner, I’m willing to do anything.

I come back to dependency in queer partner migration relationships in the next chapter which focuses on loss as a feeling of migration, but here I want to point out that Nelly does not *describe* this responsibility as a loss of, for example, equality (even though, as I discuss in the next chapter, it can *result* in loss, all the same): she describes it as something she does because of love, and says she is “ready to give everything” and “do anything.” Ann Swidler (2001) describes love as having a specific content and function, part of which is to always include a dramatic and obvious choice, that is, the choice of the right person (see also Nordin 2007). Love is also unique, as are the individuals participating in the love. Choosing the right, unique person should allow love to withstand all types of obstacles and problems, similar to what Nelly describes in the quote above.

The Struggle to Be in Line with Swedish Equality Discourses

Once Nelly’s partner moved to Sweden, she remembers the first six months as tough, and that it took them a while to get used to the situation. Having not lived together before,³⁴ and having spent less than a total of three months together before his move, she says they had to get to know each other “for real,” something that comes back in many of the participant narratives. Also, this period brought with it:

34. Migration legislation requires the partners to live together once the migrating partner has moved to Sweden. Most partner migrants receive a two-year, temporary residence permit, and when applying for a permanent permit, partners need to show that they have lived together in order for the migrating partner to qualify for the permanent permit.

a bunch of different aspects of inequality between us. It was my apartment he moved to. He did have some friends of his own and stuff in Sweden, but some of them didn't live in the same city as us, so he didn't have a very big social network and it was this balancing act for me the whole time to, well, how much could I be me and do what I wanted and be independent and see my friends and at the same time, then, make sure that he was doing alright. So, yeah, it was hard and it was... I don't know, I guess it's always like that when you move in together with someone, but given that things went so fast for us and we didn't have this everyday life that I think many Swedish couples who live in the same country have, where you each have your own apartment and you have time to get to know each other, you can go and stay overnight at each other's places. But that kind of wasn't there, that period wasn't there for us, it was just like, bam, move in together. I found it tough to get my partner to feel that he had just as much access to the apartment, to our finances, to, well, what we were going to do and get up to socially and stuff like that. I mean, it's something we still struggle with, but it was even harder then because then we didn't have-- Now we talk about it all the time, *all the time*, and formulate and like... yeah, it's something that's more present. Then it was more that you didn't really get what was going on when conflicts happened because it was... well, because I didn't understand what the source of it was but just saw the result...

In this quote Nelly positions herself as part of the second common love narrative as described by Swidler (2001) and Nordin (2007). While the first one is the love that 'strikes,' the 'true love' that just 'happens,' the second, and equally present narrative, is one that describes love as labour and the efforts required to make relationships work, here described by Nelly as something to "struggle" with and "talk about all the time." This work is undertaken to bring the relationship in line with the 'good' relationship.

A ‘good’ relationship to Nelly is an equal relationship. At the very beginning of her narrative, she positions herself as a feminist and someone who has had a longstanding interest in social equality. This also means she is well versed in Swedish equality discourses, of which gender equality is the most important, but far from the only one. Ann Towns (2002) describes how Sweden has conceptualized itself since World War II as modern and progressive, but also a “moral superpower,” portraying itself to be without a colonial history³⁵ and an “ideal” state against which other countries can measure themselves (see also Gilroy 2014; Habel 2008, 2012a, 2012b; McEachrane 2014). Gender equality was incorporated into this already-existing Swedish national identity of morality and equality in the 1990s (Towns 2002), and Antje Hornscheidt argues that it has become an important part of “a public branding of a Swedish image as ‘liberal’ and ‘progressive’” (2008: 392). Ideas of Sweden as progressive, moral, and equal have made equality in general and gender equality in particular important sites of sense making for Swedish people. This is consistent with Nelly being preoccupied with what she perceives to be inequality in her relationship.

As Ulrika Dahl (2005) points out, the Swedish gender equality discourse positions gender equality as being about women *and* men (never women *or* men) and the equality between them; if either women or men are removed, the issue of (in)equality also disappears. At the same time, gender inequality is positioned as the *only* inequality occurring in intimate relationships, and I argue that if a relationship does not consist of a man and a woman, it becomes difficult to understand it as unequal in a Swedish context: apart from gender equality, there are few other ways available to conceptualize inequalities in relationships. As Nordin (2007) points out, there is a

35. This kind of portrayal is challenged by scholars such as Ylva Habel, who argues that Sweden suffers from “collective amnesia” regarding its complicity in the colonial project (2012a: 101), and Michael McEachrane, who maintains that Sweden’s self-image “perpetuates rather than challenges a view of oneself as representing a universal humanism without complicities in a colonial world order” (2014: 94).

‘correct’ love that we need to be included in in order for the love to be considered true and real. If we perform the correct love, we are also in line. However, what Nelly describes in her quote is an *incorrect* love because of its inequality.

Also, for Nelly, the “different aspects of inequality” she describes is something that happens in her *relationship*. This is a common way of understanding love and relationships, by individualizing personal matters, devaluing structural explanations, and overlooking the power relations that love can produce (Chantler 2014; Langford 1999; Nordin 2007). As I explore below, inequalities because of race, gender identity, and language are also strongly present in Nelly’s narrative, however, these inequalities are positioned as occurring *outside* her relationship and as tied to larger structures of inequality such as racism and transphobia. In comparison, the inequalities in the quote above come across as something that just ‘happens’ to her and her partner, and which they have to “struggle with,” but which they will be able to solve and put behind them. In this Nelly can be compared to Anna Malmquist’s (2015) interview participants in her study of Swedish lesbian parents and relationship equality of birth mothers and non-birth mothers. Malmquist notices that these parents place themselves within one of three “equality repertoires,” and Malmquist labels the repertoire that describes Nelly’s situation “the struggling interpretive repertoire.” In this repertoire an imbalance is described between the birth mother (who is depicted as ‘becoming’ the child’s primary parent) and the non-birth mother (depicted as the secondary parent). This perceived inequality is not accepted by the parents and they “struggle” and “work hard” to “fight the enemy” of inequality (Malmquist 2015: 261).

Similarly, as I will go on to show, Nelly’s narrative tells of hard work to change what she understands as unequal in her relationship. She continues to position herself as an independent person by saying, “It was this balancing act for me the whole time to, well, how much could I be me and do what I wanted and be independent and see my friends and at the same time make sure that he [her partner] was doing alright.” As romantic love today is based on notions of two autonomous individuals coming together and choosing one

another, this kind of autonomy is also required in order to fit into Swedish equality discourses, as equality is not possible if one party is dependent on the other. Both partners should always have the possibility of walking away and leaving the relationship; neither of them should be tied to the other. Situated within these notions of love and equality, Nelly needs to negotiate both her own and her partner's independence in order to bring their relationship in line with dominant discourses.

Nelly feels the discomfort of being out of line and having more power in her relationship because it is her apartment they live in, her money they use, her social networks they share, and, essentially, her world they live in. That feeling makes her undertake emotional labour to bring her relationship in line. For Nelly, the ideal relationship is always equal, and the quote above shows that she had not consciously considered that her relationship *could* be unequal; she “didn't really get was going on when conflicts occurred [...] because I didn't understand what the source of it was.” She now understands the conflicts to be a result of the inequality of the situation, and so she struggles to make herself independent, on the one hand, and also create independence for her partner, on the other, so they can lift themselves above the inequalities and orient themselves along the lines of more ‘correct’ relationships.

The Emotional Labour Inherent in Aligning a Relationship

Emotional labour reappears in almost all participant narratives I have gathered, and I borrow the content, if not the term, from Arlie Russell Hochschild. Hochschild uses the term “emotion work,” which she defines as “the act of trying to change in degree or quality an emotion or feeling” (1979: 561). It is an act where a feeling is evoked, shaped, or suppressed, and Hochschild argues that “emotion work can be done by the self upon the self, by the self upon others, and by others upon oneself” (1979: 562). I prefer the term ‘emotional labour’ in order to differentiate it from the ‘the work of emotions,’ which, to me, is what emotions ‘do’ as theorized by Ahmed (2004a). Emotional labour is carried out by individuals and consists of work based on emotions,

such as love and concern, meaning the emotional labour that Nelly performs is different from the way emotions shape her narrative.

This means I use the term emotional labour to describe the work carried out by in particular the non-migrating partners in the study to align their migrating partners in various ways. They perform this work both upon their migrating partners when trying to make them feel aligned in Swedish contexts, and on others to make these others help align their partners. I understand emotional labour in relation to the participants to mean work carried out as a result of a feeling, but the also the use of emotions and feelings as the tool that ‘gets the work done.’ The end result in both cases is a change in ‘how things feel.’ Nelly performs a lot of emotional labour to bring her relationship in line to fulfil notions of equality that an intelligible Swedish relationship built on love needs to fulfil, but it is also done to come across as less different and more in line with more normative relationships.

An equal relationship should consist of two financially independent individuals, as dominant Swedish discourses maintain that one person should not support the other financially and both should contribute economically to the home and the relationship. While the assumption is that men always participate in paid work, women are strongly encouraged to do so as they should not be dependent on their male partners. This notion contains the impossibility of being an autonomous individual – which is the prerequisite for equality – if one is financially dependent on one’s partner. Nelly can feel that others question her relationship because her partner depends financially on her. At the same time, she feels that financial dependence can be understood by others as a type of inequality that is regretful but a temporary phase, as they assume that Nelly’s partner will eventually become financially independent, which would bring their relationship in line. However, Nelly grapples with her feelings about this:

I went into this thinking that my partner shouldn’t have to feel... that he is dependent on me for money or can’t do what he wants to do. But it’s a really difficult situation because I have had a completely different relationship to

money in my life than he has had. He has never had money to like... ration, like how much should I spend on food... like I have done, rationed money independently for a fairly long period of my life. And so then I think like this, he needs an opportunity to get that information and make those decisions, and then he can decide, no, I don't want to be cheap and go to the supermarket and buy a big, cheap Coke, I want to buy my small, expensive Coke at the corner store. I need to make sure that he gets that information so he can make those decisions. And it's so difficult, I think it's really difficult. I don't want to be some kind of reprimanding person, I just want to put the information to him neutrally [*laughs*], I want to say, "This is available and you get to choose." But it's difficult to deal with. He doesn't have his own bank card, I withdraw a bunch of cash that he gets to do whatever he wants with, and then when it's gone, I withdraw another bunch.

Nelly is aware of the different ways she and her partner have been socialized to relate to money because of the different cultural contexts they have grown up in. She finds it 'really difficult,' and the quote above shows the emotional labour she performs to correct this the best that she can. In this instance it means trying to educate her partner so that he makes informed decisions the way an equal partner 'should,' helping align her relationship in a way that orientates it as an equal relationship where both partners are able to make financial decisions that 'make sense.' As it is now, the relationship is brought out of line in a way that Nelly finds very problematic, because she recognizes the power disparities involved in being 'the person with the money,' a position she does not like occupying. While she does "not want to be some kind of reprimanding person" and tries to "put the information to [her partner] neutrally," she recognizes the difficulties in trying to 'educate away' these differences of power. The fact that she is involved in such intense emotional labour to bring the relationship in line in relation to money means she experiences discomfort not being equal and aligned according to Swedish equality discourses.

However, Nelly's relationship *is* unequal: while she positions herself as a working-class individual making, by Swedish standards, a fairly low income even after having secured her "first real qualified job in an office," she is also white, cisgendered, a citizen, speaks fluent Swedish, understands Swedish social codes, and has her social and family networks around her, all of which assist in making her life flow fairly effortlessly. Her partner, on the other hand, has none of these advantages. Nelly acknowledges this by saying:

There are loads of other aspects that affect us in minute detail, and we always have to relate to that and actively work against it in our relationship. And it would make it easier if society wasn't so... didn't think being queer was weird or abnormal or people who don't have perfect Swedish or don't have white skin or those kind of things [were also perceived as 'weird'], then this inequality wouldn't have occurred in the same way, but now it's there, so...

Judith Stacey in her research on gay male couples in Los Angeles describes a couple she calls Ozzie and Harry, who, just like Nelly and her partner, are highly unequal in that Harry is an older, white, financially stable American citizen while Ozzie is a younger, "Afro-Brazilian raised in an impoverished single-mother family" (2004: 186) who lived as an undocumented migrant in Europe when they met. Stacey writes that "formally, [...] Ozzie occupies a disadvantaged position across a staggering number of social divisions and cultural resources – including income, wealth, education, occupation, race, nation, language, citizenship, not to mention access to the ongoing support of his natal world of kin, long-term friendship, community and culture. Moreover, [...] Ozzie has become a full-time, at-home parent and economically dependent on Harry, to boot" (2004: 187).

However, as Ozzie and Harry do not measure themselves against various perceptions of equality, they do not need to negotiate these inequalities in the same way that Nelly is required to in order to be in line with Swedish equality discourses. For Nelly, it would be impossible to come to terms with, as she makes the money, is used

to rationing her money, and is familiar with costs in Sweden, the notion that she should also be *in charge* of the money. This is despite the fact that she is, for all intents and purposes, already in charge of it, given that her partner has no access to money unless she gives it to him. However, instead of acknowledging that this inequality exists and accepting it, Nelly must find ways to change it and align her relationship with Swedish equality discourses as this inequality means her relationship ends up unintelligible to her.

Creating the 'Right' Love When Out of Line

Nelly's narrative, however, does not only, or mainly, consist of the financial inequalities that she finds others around her are quick to pick up on. Rather, the way in particular race, gender identity, age, language skills, and migration background are entangled in a messy knot that is impossible to tease apart is more prominent in the narrative, and Nelly says, "There is an intrinsic inequality in our relationship that isn't there for other couples, especially not if you're a two white Swedish middle-of-the-road hetero cis couple." The fact that her partner is a trans person of colour with migration background and they are a queer couple mean Nelly comes across many structural inequalities, but also that she is, as I will go on to show, consistently brought out of line because of it.

Nelly's awareness of the racism and transphobia her partner is subject to runs through her narrative, and she performs emotional labour to attempt to increase his wellbeing. I interpret that the reason for this is knowing that her partner now has to deal with a very different life than the one he left behind. Living in Sweden means racism is much more prominent in his everyday life, and because he meets more new people and is required to explain himself in more situations, his gender identity is questioned more. Throughout her narrative, Nelly positions herself and her partner against a white, cisgendered, Swedish world that only sees them as an intelligible couple and intelligible persons if they conform to the rules by being, or at least coming across as, white, cisgendered, and Swedish themselves. When they present themselves as the individuals they truly are, Nelly says:

I feel like it's like we're lying or it's something... I mean, there's something in all these contacts with government offices, in those cases there's some kind of conflict or if you want to speed up a process or you want to be taken seriously, then it feels like my credibility increases, or my partner's credibility increases, if I'm the one bringing up the issue instead of my partner. Because I'm white and because I speak Swedish in a way that indicates that I was born in Sweden and then also... Well, if they read us as two girls, government officials often refer to my partner as "your friend here." And sometimes you let it slide and then sometimes you say, "Well, he's my partner." And then maybe they continue saying "she, blah blah." Okay, you let it slide once [that her partner is referred to as 'she'], and I'm like, I hope my partner didn't hear it, but then you realize he heard, and the person says it repeatedly. So you're like, "Well, no, he's a he..." It's like you lose credibility step by step the more you expose who you are and the first thing you feel is that they think you have lied to them. Partly because you don't have any credibility to start with because my partner is a person with a migration background and that's a kind of person you don't trust very much, and then on top of that, they [government officials] think they see this person who claims to have some kind of gender they clearly don't have! So this must obviously be a person who can't be trusted, or that's the feeling you get. And it's so difficult to say what it is, but this is communicated all the time. Some people almost get pissed off, like you have lied or kept something from them, while others are just generally confused, and maybe someone will say, "I have no problems with this [referring to her partner's trans identity]! No problems, no problems!" And then, on top of this, language and skin colour, depending on whether you are physically present or talking on the phone. And then also... Sometimes there's an additional dimension because since my partner is a trans person, he is read as much younger than he actually is – if he's read as a man, then he

becomes a boy. I can feel the suspicion is very much aimed at me then, like, what kind of person *are* you? And then the idea... that I'm some kind of older woman who's gone to Gambia [*starts laughing*] and found myself a boy, poor... [*laughs*] I mean, you don't know what they're thinking, but it's like you feel people thinking, "What is this? What's your relationship? Are you adopted?" And in the midst of all this, people can't sort through it, it's too far from their reality, making it really close to ideas they've got that are based on racism and sexism and stuff like that. So when they get these jumbled ideas in their heads they become really hostile and quite unhelpful. And then you have to work through that by using a certain formal language or show that I'm super-duper Swedish so take me seriously [*laughs*], I'm really cis! No... you don't want to do that either, I don't want to be perceived like that, I really don't want to use those things [*her whiteness, Swedish-ness, and cisgenderedness*]. But yeah...

Nordin (2007) argues the importance of 'loving right,' that is, to be in love with the 'correct' person in order to be perceived as the 'right kind' of person. This can be compared to Fanny Ambjörnsson (2004) who in her study of gender, class, and sexuality amongst Swedish high school girls found that having the 'right' boyfriend was essential for the girls in the study to pass as the 'right kind' of girl. In her encounters with government offices in the quote above, Nelly is perceived to love 'wrong': wrong gender, wrong body, wrong race, wrong national background, wrong language, wrong age. In these encounters she feels that she is lying and cannot be trusted, or, rather, that others place these feelings on her. What these feelings do is make Nelly work hard to show those she is dealing with that she is, in fact, in line and should be paid attention to, despite 'loving wrong,' by "using a certain formal language" and showing that she is "super-duper Swedish [...] [and] really cis!" She notices that when her relationship is not in line, she does not receive what she needs or wants: she as well as her partner become persons who can be overlooked.

While Nelly positions herself in her narrative as politically aware and very critical of Swedish whiteness and assumptions that ‘everyone’ is cisgendered, she nonetheless uses these norms to “get stuff done,” as she puts it earlier in her narrative. Ahmed discusses what she calls the “non-performativity of anti-racism,” arguing that “declaring one’s whiteness, even as part of a project of social critique, can reproduce white privilege in ways that are ‘unforeseen’” (2004b: 12). Nelly does not “want to use those things,” that is, the privileges that position her as more normative and in line than her partner, but she still does. This works to show how difficult it can be to negotiate one’s privileges and re-position oneself in one’s own narrative, but it also shows how Nelly orientates herself from a white, Swedish, cisgendered position: she takes this as her point of departure instead of orientating herself from, for example, the point her partner is forced to orientate himself from.

Being overlooked and made to feel that she is lying and cannot be trusted makes Nelly perform emotional labour on several fronts. First by trying to ‘protect’ her partner when those they speak to label her partner’s gender incorrectly. In these instances, she tries to explain to the person in question that “he’s a he.” This, in relation to the entanglement she and her partner are caught in, which if cut and analyzed in this situation would bring not only gender identity but race, age, language skills, migration background, colonial histories, and the geopolitics of sex tourism into focus, makes some people angry, while others become confused. This leads to the second type of emotional labour that Nelly performs, which is trying to change the feeling in the people she and her partner interact with in order to move the focus away from her partner and their relationship being out of line. Instead, she emphasizes the ways she *is* in line, with the hope that this will align her partner and their relationship as well, but at the same time as she does this, she also reproduces whiteness, Swedish-ness, and cisgenderedness as norms. Nelly’s quote above is an example of how the entanglement one is caught in cannot be separated into isolated strands when trying to understand what happens in the encounters Nelly refers to. The queer and interracial relationship, the perceived difference in age, Nelly’s partner’s lack of fluent Swedish and his nationality as well as the migration process

and histories of colonialism are entangled to the extent that Nelly experiences that people cannot “sort through it, it’s too far from their reality.” However, it also means Nelly cannot make sense of what generates what: it all works to create the particular situation and the feelings that Nelly’s relationship, and so her love, is not ‘right.’

As I noted earlier in this chapter, the feeling of love also sticks differently to different bodies. While she laughs when talking about how her partner’s gender identity causes him to be read as much younger than he actually is and, as a consequence, Nelly being suspected of being an “older woman who’s gone to Gambia and found [herself] a boy,” this is not the kind of relationship that the ‘right’ and ‘good’ love sticks to in a Swedish context. Nordin (2007) in her study of middle-aged men living in the Swedish rural north hoping to meet Russian women for a relationship, Anne Britt Flemmen’s (2007, 2008) and Flemmen and Ann Therese Lotherington’s (2007, 2008) studies of men from rural northern Norway in relationships with Russian women, and Helena Hedman, Lennart Nygren, and Siv Fahlgren’s (2009) analysis of media discourses of Swedish men and Thai women’s relationships all show that certain inequalities, in particular age and global and geopolitical economic imbalances, mean love has difficulty sticking to these relationships. The relationships are instead perceived to be built on *something other* than love, such as the Russian and Thai women’s wish for a better life, in particular economically, and the Swedish and Norwegian’s men’s hope to access sex and housekeeping. In short, these relationships are not perceived to have come about because individuals in them were ‘struck’ by love in the way a ‘correct’ and ‘good’ relationship should have started. In order for love to be assumed, there must be equality as only an equal relationship can produce intelligible love, or ‘real love.’ This means neither love nor equality can stick to Nelly if she is perceived to be with a black teenage boy, as that kind of ‘love’ will raise questions about power differentials because of age, race, and nationality.

To be in line as an equal couple, and through this practice the ‘right kind’ of love, is one of the most important points in Nelly’s narrative. However, the entanglements that she and her partner are caught in, which bring together such strands as race and racism, age,

gender identity and transphobia, non-Western-ness and Swedish-ness, migrant backgrounds, discourses of interracial intimacies, and European colonialism and colonial histories, mean Nelly and her partner are often stopped and brought out of line, making the inequalities between them highly visible and tangible. Nelly's starting point is that loving should be simple and straightforward, but she notices that society only recognizes individuals in line as ones worth paying attention to. This makes her construct her narrative as one of frustration and also loss: she knows the components of a 'correct' relationship and what is needed to love 'right,' but she finds her own relationship falling short of the ideal of an equal and white love modelled on the Swedish equal heterosexual relationship. Despite this, she still aspires to align her relationship by trying to make it more equal. However, as an individual she cannot change the structural inequalities that affect how her and her partner's love is perceived, at the same time as she cannot imagine love without equality.

I will now move on from Nelly's narrative to that of Alejandro and Fredrik. Their narrative differs slightly in comparison to Nelly's in that they construct a story of love in which their love is aligned as both a 'good' and 'right' love. At the same time, theirs is also a narrative about whiteness and non-Western-ness, although mediated through class.

ALEJANDRO AND FREDRIK'S STORY: TO RECOGNIZE LOVE IN QUEER PARTNER MIGRATION

I meet with Alejandro and Fredrik on a hot summer's day, and we sit in a park in the central part of the city they live in, drinking coffee and talking. Alejandro, who is thirty-two, moved from Chile about two and a half years ago to be with Fredrik, who is thirty-four. They are very talkative, and bring up issues they feel I miss, move the interview along between themselves rather than necessarily waiting for me to ask them questions, and argue over how their narrative should be constructed.

Alejandro and Fredrik are both cisgendered men who refer to themselves as “gay.” Alejandro chuckles when he adds to this: “I’m a conservative gay man. I’ve learned to be more relaxed here in Sweden and be more open-minded.” When I ask what he means by this, he explains that he used to be more “prejudiced against lgbt people,” specifically against individuals with non-normative gender identities. He says:

You think that just because you’re gay, sitting there in your own country, you’re open-minded or liberal. But then you come to a different country where it’s more open and... and there’s more... the sexual, the sexuality, it’s broader than what you expect. Or what you have known before. That tests your own prejudices and you say, ok... I do have strong... negative feelings towards some people that I shouldn’t. So that makes you question and of course that opens... your mind. Fredrik has shown me that.

Fredrik, who actively tries to make Alejandro more interested in queer issues, laments that “men in Sweden, they’re not really interested in lgbt issues and queer issues, which I am. Usually gay men don’t really care about those things.”

Alejandro defines their relationship as “interracial,” something Fredrik does not wholeheartedly agree with. While Fredrik is white and of white Swedish background, Alejandro has come to realize that he becomes racialized in Sweden; many Swedish people he meets perceive him as ‘looking’ Latin American, that is, he becomes Latino through the migration. Based on this, he is approached in particular ways, and he says he “never thought about race or about *my* race” until he arrived in Sweden, but now he does. Both Fredrik and Alejandro have university degrees, although neither works in the field of their education when I meet them. In order for him to be allowed to work in his profession, Alejandro must supplement his degree with Swedish university courses, something he does not feel ready to do yet. Fredrik has changed his mind a number of times and studied a

few different disciplines. Both are employed in jobs that require no further education and which are usually characterized as unstable in terms of available work, although neither Alejandro nor Fredrik expresses that they do not have enough work or lack money, now that they are both working.

Narrating the 'Good' Love Story

Alejandro and Fredrik met online on a Swedish gay site two months before Alejandro came to Sweden to visit Swedish friends he had met in Chile. Fredrik says that Alejandro “wanted to get to know some gay people too so he could see the gay side of [the city his friends lived in] when he was travelling.” To this Alejandro says:

I just wanted to have fun! [*all laugh loudly.*] It was my summer, I was coming for a month or so...

Fredrik: I was working the night shift and... there was this guy that checked into my site and he wrote he was going to travel to my city and I thought, oh, summer fling! Summer flirt. And I think he was thinking of the same thing.

Alejandro: Of course!

Sara: [*to Alejandro:*] And that was you?

Alejandro: That was me. I was coming to visit my friends. We had this promise that before our 30s, I was, it was my turn to travel to Sweden, to visit them. And I keep my promises.

Sara: And they were straight or...?

Alejandro: Yeah, my friends are straight. So I thought, they don't have any gay friends and... it's gonna be my summer vacation so... [*laughs*] So, okay, I want to have some fun and meet some cute Swedish guys. And then travel the rest of Scandinavia. That was my plan.

Fredrik: So his plan was to travel Scandinavia for six weeks but he ended up staying six weeks in my city.

Alejandro: Yeah. [*laughs*] I didn't move.

Fredrik: We went to Copenhagen once.

Alejandro: Yeah but... we went together...

When discussing how they met, Alejandro and Fredrik, on the one hand, talk about a “summer fling,” and “it was my summer” to have “some fun and meet [...] cute guys,” constructing a notion of something non-committed and transient. They are not looking actively for a relationship, and they did not expect love. However, as they go on to tell, they did fall in love: Alejandro and Fredrik are some of the few participants who in the interview tell the story of *how* they fell in love, and as I will go on to show, their narrative follows a common love-story pattern.

Alejandro: At the time, in Chile, I was working in the middle of nowhere. So I was like, okay, the only way to get to know people is... internet. Thank god! So, after work I remember being a bit online and that's when Fredrik wrote me.

Fredrik: And then we chatted more or less, like, twice a day, writing emails and chatting over MSN and talking online a couple of hours every day for two months. And then he came here... eeh... August 12th. We met a quarter to ten in the evening on August 12th. And on the morning of August 13th we fell in love. [*makes swooning noise:*] Aaah... For real.

Alejandro: Of course, it happens I think with... any type of... these... internet relationships. They, they are very intense in the beginning. You know, the mystery of the person and especially when they're on the other side of the world. It seems like the... the... the need to reveal more about yourself, it's, it's faster than actually to... to meet

someone face to face. So we matched instantly almost and I remember like [*making sound of hurrying and being stressed*] coming home after work like [*in excited voice:*] I'm going to chat with Fredrik! And... and that didn't give me that much time to meet other people online. [*laughs*]

Fredrik: [*jokingly:*] That's why I wrote so much, so that he wouldn't have time to start talking to anyone else.

In this part of their narrative, Alejandro and Fredrik tell a classic narrative of falling love: hurrying home from work to catch up with each other online, looking forward to chatting several times a day, “matching” instantly, and falling in love “for real” after spending one night together. Their narrative follows the pattern of ‘good’ love in that “a kind of evolution history of love is told. The first romantic story about the spontaneous feeling that just occurs is how true love should begin. It should then form the basis of and change to a refined and mature, realistic love, a true and honest two-ness [...] If the first is not there, the second cannot exist or come across as believable whether to others or oneself” (Nordin 2007: 62-63; my translation). This means Alejandro and Fredrik’s narrative early on establishes their love as in line with discourses of ‘good’ and ‘right’ love, and I will come back to this in the analysis of their narrative. Also, when Fredrik jokes about writing to Alejandro so much that Alejandro would not have time to start chatting with anyone else, this aligns their narrative with other classic love narratives that prescribe that love must always be monogamous and a ‘twosome’; had it not mattered to Fredrik if Alejandro was simultaneously chatting to and planning to meet with other guys, the feeling of love would not stick to them in the same way.

At the same time as Alejandro and Fredrik are being very open with how they felt, that they felt *a lot* for one another, and narrate their love as one that is in line, they are simultaneously the only participants I interviewed whose narrative questions popular discourses about love. Once Alejandro came to Sweden and they fell in love, they did not assume that this love would necessarily need to continue, which

is something I will come back to. In the quote above, Alejandro also views their love story through quite sober eyes, saying that the intense feelings they felt were part of what usually happens in an “internet relationship” where one feels “the need to reveal more about yourself.” By saying this, Alejandro shows that he is aware that they are constructing a narrative that becomes aligned with the narrative of the “cosmic mystery of love” (Myrdahl 2010: 113), but that he is also able to step outside it and see how they are creating this story.

Defining the ‘Seriousness’ of Love

For the six weeks that Alejandro visited Sweden, their relationship was intense, but they were unsure where it was going. Once Alejandro left, they kept in touch and loosely discussed Fredrik moving to Chile, but dismissed this idea fairly quickly (as Alejandro says, “I didn’t speak Swedish but I speak English,” adding in a dismissive voice aimed at Fredrik: “And what do you speak in Spanish? Ehm, no!,” indicating that for language reasons, Chile was never an option). Fredrik says:

It was easier if you [Alejandro] came here. So we just... almost like a joke said [*in questioning voice:*] we can apply for a visa for you?

Alejandro: [*breaks in, laughing a little*] Yeah, yeah, don’t say that because of the Migration Agency... [meaning if their residence permit application was a joke, the Migration Agency could revoke his residency] [*laughs and makes Sara laugh*]

Fredrik: We were like, okay, if we get the residence permit, then we go on, if we don’t get it, then it wasn’t meant to be.

Alejandro: It was a lot of... Okay, we wanted to be together but also I think it was a bit... not the context, but like a third party. Something to help us to define a bit who we were. It was a bit weird in that sense. In our case it was the Migration Agency that defined who we were, if

they were giving me the visa or not. For us it was a quite special thing, to be together. Even though... we started as a summer fling, it didn't end, and it turned into something very... strong. So when I came back to Chile, it was like, okay, we'll see how things go. We'll see if they give me the visa or not. And... and also with the time we were separated. [*To Fredrik:*] It was how many months...?

Fredrik: Six months.

Alejandro: Six months separated, okay, let's see if... the... the love or interest we feel for each other vanishes or still remains or actually grows. I mean, that was what happened [that the love grew] so... so it was quite special also, it was a big test, being separated for several months.

Applying for Alejandro's residence permit was "almost like a joke" but, to their surprise, which is still evident almost three years later, the Migration Agency considered their relationship 'serious' enough for Alejandro to be granted residence. Alejandro and Fredrik are clear on that they were in love when Alejandro left Sweden, but this, to them, did not necessarily mean they should do everything in their power to continue the relationship, or that it was a relationship that should be continued. They applied for Alejandro's residency to see what happened: "if we get [it], then we go on, if we don't get it, then it wasn't meant to be," as Fredrik puts it. Nordin (2007: 62) writes that love is an issue of 'seriousness' not only in relation migration legislation, but that this feeling of 'seriousness' or 'realness' identifies the unique person you enter into a relationship with and also whether you stay or break it off. If the relationship breaks up, this is understood as "it was not 'real' love to begin with" (Nordin 2007: 62; my translation). Alejandro and Fredrik construct their narrative along this well-known story, but with a twist: they are not sure how they feel, whether they identify the 'seriousness' required for love to be 'real' love in their relationship. The Migration Agency makes the decision for them and "define[d] a bit who [they] were" by granting Alejandro's residency. Had Alejandro not received his residency, they

would have accepted this and understood it as not ‘real’ love and so not a relationship that should be ‘rewarded’ with residency.

Alejandro makes another observation in the quote above, and it is a point I will come back to again later in the analysis of their narrative. He tells Fredrik to not say their residence application was a joke because this would indicate to the Migration Agency that their relationship is not ‘serious.’ But it also shows that he is aware of which partner migration narrative he should be written into, that is, *not* the one where his and Fredrik’s love – and so the ‘seriousness’ of their relationship – could be doubted.

Focusing on queer kinship, Ulrika Dahl writes that “both LGBTQ activism and studies of queer kinship have naturalized the emphasis on love as the foundation of family” (2014: 149). She continues: “by recognizing it as ‘love’, we might say that queer desires, both sexual and familial, become culturally intelligible as symbols in the creation of kinship and family” (2014: 150). Since the 1970s, love has been the main point of departure for much lgbtq activism. Love makes an intelligible individual; as Dahl writes, it is connected to a person’s “humanness” (2014: 151). ‘Love’ has consciously been linked to the queer body by many activists while ‘sex’ has been detached from it. Campaigns such as Amnesty International’s campaign “Love is a Human Right” and the Australian “Equal Love” campaign for gender-neutral marriage position queer love as ‘equal,’ implicitly understood as ‘equal to straight love.’ Through this kind of activist work, positive feelings that stick to the sign ‘love’ have been extended so that they now also stick to queer individuals who love.³⁶ By making

36. This makes it possible for politicians to embrace, for example, gender-neutral marriage, allowing statements such as that of British prime minister David Cameron, who said when the law was passed that made marriage gender neutral in the UK, that “when people’s love is divided by law, it is the law that needs to change” (Molloy 2014: n.p). By the same token, American president Barack Obama could state that “love is love” (Jacobs 2015: n.p.) when the US Supreme Court ruled that the American bans on same-sex marriage were unconstitutional. Persecution on the grounds of sexual orientation is similarly connected to love rather than to sexual practices (e.g. Amnesty International Publications 2013; Hojem 2009; Parsi with Colbourne 2015), because the recognition of love as a

queer desires intelligible by recognizing them as love, Swedish homonationalist discourses are also activated.

Alejandro and Fredrik's narrative makes many references to their love, which, as I noted earlier in the chapter, is quite different from those of many other interview participants. Their narrative brings their love out, names it, and emphasizes it. They do think of themselves as being in love when they apply for Alejandro's residence permit, but this love is not described as an unstoppable force of nature. Compared to Nelly in the first narrative of this chapter, who described how she would do anything to ensure her partner could come live in Sweden, Alejandro and Fredrik's approach is very different. They describe their initial relationship as a "summer fling," and realize they need to write themselves into society's dominant scripts of love, but are unsure whether they are able to do so. They question whether love sticks to them, and whether theirs is a relationship in line, thus needing someone else to define it for them. However, as the Migration Agency interprets their relationship as 'serious' and decides it is in line, the Agency effectively also determines for them 'what kind' of relationship it is. Alejandro and Fredrik are brought in line with other 'real' relationships and can start orientating themselves from this point.

A Love in Line

In their narrative, it is Alejandro and Fredrik, rather than the Migration Agency or people around them, who doubt whether love sticks to them, and, in one way, when they tell their narrative their doubts seem sensible. When they apply for Alejandro's permit, they have spent two months chatting online, six weeks together in Sweden, and a few weeks apart, again chatting online. Once Alejandro moves to Sweden, they have also spent six months apart. I mentioned the two versions, or narratives, of romantic love (Nordin 2007; Swidler 2001) earlier in the chapter, where in the first, love is described as

positive and universal feeling is what allows the sexual practices to be accepted.

something that strikes you and sweeps you off your feet, while in the second narrative, love is considered something to be worked on and worked out, a more 'realistic' view of love. Alejandro and Fredrik tend to describe love as the realistic, love-is-labour version (at the same time as they, just like the research participants in Swidler's (2001) and Nordin's (2007) studies, also go back and forth between the two different love narratives). That they are skeptical of the fast progression of their relationship is understandable against this backdrop. However, and as I come back to below, their having met while living in two different countries leaves them little choice in how to proceed if they want to be together in the same place while both having the legal right to remain in the same country. That said, viewed through a Swedish equality discourse, Alejandro and Fredrik's love is completely in line: they are roughly the same age, university educated with similar class backgrounds, and speak good English, meaning they can communicate well with each other. They can also tell an intelligible love story (Nordin 2007) about two people who become infatuated and then change their plans (Alejandro staying with Fredrik instead of travelling) in order to spend time together.

Further, Alejandro and Fredrik specifically point out that they did not fall in love "for real" until they met in person, this way fitting into Western discourses of how 'falling in love' should occur. It also happened fast: "we met a quarter to ten in the evening on August 12th. And on the morning of August 13th we fell in love." The relationship was not calculated or planned: they expected a 'fling' but found love. Because this is in line with how love 'should' occur, it makes love stick more strongly to them. Nordin (2007) shows that love does not stick to either single Swedish men nor the Russian women they hope to meet, both because they are actively searching for a relationship and because they are looking for a relationship with the 'wrong kind' of person. Khatidja Chantler maintains that to search for a relationship this way, which is similar to searching for a partner for an arranged marriage, "jars with Euro-American sensibilities" because of "the

emptiness of love and the privileging of rationality” (2014: 23).³⁷ Nicole Constable, in her study of relationships between American men and Chinese and Filipina women, ascertains that “those involved in correspondence relationships [i.e. pen-pal or internet relationships started with the sole purpose of meeting a partner] are often defensive about romantic love because observers assume its absence, whereas in most other U.S. marriages, its presence may be taken for granted” (2003: 120). Nordin argues that love needs to be practiced in a very particular way in order to be understood and read as ‘good’ love, and that the individuals practicing it must have “romantic competence” (2007: 73), which, according to Nordin, is connected to, in particular, geographic place, age, body, and class. As I go on to show, this is a competence Alejandro and Fredrik master well, which is one reason love sticks to them. This shows how some bodies’ migration can become legitimized through love: if love can be shown to have been present from the start, the relationship is less likely to be viewed as fraudulent by the dominant society.

Continuing along this line, dominant discourses of love and of partner migration hold that a partner migration may *only* occur because of love, meaning the migrating partner’s love cannot be combined with hope for a better future, economic improvement, or a wish to leave the country they are currently living in. If we remember how this dissertation places a theoretical framework of intimate citizenship around the interview participants’ narratives, this is a place where what Ken Plummer (2003) calls “intimate trouble” occurs. Absent love or love tied in with other aspects of life disqualifies the migration, making it a fraud because it was undertaken for the *wrong reasons*. This is strongly connected to notions of ‘true’ love as something that cannot be ‘found’ but must spontaneously occur between two autonomous individuals. This is, as Myrdahl (2010) argues, why arranged marriages and other non-love based relationship

37. Nordin’s research, however, shows that the Swedish men in her study specifically were searching for love – to love and to be loved – and that the importance of finding ‘real’ love runs through the men’s narratives.

practices can never be considered equal to love based relationships in the Western world (see also Constable 2003). In a Swedish context, the perceived inequality that I mention earlier in this chapter in relation to Flemmen's (2007, 2008) and Flemmen and Lotherington's (2007, 2008) studies of Russian women and Norwegian men, Nordin's (2007) study of Swedish men hoping to meet Russian women, and Hedman, Nygren and Fahlgren's (2009) analysis of discourses of Thai-Swedish relationships show this as well. Despite being unsure of their love, Alejandro and Fredrik simultaneously align themselves along the line of the 'right' or 'true' love by how they construct their narrative. Their love was spontaneous, it 'struck' them (Nordin 2007), and as I go on to show later in the analysis, they also emphasize the free and autonomous choice they have each made in choosing each other.

*When a Relationship Cannot Start until
the Residence Permit is Approved*

Partner migration falls under family-tie migration in Swedish migration legislation. 'Family' is defined as a current partner (husband, wife, registered partner,³⁸ or cohabiting partner); a person the migrating partner is planning to marry or live together in a relationship with; children; and parents. The migrating partner always moves to a 'reference person,' that is, the person residing in Sweden, and reference persons are divided into four categories: Swedish citizens, Nordic citizens,³⁹ EU/EEA⁴⁰ citizens, and non-EU/EEA citizens. Depending

38. Registered partnership was available in Sweden to same-sex partners between 1995 and 2009. After gender-neutral marriage was introduced in 2009, it is no longer possible to enter a registered partnership.

39. The Nordic countries consist of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden.

40. EU countries include Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. EEA countries

on which category a reference person falls under, the rules differ for the migrating family member. As I established in the previous chapter on methodology, all migrating partners in this study moved to a reference person who was a Swedish citizen. However, depending on whether partners were married or not when the migrating partner applied for residency, their applications were treated slightly differently, and I will return to this in the chapter on belonging.

Alejandro moved from a non EU/EEA country to a reference person with Swedish citizenship. Had Alejandro and Fredrik been married or had they cohabited without being married for a period of two years or more outside Sweden⁴¹, whether in Chile or elsewhere, Alejandro would have been *entitled* to a residence permit (Swedish Migration Agency 2015a). This is a result of the 2003 EU family reunification directive according to which all EU member states “shall authorise the entry and residence of spouses” (Council Directive 2003/86/EC). The directive specifically applies to marriages, but Sweden has chosen to apply it to cohabiting couples as well. Partners like Alejandro and Fredrik, who are neither married nor cohabiting at the time of the application but are planning to either marry or cohabit once the migrant partner arrives in Sweden, *can* be granted a residence permit, but are not *entitled* to one (Swedish Migration Agency 2015b).

include all EU countries as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, and Turkey.

41. The definition of ‘cohabiting partner’ is taken from the 2003 Cohabitees Act (*Sambolagen*), which defines a cohabiting relationship as a permanent relationship consisting of two people who “live together as a couple,” which “normally includ[es] sexual relations” (Ministry of Justice 2012: 2), and who share a household, including chores and expenses. According to the Migration Agency’s *Handbook in Migration Cases* (Swedish Migration Agency 2015c), a ‘permanent relationship’ is interpreted as the couple having lived together for two years or more outside Sweden, but a shorter time period can be considered ‘permanent,’ particularly if the couple have children together.

Alejandro and Fredrik's residence application process not only provided a positive result, it also happened much more quickly than they had anticipated, and Alejandro and Fredrik discuss this in the interview:

Fredrik: I think you [Alejandro] applied in something like October, you sent an email to the Swedish embassy to book the interview. And then you got the interview on November thirty-first. I'm good with details!...

Alejandro: You're a bit scary with the details...

Fredrik: And then I think it was... eh... after Christmas I got the letter from the Migration Agency to write my story.⁴² And then on January fourth, you got the visa. So it went so easy.

Alejandro: Yeah...

Fredrik: So then we had done it, and then it was like, okay, I guess... we start a relationship together.

Alejandro: [*breaks in:*] Well, we had... we had a relationship. [*laughs*] But... the thing... we never expected the application process to happen that fast. I thought I was going to have more time to, to... to decide towards the end of the application process, if we should, am I actually gonna move or... not. And it happened very fast so... but I don't regret it at all. It was a big risk. And I'm happy so far.

42. While the migrating partner attends an interview at the nearest Swedish embassy as part of their residence application process, the non-migrating partner in Sweden is usually not interviewed. Instead, they are required to write down the couple's 'relationship story,' detailing how they met, how they keep in touch while separated, and so on, and submit this 'story' to the Migration Agency as part of the application.

Fredrik's memory for details makes it easy to calculate that it only took them about a month from the time Alejandro left Sweden to when they applied for a residence permit. In this quote, they make it clear again that they were not sure what kind of relationship they had, or if it even was a relationship at the time: Fredrik says that once Alejandro's residence application was approved, he thought, "okay, I guess... we start a relationship together." This indicates that he had not been sure the permit would be granted, and had not really planned for what would happen if or once it was. Although Alejandro dismisses Fredrik's statement by saying, "we had a relationship," he similarly expresses that he was taken aback when the application was approved, making it obvious that he, too, was unsure of exactly what kind of relationship, or love, theirs was.

Surprised by the speed of the process – less than three months from start to finish – Alejandro also expresses that he had not yet come to a conclusion on whether he actually *wanted* to move to Sweden, saying, "I thought I was going to have more time to decide." Alejandro and Fredrik's narrative positions them as a couple who thought their love was less intelligible than it turned out to be in their meeting with the Migration Agency. When the Migration Agency promotes their relationship from 'summer fling' to a serious relationship, Alejandro and Fredrik also starts taking it more seriously. This shows how the context one is in and the extent to which this context acknowledges one's feelings and intimate practices also affects how an individual feels.

Creating the Correct Migration Narrative

However, as Alejandro's quote above indicates, being sufficiently in love (or, being able to perform the 'right' kind of relationship) to receive a residence permit did not necessarily mean to either of them that they would continue the relationship. About three months after Alejandro's residency was approved, Fredrik went to Chile, and they planned to fly back together to Sweden at the end of his visit.

Fredrik: When I first went to Chile to pick you up, wasn't that--

Alejandro: [*interrupts in upset voice:*] Pick me up??
Sounds bad! [*everyone laughs*] It sounds like a... parcel or something. You, you, you went to visit me!

Fredrik: To visit you.

Alejandro: And to get to know my background. But that's it. [*everyone laughs*] That sounds better.

Fredrik: Yes, yes, yes. But... yes, I was thinking, I'm going to go to Chile but then we'll see... Perhaps when we meet up again, perhaps we won't feel... It'll be like... it will be awkward...

Alejandro: [*breaks in:*] Yeah, of course, but--

Fredrik: [*keeps talking*] ...I would go to Chile but you [Alejandro] didn't have to go back with me to Sweden. We'll just see.

Alejandro: We still tried to play it a bit cool, leaving us a chance to cool off from the relationship... It was a bit implicit, I think. You've come to Chile and it's implied that we'll see what's going on. What's gonna happen...

Sara: So you didn't actually talk... Did you say, "Well, I'll go and we'll see what happens" or...?

Fredrik: We had like two paths, like one... like one version was that, yes, you go to Sweden and we live happily ever after...

Alejandro: Yeah, yeah.

Fredrik: ...and one path was I go to Chile and then, oh, bye bye, have a good life! There were two plans.

Alejandro: [*breaks in:*] Yeah, yeah. For me it was important that he came to Chile because I wanted to know him in my context and for him to know what's my story a bit, just

to see the people that I was talking about all the time and the place. And also to feel, it's important... well, I was a bit aware that [*in somewhat condescending voice:*] love is blind... and I needed to get some feedback. From someone like a good friend... Someone who said, "Yes, sure!" or "No, you know, it's... it's unsure" [about Fredrik]. I needed like... to... feel what my friends thought. And it was a bit to, to test him. If he's coming to Chile or not, because of me. Because it's easy to pick someone up. [*laughs*]

In their narrative, Alejandro and Fredrik construct love as something that can change. They want to wait and see what the six months they are separated does to their relationship; as Alejandro says, love can either diminish or grow with distance, and in their case, it grew. Fredrik mentions "two paths," where, if they follow one of these paths, they fly back to Sweden together, but, if they end up following the second, they say "bye bye, have a good life!" to each other and break off the relationship. Nothing is certain. Alejandro also wants to know what those close to him think of Fredrik, what their feelings are about his feelings: is Fredrik worth the big risk of migration? He also wants to see if Fredrik actually will travel to Chile for him, arguing that picking up someone is the easy part, but following through with a serious relationship is more difficult. Alejandro and Fredrik position themselves as choosing each other: while they are in love and things move fast, they are also rational and stop themselves along the way to reflect, this way writing themselves into the more realistic, love-as-labour narrative (Nordin 2007; Swidler 2001). This is also a way of constructing their love as responsible, and aligning it along the lines of the mature, refined, realistic love that Nordin (2007) argues the feeling that 'strikes' should grow into in order for romantic love to follow the narrative of the 'good' love. But Alejandro and Fredrik's narrative also shows that love can be done in a number of ways, and that those it involves may need others to determine and acknowledge this love in order for it to become intelligible.

There is also another aspect to the quote above. I mention at the beginning of Alejandro and Fredrik's story that they argue between

themselves over how their narrative should be constructed. At the same time as they build a joint narrative, they are, compared to other couples I interviewed, also speaking much more from their individual point of views. While they communicate a joint migration process and a joint story, they do not come across as a unit. Instead they, at numerous points in their narrative, question and disagree with each other. This is established at the very start of the interview when Fredrik states a point, and Alejandro asks me:

Is it ok if we interrupt each other?

Sara: Yeah, yeah, yeah! Absolutely!

Alejandro: Ah, ok. So I can also tell my version at the same time.

The fact that Alejandro recognizes that there is a version of their narrative that is ‘his’ is interesting, as most couples were much more hesitant to present individual versions of their migration process. Alejandro and Fredrik are constantly negotiating who has or should have the interpretive prerogative and power to create their narrative, and they question each other’s versions of events. Alejandro makes us all laugh by stating that Fredrik makes him sound like a parcel when he interrupts Fredrik outlining how he was going to Chile to “pick” Alejandro “up,” but his criticism is sincere, and he makes it clear that he does not want to be positioned as “a parcel” in their narrative. Rather, he positions himself in ‘his’ version as someone who likes to take risks and try new experiences. He says that he thought, “Okay, Sweden, why not? Sure, let’s try it!” and he emphasizes several times in the interview that he *chose* to move to Sweden:

So it wasn’t like for economic reasons or to support myself or my family that I moved here. It was actually because I trusted, I thought it was the relationship of my life to be with this person, with Fredrik.

I can go back to Chile because it was not... that I have

to live here. Or... for, for... to support myself or... no! It's just because I really chose to be with you [Fredrik]. And it turned out that you are Swedish and you live in Sweden.

I said to them [people who asked why he lived in Sweden], I chose to be here. I wanted to be here. And I chose to be here because I wanted to be with you [Fredrik]. But I chose to be here, it wasn't something like, I asked for asylum or something.

Alejandro's choice to be in Sweden and choosing Fredrik ties in with theories of the autonomous, free individual as discussed by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995), Giddens (1992), Illouz (1997), and Luhmann (1986). It is also similar to how other partner migrants position themselves in, for example, Constable's (2003) and Flemmen's (2008) research on partner migration: to have chosen one's migration rather than being 'picked up' like a parcel. By choosing to be in Sweden, Alejandro is also positioning himself as an autonomous individual whom love sticks to and who is therefore in line. If he were *not* expressing his love and actively choosing to be in Sweden because of Fredrik, Alejandro's stay in Sweden would be suspicious and questionable, and their relationship would be brought out of line. Nordin (2007) also points out that the presence of love makes a relationship, apart from more believable, also more valuable. This is similar to Dahl's (2014) arguments above about love being linked to queer bodies while sex is detached from them. Love 'softens' the relationship, particularly those relationships where sex, rather than love, is assumed to be the basis of the relationship (Constable 2003; Flemmen 2008; Nordin 2007). In addition, this is a point where Swedish homonationalism and intimate citizenship discourses intersect and work to create the opportunity for partner migration relationships such as Alejandro and Fredrik's. The fact that Alejandro and Fredrik are brought in line as love sticks to them also makes them 'proper' homonationalist homosexual subjects.

Gender identity, or rather cisgenderedness and a 'correctly' aligned masculinity (in the case of Alejandro and Fredrik), is an important

part of the ‘proper’ homonationalist subject: Fredrik points out in the narrative that neither he nor Alejandro ‘seem gay’ and tells a story where Fredrik’s mother asks if Alejandro really is queer because “he doesn’t seem like it.” To this Fredrik responds, “Do *I* seem gay to you?,” to which his mother admits that no, he does not. Alejandro and Fredrik are thus aligned along lines of cisgenderedness and a ‘correctly’ aligned masculinity in that they are read as ‘not-queer.’ As I will return to below, they are also middle class and educated, and thus used to the privileges that come as part of this. They are, in a sense, the Swedish norm, only queer, meaning they are the kind of homosexual subject that is easily included in Swedish homonationalist discourses.

Alejandro also emphasizes that he does not live in Sweden “for economic reasons or to support myself or my family” and that he did not come there to “[ask] for asylum or something.” This shows that he is aware of that in the hierarchy of migrants, being a partner migrant who moved because of love has more currency than being an economic migrant or an asylum seeker. It also shows he has been put in the position to explain, and perhaps defend, his move to Sweden previously, causing him to articulate and emphasize it several times during the interview. Most importantly, to say “I thought it was the relationship of my life to be with this person, with Fredrik” immediately brings him in line with discourses of love. Alejandro and Fredrik also point out several times in the interview that they are monogamous, stating, for example, “Of course, you’re my choice, and I’m yours,” and “You’re plenty enough for me! I couldn’t handle another one.” This is another way of bringing their relationship in line with the norms of romantic love, as being monogamous also means love sticks to them easier (Adeniji 2008; Barker & Langdridge 2010a, 2010b).

To Love is to Live Together

When they arrived in Sweden, Alejandro moved into Fredrik’s apartment. Neither of them had lived with a partner before, and they describe this as a new experience that they wanted to try, but also as something that was stipulated in the residence permit rules,

leaving them no choice in the matter. This left them feeling their relationship was forced to develop quite fast and based on decisions made by the Migration Agency rather than themselves.

Alejandro: To be honest, we didn't have like a previous, long relationship before we decided to move in together. We can't say, oh, there was a long time, we were boyfriends a year or two years before we decided to move in together. It happened fast because in order to be together, we had to go with what the Migration Agency decided. The relationship prior to that, well, we were apart. I was in Chile. There was a risk – we're going to move in together and see what happens. It wasn't something that was planned, like you can plan ahead when you have been with someone for a long period of time... being just boyfriends and then, ok, let's go to the next step. No, the next step was the first step for us.

Fredrik: Before this, when I heard friends say that they met and then they were together for four, five weeks and they moved in together, I thought they were idiots! I can still make that comment about people – oh, they're so stupid for moving in together so fast, and then... well, actually we... kind of did the same thing.

Alejandro says that moving in together “was a risk” and not “something that was planned.” This way of discussing their relationship positions Alejandro and Fredrik as part of the discourse of the modern, autonomous, and free individual that I mention above. Modern, autonomous individuals calculate risks, assess pros and cons, and make rational decisions – including decisions about love.

The Migration Agency cannot ask an applying couple to ‘prove’ their love (although, as I showed earlier using the example of New Zealand Immigration, some migration authorities go very far in asking couples to show evidence of normative practices of intimacy, emotional dependence, and exclusive sexual relations that are assumed

to be part of a love relationship). If it were possible to prove, if it were possible to *share* a feeling with an outsider, this would be all that was needed in order to have one's residence application granted, because as Myrdahl (2010) shows, a partner migration relationship based on love is considered 'serious.' However, since this kind of proof is impossible to supply, applicants are instead required to show evidence of normative relationship practices which the Migration Agency has determined should be part of a 'serious' relationship. This includes living together; that neither of the partners is living in an intimate relationship with a third person; sharing money and financial responsibilities; and talking and sharing information about oneself and one's family with one's partner, that is, 'knowing' one's partner. Alejandro and Fredrik have no problem performing these normative relationship practices, but their narrative tells a story of a love and a relationship that is much more dynamic and complex than the kind of relationship that the Migration Agency evaluates.

Alejandro and Fredrik partly describe their relationship as starting when Alejandro arrives in Sweden, as they had only spent about two months physically together in the same country before Alejandro's move. Migration legislation makes what they see as their logical "next step" (moving in together) their "first step." Because migration legislation assumes that a 'serious' relationship always means cohabiting, partners who apply for a residence permit are required to live together for the first two years until the migrating partner has received permanent residency in order to demonstrate the seriousness of the relationship (and partners are assumed to keep living together also past this point; however, once a permanent residence permit is granted, the requirement of cohabitation ceases to apply). The requirement to live together shows that there is an idea of a sexual relationship and reproduction inherent in partner migration legislation, and as I mention earlier in this chapter, family-tie migration legislation is partly based on the Cohabitees Act, which assumes sexual relations between the two cohabiting partners. This requirement has the effect that people who do not know each other very well because their relationship is just starting out, and who maybe would have chosen to let their relationship evolve more slowly

before moving in together (or who would prefer to not live together at all), do not have this option.

Just like Alejandro and Fredrik, the migrating partner's move to Sweden more or less signaled the start of the relationship for the majority of the interview participants of this study. They may have spent extended periods of time together, but most had not lived together or had a regular day-to-day life together before the move. The start of the migration process coincides with the start of living together and what some describe as "starting the relationship" or as a "new relationship." (Nelly makes a similar observation in her narrative in the first part of this chapter, for example.) Alejandro and Fredrik had known each other for less than a year and spent a total of eight weeks together when Alejandro moved into Fredrik's apartment. Migration legislation thus forces partner migrants into an emotionally more serious relationship more quickly than most other Swedish relationships, because applying couples have to fit into the Migration Agency's narrow definition of what a relationship 'should' look like. Also, because the migrating partner is not eligible to receive any type of government-funded support until they become a permanent resident, the non-migrating partner becomes responsible for supporting both of them. This creates the type of relationship inequality that Sweden otherwise tries to actively resist through various policy and discursive interventions. To be together, partners have to have a relationship that is out of line with the most important Swedish norms of love and intimacy.

Anne-Marie D'Aoust (2013) argues that social understandings of what an 'intimate' or 'romantic' relationship is and consists of forces migrants and their partners to present – or perform – a particular kind of relationship and intimacy in their dealings with migration authorities, even if the relationship they are performing is not the kind of relationship they might have in reality. She uses the concept of technologies of love to discuss how intimacy connects to citizenship and argues that these technologies play a significant role in disciplining partner migration. This is particularly so in the actual residence permit application process, where "the materiality of love [...] needs to be learned and recognized as much by the

couple involved in the migration process, as by the various actors and administrative technologies involved in the evaluation process” (2013: 263; see also White 2010). By making “the next step the first step,” Alejandro and Fredrik perform a type of relationship they did not actively choose for themselves, aligning their relationship with normative ideas about love and relationships to make it intelligible to the Migration Agency.

The Public Recognition of Queer Relationships

Being granted residency means having one’s queer relationship publically recognized. For Alejandro, it is important that through his migration, his relationship with Fredrik is acknowledged and, as he says, more “socially accepted,” than if he had stayed in Chile. He shares this feeling with several other interview participants. Alejandro says that while he is completely out to this family, they are “very traditional, so I knew if I was going to have a gay relationship, it wouldn’t be as open as it is here.” This made moving to Sweden seem more appealing:

I was thinking, my relationship with Fredrik is going to be validated by law in... in Sweden, and I don’t have to be afraid of something happening. Not because someone in Chile is going to kill you because you’re gay. It has happened but... But it’s, it’s just like the recognition, that validation that I need, that social validation and not be ashamed perhaps. Like it could be in a conservative culture like Chile. So no one could come to me and point at me or something, saying you two shouldn’t be together. We have the same rights as everybody and we are equal here.

Small everyday things make them feel recognized as a couple, such as when Fredrik says “our first confirmation of our relationship was from ICA [a major grocery store chain], because we got an ICA card. And with it came a letter that said ‘Welcome Alejandro and Fredrik!’”

Fredrik saying this makes Alejandro laugh and sigh romantically at the same time, and Fredrik continues:

We still have that letter at home! [*Sara laughs*] Just like... because that's like ICA recognized us by name! At least living together but like...

Alejandro: [*with laughter in his voice:*] Not official, it's...

Fredrik: The ICA card felt more like real than... anything else. [*Alejandro laughs*]

This recognition is also made possible by Swedish homonationalism and discourses of intimate citizenship. Further connected to this is Alejandro and Fredrik's feeling that others find their relationship 'cute,' something I will discuss at more length, using examples from Alejandro and Fredrik's narrative, in the chapter on belonging. They mention this in relation to their resident permit application interviews, but also in other contexts. To be cute necessarily means appearing non-threatening to the person who expresses coming across something cute. To be non-threatening, then, is proof of being perceived to be in line, that one does not queer one's surroundings. Alejandro and Fredrik's love, in Swedish discourse, is 'good love,' and their relationship is, by extension, a 'good relationship.'

Alejandro and Fredrik connect their being in line and the comfortable feeling they experience with sexual orientation, that being gay and having a queer relationship is "socially validated" in Sweden. However, I argue it is also tied to discourses of equality that situate the two as equal partners. I discuss the ways in which certain processes of power show up in Alejandro and Fredrik's narrative in more detail below, but from a homonationalist point of view, taking into consideration Swedish equality discourses as they pertain to love and relationships, Alejandro and Fredrik's age but in particular their class, education, and their own understanding of which lines they should follow, and so from which point they should orientate themselves, help to bring their relationship in line. They are, in a

sense, the perfect modern subjects, being, in Nordin's (2007) words, the 'right' persons for each other. Love sticks to them, both as a result of how in particular class, age, and cisgenderedness are entangled, and because of how they narrate their love and so align themselves through their narrative. They also carry a certain classed respectability that helps them show their romantic competence (Nordin 2007). The love and the relationship they narrate can be narrated, and so orientated, a specific way because of the class resources that Alejandro and Fredrik have access to. This is also what aligns them with Swedish homonationalist discourses and makes them and their love 'cute' in the eyes of those they meet. As I touched on in Nelly's narrative in the first half of this chapter, while Sweden is accepting of non-heterosexuality, the dominant discourse is much less accepting of other relationship norms being transgressed, leading to those relationships being stopped and brought out of line.

Class, Race, Nationality, and the Equal Relationship

Like Nelly in the previous narrative, Alejandro and Fredrik also negotiate the elusive equal love, but in different ways. Just as Nelly supports her partner financially, Fredrik supported Alejandro for his first eighteen months in Sweden. Fredrik says Alejandro could have looked for work and exemplifies this by saying, "he could have got a job as a cleaner," but continues: "but none of us really wanted him to do that. There's a sort of power, of course, in a relationship and I think that [Alejandro working as a cleaner] could have ruined stuff." While Alejandro and Fredrik are currently working public sector jobs that require little education, they both come from middle-class families and have university degrees. Alejandro working as a cleaner would have brought too much inequality to their relationship and brought it out of line to the point that it would have become unrecognizable to them. Out of two bad things, they agree that they prefer the path that they chose, that is, Fredrik supporting them both on his income until Alejandro found a job that they felt comfortable with. Alejandro, however, still finds it frustrating when looking back:

Alejandro: I knew there would be economic strain, especially for Fredrik. I never thought it was gonna be that long. I thought it would be shorter, that it was going to be easier for me to get a job. But it wasn't. That put a lot of stress on the relationship... I was thankful for Fredrik's generosity. Because I was aware of it and it also put a bit of stress on me, like, hey, move your ass and try to get a job! When you don't earn your own money... after a while it just feels like... it sucks. I was frus--, I was a bit frustrated. Because I hated that I could have one or two beers and the rest, if I wanted to have more, Fredrik would have to pay for. I never had to do that before. But I then I had to. But things improved, I got a good job so... it got better and better. Now I think we're equal, economically speaking, after two years... we divide everything by half and... ehm... it feels great. And now we can plan for the future, like if we're gonna buy something together or travel somewhere. It just feels great. Just to be able to do that.

Fredrik: In September we're going on our first holiday together.

Alejandro: Yeah. Equal holiday! No, but it feels great to not have that pressure anymore in the relationship, that Fredrik has to carry everything, financially speaking.

The frustration Alejandro felt when he had no income and the stress he experienced to find a job came out of a dependency that resulted in inequality, and which is similar to what many interview participants describe in their narratives. This frustration and stress was not only in relation to himself but also in relation to Fredrik, as Alejandro realized his own lack of income meant Fredrik had to carry a heavier emotional burden, which put the relationship itself under pressure. Alejandro's feelings also work to make him understand that his migration has changed his life in significant ways. He is now a person who has to ask his partner for money, something he has never done before and which both introduces inequality between

the two of them and orientates Alejandro along different lines than he is used to. Yet, the discomfort both Alejandro and Fredrik seem to experience when imagining that Alejandro would have taken a job as a cleaner, which would have required them to orientate themselves away from the middle-class lines they are comfortable with, makes them prefer a life with less money and more financial dependency and inequality over one with more money but also possible changes in the class dynamics of their relationship. This means Alejandro and Fredrik jointly uphold certain class norms, similar to how Nelly in the previous narrative uphold norms of whiteness, Swedish-ness, and cisgenderedness.

While Alejandro and Fredrik construct a joint narrative around financial inequality, they diverge when it comes to other aspects of inequality that the migration has brought to their relationship. Alejandro mentions what he calls ‘romantic ideas’ of partner migration several times, and says somewhat sarcastically:

You think: I’m going to move with this love and everything will be fine, everything is gonna solve itself, it’s gonna be easy. Oh yes, thanks, it works itself out, but it’s very difficult. It’s immature thinking. Love can conquer all and... but when you move and you get here and after your honeymoon in the new country and you’re starting your relationship, you realize, oh, it’s a big deal. Even if you’re happy, at the same time you face reality and realize that, shit, I moved to a different country and now I have to make my way here! And how am I gonna do that? You’re so focused on just getting the papers to move abroad but you never... think... or barely think ahead about what’s coming next.

This statement sums up the love Alejandro experiences in his relationship but also the uncomfortable feeling of realizing that he is being stopped and brought out of line as a migrant. The love initiated his move, but it is not capable of making him feel in line

in Sweden: one thinks that “love can conquer all” and “everything will be fine,” but it turns out that moving “is a big deal” and “you have to make your way here.” Alejandro also aligns his narrative with that of the realistic, mature, love-is-labour (Nordin 2007; Swidler 2001). Love is a strong feeling and motivator, and Alejandro is not alone in having been so focused on the residence application and all the practical details that he barely thought about that the process did not end there; several interview participants describe that having received their residence permits and moved to Sweden, it was a rude awaking to realize the amount of emotional labour required to keep a partner migration relationship going once living in the same country. Likewise, in particular class, but also nationality and a feeling that the world is an open and welcoming place (Tsfahuney & Schough 2010) as well as “a room of possibilities” (Grandin 2007), is present in Alejandro and Fredrik’s narrative. To assume that “everything will be fine” when going through a migration process is, as I examine in more detail in the chapter on belonging, only available to those who are used to certain privileges and to being in line. To not consider the fact that “you have to make your way here” is possible only if ‘making your way’ has never previously come across as difficult or a problem, revealing a classed understanding of the world.

As Wendy Langford argues, couple relationships in the Western world are “invested with an unprecedented range of meanings,” ranging from our desire for personal identities and emotional fulfilment to sexual satisfaction and existential security (1999: 1). Love is expected to be able to both carry us through that which is difficult as well as fix that which might be broken, but Alejandro has come to realize that love alone does not necessarily make everything “fine” and “easy.” No matter what dominant discourses tell him, love does not make a migration less challenging. Rather, it might actually make it more demanding in that the migration brings multiple structural inequalities to the relationship that the love cannot help to ‘set free.’ Because these inequalities should not exist in a ‘good’ relationship, the partner migration relationship is brought out of line in the eyes of both the partners and those around them, and they need to negotiate how to relate to the inequalities.

However, as Nelly's narrative in the first part of the chapter made clear, the interrelation between the public and private spheres, that is, intimate citizenship and "intimate trouble" (Plummer 2003), and between normative discourses of love and equality, on the one hand, and lived practices, on the other, can be difficult to negotiate. Alejandro comes back to the feeling of being brought out of line, and this way not being able to show the equal and 'good' relationship, several times in the interview. For example, he did not understand that speaking (good) Swedish would be as important as it turned out to be, and that his lack of Swedish would make him dependent on Fredrik, since it meant he could not land a job as soon as he had planned. But it also relates to race and nationality, as he is racialized in Sweden in a way he is not in Chile. When discussing that it would be nice to have friends who are both queer and in what Alejandro defines as interracial relationships, this exchange takes place between Alejandro and Fredrik:

Alejandro: [*laughs*] It's kind of weird to define myself to be in an interracial couple. I never felt like... I never thought about my race and that until I moved here.

Fredrik: It's just cross-continental...

Alejandro: But still, I never thought about it or never felt like we are interracial [*laughs a little*] or like thought about my race.

Sara: Do you think about it now?

Alejandro: Aaah... I think it's more like...

Fredrik: Is not a matter of race, but of continents.

In this exchange, Alejandro clearly positions himself as being racialized in Sweden. He has never had to think about race before because he, as I interpret it, is considered white in a Chilean context. However, now he identifies himself as being part of an interracial couple because of how others situate him. After the short exchange

above, Alejandro goes on to explain that “people [in Sweden] have some thoughts and stereotypes and prejudices against South America or Chile. But I think we’re still a Western country.” It annoys him that Swedish people think of South America in general as undeveloped and lacking good education:

This condescendence you can sense sometimes. I mean, I’m not being paranoid, but this sense that people think, “Oh, my education is better than yours,” that kind of pisses me off sometimes. This condescendence [*in a voice indicating that the person he is imitating is feeling sorry for him.*], “Ooh...” Or, for example, “Your parents, what do they do?” [*Alejandro mentions two upper middle-class professions requiring university degrees*] “Oh, so they’re well educated!” So these kind of comments that... well... It would be kind of rude if I said your parents are well educated but it’s kind of right if you say that to me? When they know I’m South American, I get a different classification. And all the ideas that comes with this.

In Alejandro’s encounter with Swedish discourses on race, modernity, and progress, his race, nationality, and perceived non-Western-ness are entangled in ways that racializes him as non-white. Both Alejandro and Fredrik experience that others perceive Alejandro as ‘not-Swedish’ because of the way he looks, but while this has made Alejandro think about “[his] race,” Fredrik perceives it as being about different “continents.” I interpret Alejandro’s narrative of racialization as him mainly being racialized as ‘non-Western’: while he is perceived to be ‘not-Swedish’ based on his appearance and so is stopped by the question, “Where are you from?,” he feels that what brings him out of line is being South American, or Latino, not his physical appearance. It is his non-Western nationality that is the focus, and the fact that he is perceived to be backwards and traditional because of it. Alejandro in particular, but also Fredrik to an extent, position themselves as middle class in their narrative. Being read as uneducated, and so

not-middle class, because of looking South American frustrates and angers Alejandro. However, at the same time he positions himself as using his middle-classness as a resource throughout the narrative and how being middle class and educated can be used as capital to deflect the racialization he is subjected to. This makes Alejandro and Fredrik's narrative one of whiteness as well.

While Fredrik recognizes that Alejandro becomes racialized in Sweden, and labels it racism in the interview, it is a topic he prefers to move away from in the conversation. That Alejandro is brought out of line because of race, nationality, and non-Western-ness makes their relationship tangibly unequal: Fredrik belongs and is aligned, while Alejandro is not. Swedish equality discourses offer limited language that affirms and acknowledges racial experiences (Adeniji 2010; Garner 2014; Habel 2008, 2012a; Hübinette et al. 2012; Hübinette & Tigervall 2009), making it an uncomfortable topic.

I will return to issues of dependency in queer partner migration relationships in the next chapter, but in relation to Alejandro and Fredrik's narrative I want to point out that because independence is important in the workings of romantic love, losing independence can also mean losing love, and as being independent means being equal, losing independence simultaneously means losing equality. Alejandro points out that he was more independent in Chile and able to "manage" his life, but that moving to Sweden has meant "a whole new world, and, I mean, a whole new world is scary. When everything is new, you become small and a bit, well, 'Who's gonna show me?' or sometimes, 'Who's gonna save me?' [*laughs*]." Fredrik, however, does not agree with Alejandro's assessment of the situation. When Alejandro describes "becoming small," Fredrik answers, "Well, you have been taking quite a lot of space. I haven't really noticed any period that you were feeling small and inferior." Fredrik then moves on to another topic, effectively closing the discussion. This reveals two very different migration narratives that are difficult to reconcile. My interpretation is that Fredrik senses that if he engages with, and acknowledges, Alejandro's experiences of racism and the migration process as a stopping process, he allows inequality to enter their relationship. By not 'allowing' Alejandro be small, the inequalities

cannot enter, but it also means that Fredrik refuses to see his own place in upholding white norms, this way contributing to Alejandro's experiences of racism. Not naming the inequalities that threaten to bring the relationship out of line makes it possible for Fredrik to view the relationship from a point of view of dominant discourses of love. This stipulates that two people in love are unaffected by outside influences, because if structural inequalities affect the relationship by bringing in differences between the partners, the love can no longer be construed as 'good' or 'right.'

CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined the feeling of love and how it can be understood in a Swedish queer partner migration context. The interview participants in this study use romantic love as the foundational emotion underlying their migration, yet they do not necessarily *talk* about love to any great extent in their narratives. Rather, as Nordin (2007) points out, narratives of love tend to be about the relationships where the love is supposed to be realized, where positioning oneself as being 'correctly' in love is important in order to bring the partner migrant relationship in line.

The entanglements that the partners of a relationship are caught in affect how well the feeling of love sticks (Ahmed 2004a) to the relationship. This is crucial, as love needs to stick to the relationship in order for it to be considered 'serious' and 'good' by others. A relationship should be entered into for the 'right' reasons, which, in a Swedish context usually is synonymous with being in love. For partner migrant relationships, the presence of love, and that love sticks to the relationship, is essential because dominant discourses on migration and relationships stipulate that a partner migration should not be undertaken for reasons such as the migrating partner wanting to find a way to live in Sweden. That is, the relationship must come across as 'genuine' in order to not be suspicious, and a 'genuine' relationship is built on love (Constable 2003; Flemmen 2008; Hedman, Nygren & Fahlgren 2009; Nordin 2007). This means that if love sticks to the

relationship, it is aligned along the lines of a 'good' relationship.

However, if you are out of line in a number of ways, like Nelly, love has a more difficult time sticking to you and your relationship. Race, gender identity, nationality, and age, but also the fact that Nelly's partner is considered 'more' of a migrant than, for example, Alejandro, who is read as 'more' white and 'more' Western in comparison, means Nelly needs to work hard in other ways to show that her love is a 'good' love. In contrast, the entanglements that Alejandro and Fredrik are caught in, which when cut to be analyzed show strands that make it easier for them to orientate themselves in ways that mean they are more in line on most accounts than, for example, Nelly and her partner, also allow for love to stick to them more easily.

Also, love sticks more easily to an equal relationship. Discourses of equality are of paramount importance in Swedish understandings of the 'good' relationship (Dahl 2005; Habel 2008; Hornscheidt 2008; Towns 2002), particularly gender equality, but also age, race, nationality, and class get tangled up in understandings of the equal relationship. As equality is required in order for the relationship to be in line, equality becomes an important aspect of love. The narratives analyzed in this chapter show that both Nelly and Alejandro and Fredrik strive to create equal relationships that are in line. However, the way the entanglements the partners of the relationship are caught in get tangled affect whether a relationship can be brought in line with discourses of equality. For Alejandro and Fredrik, it is possible to more easily orientate their love along lines of equality because race, gender identity, age, and class position them in ways that are understood as already equal. Nelly's love, however, is consistently brought out of line because her relationship is orientated along lines that in a Swedish context cannot be understood as equal.

Positioning one's relationship as consisting of 'good' and 'correct' love, that is, for example, describing a spontaneously perceived feeling that 'strikes' one and develops into a more 'mature' feeling (Nordin 2007), and which causes one to make obvious and dramatic choices (Swindler 2001), as in Nelly's narrative where she describes she was 'ready to give everything' and 'do anything' for her love and her relationship to be realized, makes the relationship intelligible. This is

particularly important in those cases little else brings the relationship in line, such as in Nelly's case, but it is evident also in Alejandro and Fredrik's narrative that they are aware of the importance of positioning themselves along the lines of 'good' love. As I mention above, a partner migration can be suspicious, and a migration assumed to have come about for reasons other than love and the relationship itself, that is, for the 'wrong' reasons, if 'good' love is not an obvious part of the partners' migration narrative. This is particularly so when the partner migration relationship includes a partner with roots in a non-Western country.

Emotional labour is also important in order to bring the relationship in line with discourses of 'good' love. This labour is required to 'translate' the love of the relationship into 'good' love in those cases a relationship is out of line and not read by others as the 'correct kind' of love. In Nelly's case this means using the norms of whiteness, Swedish-ness, and cisgenderedness that she, but not her partner, has access to, to align both her partner and her relationship. This is despite Nelly positioning herself in her narrative as being very critical of these norms: however, rather than attempting to orientate herself from a different point, she tries to orientate her relationship along white, Swedish, cisgendered lines by engaging in emotional labour to change others' view of her love.

Alejandro and Fredrik's narrative shows that privileges do not always follow the migrant in a migration. While Alejandro and Fredrik are used to being orientated as a certain kind of subjects and assume a number of privileges relating to class, race, and nationality, Alejandro finds that in a Swedish context he is read as not-white and is also assumed to lack education and come from a 'developing country.' This causes frustration and anger, but he and Fredrik are able to mediate this through class: by drawing on class resources but also by positioning himself as part of a 'good' relationship and someone 'struck' by 'true' love, which makes the migration valid in eyes of others, he is able to position himself as 'more than,' or different from, the economic migrant or the refugee.

Losing privileges and one's assumed place in the world is something I will return to in the next chapter, which examines the migrant emotion of loss.

Chapter 6

Loss

*I had no idea of what was missing
but felt the missing-ness of the missing.*

Jeanette Winterson (2011: 103)

To leave a place almost certainly means to leave behind some things that we would rather keep. These might include particular people, places, and objects that we lose when we leave, but it may also be that certain feelings are lost: the feeling of knowing your way through life, of confidence, of belonging, or, as this chapter examines, of being in line. Loss is an element of migration, however small that element may be. As David L. Eng and Shinee Han write, “the experience of immigration itself is based on a structure of mourning” (2003: 352). At the same time as many interview participants describe their migration processes in similar terms as many migrants in the privileged migration literature, that is, they position themselves as somehow different from migrants who have moved from more common out-migration countries, these as well as other narratives were also underwritten by loss. The narratives resonated of mourning over what had been left behind as well as what, often quite unexpectedly and unceremoniously, had been plunked in place of what used to be there. Often participants had difficulties formulating their loss:

like Winterson in the quote above, they “felt the missing-ness of the missing,” but had a hard time pinpointing what they had lost.

Sara Ahmed writes that when we are comfortable, when we sink into the comfortable chair to the point that “it is hard to distinguish where one’s body ends and the world begins” (2004a: 148), we do not notice what we have. However, once it is removed, we feel the loss. At the same time, not all interview participants I met are confused in the face of loss, mourning, and missing-ness as part of their migration. As I show in this chapter, this confusion is closely connected to whether one is used to being in line or not: how the entanglement one is caught in tends to show one’s gender identity, race, class, nationality, and a colonial and geopolitical history as places that stop and bring one out of line or not when a cut is placed in the entanglement in order to study a particular situation.

By analyzing the narrative of Jasmin from the US and her Swedish wife Emma, and the narrative of Max from an African country,⁴³ I discuss the emotion of loss. Their narratives show how loss because of a migration can be experienced very differently depending on an individual’s entanglement at that moment and what has led up to it. The entanglement one is caught in affects what one loses and thus mourns, but also what one *expects* to lose in a migration process.

This chapter begins with Jasmin and Emma’s narrative, examining what loss can feel like from a privileged position. I then go on to discuss the loss of the independent relationship as an effect of migration, drawing on several interview participant narratives to show how migrating partners often become emotionally dependent on the non-migrating partner and the emotional labour required to live in a partner migration relationship. Finally, I discuss Max’s narrative, analyzing how loss works in those instances where a migrating partner expects to lose and mourn as part of a migration. However, I start by explaining how I understand the emotion of loss to work in (queer) migration.

43. As I discussed in the chapter on methodology, participants chose how they wanted the country they have roots in to be mentioned in the dissertation. Max chose to identify the country he moved from as ‘an African country.’

MIGRATION AS MOURNING AND DISPLACEMENT

Most scholarly work focusing on migration and loss examines this loss from a psychological point of view (cf. Ainslie et al. 2013; Carswell et al. 2011; Henry 2012; Tummala-Narra 2014; S. Wright 2009) or discusses it in relation to migrants who have experienced trauma prior to migration, often refugees fleeing war zones, but also migrants who have left their countries of origin because of political repression or economic inequalities (cf. James 2014; Khan 2013; Marchetti-Mercer 2012; Sandell 2010). However, as the Winterson quote I started the chapter with alludes to, loss can be understood as the felt absence of something, an embodied experience of something that is no longer in our lives, the mourning of that which is missing. This means it can be felt in, and applied to, most migration situations, and in this chapter I discuss loss as an emotion informing social identities and understandings of subjectivity.

Judith Butler argues that loss “seem[s] to follow from our being socially constituted bodies, attached to others, at risk of losing those attachments” (2009: 387). She contends that in order for there to be something to lose, there must first be something that was *had*, something that was desired and loved. However, and importantly, we do not always know what it is we have lost; we simply experience the loss, meaning that something is also lost *within* the loss. In terms of a migration, this might mean not consciously having ‘had’ that which one ‘had’ and lost, but rather noticing how important it was and is once one is cut off from it. As Eng and Han point out, “when one leaves one’s country of origin, voluntarily or involuntarily, one must mourn a host of losses both concrete and abstract. These include homeland, family, language, identity, property, status in the community – the list goes on” (2003: 352). These now-losses may have been taken for granted prior to the migration; one feels the loss only because that which was is no longer there. This is similar to Sara Ahmed’s (2004a, 2007) metaphor of the comfortable chair: we only notice the chair we sink into once it is less comfortable, that is, once what we took as a given is gone.

CHAPTER 6

Butler argues that loss changes us, that we perhaps mourn our losses because we accept that they will change us forever. Loss has a transformative effect, but there is no telling what that transformation or the end result may look once it is complete. Instead, “one is hit by waves. [...] One finds oneself fallen. One is exhausted but does not know why. Something larger than one’s own deliberate plan, one’s own project, one’s own knowing and choosing” has taken over (Butler 2009: 388). Butler also maintains that we understand loss to be temporary; after, for example, a migration we expect life to return to normalcy, that eventually, “mourning will be over and some restoration of prior order will be achieved” (2009: 388). Life will continue and go back to normal, even though the loss has occurred. However, she asks if it could be the case that loss says something about *who we are*, meaning that if we lose certain people or leave a place, we also lose *ourselves* because the ties between ‘I’ and ‘you’ are disrupted (2009: 338), leaving ‘me’ changed as ‘you’ are lost.

As Ursula Kelly points out, “the migrant story” is one “that holds peculiar tensions of loss and hope as its central premise” (2009: 23). Loss is, in a sense, the story of migration, and the losses partner migrants experience are perhaps somewhat different than those of many other migrants because, and this is a crucial point worth emphasizing: partner migrants in newly established relationships usually leave *everyone* behind when moving. While some migrate with children from previous relationships, they more often migrate alone, and, I would venture to say, hardly ever together with extended family members such as parents or siblings. As I discuss in this chapter, for queer partner migrants there may also be even fewer cultural contexts and relations from the country they have roots in to tap into in the country of migration, as they are not always comfortable or welcome in straight diasporic communities.

At the same time, a partner migration is voluntary, meaning the losses the migrant experiences are quite different from those occurring in a forced migration. However, this does not mean the losses are *felt* any less intensely; Kelly (2009) describes her pain of leaving and living away from the remote Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador, even though her migration ‘only’ took her to another

province in the same country. She describes experiencing not only “profound displacement and disorientation” (2009: 32), but also the nostalgia which tinges losses caused by migration, maintaining that “returning is often a re-experience or an intensification of loss” (2009: 35). The returnee becomes someone ‘in between,’ someone from neither ‘here’ nor ‘there,’ with a continued feeling of displacement as a result. These feelings are not necessarily altered because the migration is voluntary. And, as I examine in this chapter, not only do migrating partners experience loss as a result of the migration, but non-migrating partners do as well.

Loss and migration are often discussed in terms of displacement: being dispossessed and transplanted, resulting in the loss of people and communities as well as being removed from geographical places – countries, cities, villages, neighbourhoods. However, migration can cause us to experience other types of losses as well, and as I discuss in this chapter, one of these can be the loss of being in line and of not being stopped; to mourn a comfortable movement through space that the migration strips you of. This interruption also causes disorientation; suddenly the migrant as well as the non-migrating partner are orientated uncomfortably and differently.

I start this chapter by discussing Jasmin and Emma’s narrative, and the feelings the loss of privileges can cause.

JASMIN AND EMMA’S STORY: LOSING WHO YOU ARE IN THE WORLD

When I meet Jasmin, who is forty, and Emma, who is forty-four, they are housesitting an old house, belonging to friends, in a leafy and green suburb. Usually, they explain, they live in a quite small apartment in the middle of the city center. We sit in the dining area while Jasmin and Emma’s child plays on the floor and their dog sleeps under the table. Jasmin is American, while Emma is Swedish, and they are both white and cisgendered. They are, as well, both middle class, highly educated, and passionate about their professions, which has led them to work abroad in several different countries. This is

also how they met. If forced to label themselves, they both identify as lesbian or gay. As Jasmin says, “I like the word queer secretly when I think of myself. But I like the word gay to describe me. As a person, and hopefully, you know, like the fifth word used to describe me after... oh, maybe like an athlete and a sister and a mom and... you know? Somewhere further down the line.”

Jasmin embodies the privileged migrant I mention in the introductory chapter and the chapter on academic backgrounds in that she moved from a northern non-traditional migrant-sending country (Knowles & Harper 2009) as a white Western person (Fechter & Walsh 2010). The privileged migrant position runs through Jasmin and Emma’s narrative, and many of the feelings they experience in their migration process stem from this position. They are also privileged in terms of class, education, and gender identity, and if we only compare the strands of their entanglements that show up if making a cut to examine them at the moment of their interview, Jasmin and Emma could be assumed to experience their migration process similar to Lisa and Bea’s easy and relaxed narrative, which opened the chapter on methodology. However, Jasmin and Emma’s narrative shows that ‘privileged migration’ is much more complex than the privileges taken together, and that by analyzing the feelings involved in the migration process, we can begin to understand why.

When I meet them, Jasmin and Emma have been together for almost six years, and Jasmin has lived in Sweden for close to four years. They got married a year earlier, and their child was born around the same time. However, they met about six years before they actually became a couple, though nothing happened, because, as Jasmin says, “I flirted with Emma and she was not seeing me at all, you could tell she was emotionally unavailable.” She laughs when she describes her first meetings with Emma: “Emma just sat there and looked at me and she didn’t say anything. I thought still, gosh, I think she’s special, I think she’s a nice person.”

Jasmin and Emma are both very talkative. They have so much they want to say, and they think of their migration process as something important that influences their lives. Theirs is a jointly created narrative; compared to Alejandro and Fredrik in the previous

chapter, who constantly negotiate their narrative with one another, Jasmin and Emma do not question each other or consider there to be individual versions of the narrative. However, while it is a joint narrative it is also one created by two *individuals*; their relationship is not a 'unit' which produces its own narrative. This is different from some other couples' narratives where participants speak with one voice and from the perspective of their relationship rather than from their individual points of view. By contrast, Jasmin and Emma are two individuals who want to involve me, a third individual, in a conversation about their relationship. While Jasmin takes more space, both in the interview and in the narrative, it does not mean that Emma's voice is less present, but rather that they both seem to consider Jasmin's experiences more relevant for our conversation. Jasmin and Emma also take on different roles as they tell their story: while Jasmin is at times angry, frustrated, and quite animated when speaking, Emma takes on the role of toning down, and also cooling down, Jasmin's accounts at the same time as she essentially agrees with them.

Falling in Love

Jasmin and Emma had not been in contact for several years when they got in touch again by chance. This started daily email exchanges consisting of long letters, poems, songs, and pictures. Jasmin says, "I looked for Emma's mails every day as the high point of my day," while Emma adds, "It was really exciting with all the emails and everything." On the one hand, Jasmin says that when she asked Emma, a few weeks into their email correspondence, if she wanted to visit her in the US, "there was no thought of, oh, then we'll be together romantically," to which Emma empathetically says, "No, no!" On the other hand, Jasmin also says, "I just loved the way you [Emma] wrote and during those three months of writing I started to fall in love with Emma and this side of her that I hadn't seen before and you have to admit you had feelings too..." to which Emma equally empathetically answers, "Absolutely!"

As a result of their emailing, Emma visited Jasmin in the US for two weeks, and the two realized their feelings quite quickly:

Jasmin: It didn't take very long. The second day Emma was visiting we went for a hike and... ehm, we came back from the hike and it had been just a pleasant quiet day and... before we got in the car I came around to give you [Emma] a hug and we stood there hugging for half an hour. Just hugging for half an hour and I could, we could hear footsteps coming and going, cars driving in, cars driving out... and we just hugged and hugged and hugged... and I knew that I was in trouble then. The rest of the two weeks we were pretty much like on a honeymoon. So yeah, then the question for me was, "Okay, who moves where first?"
[laughs]

Emma: I'm more realistic than Jasmin, I think emotionally I can be more... practical. We completely fell in love. Of course. All the while I was thinking, my god, we're adults, we can't have... I can't keep up a long-distance relationship to the US. Jasmin said, "But Emma, shouldn't we be together?" And I was like, no, hang on, this turns my whole life upside down. Everything is really turned upside down. I had... a good life at home, or so I thought. But we... we continued, of course.

The quote above shows how Jasmin and Emma use romantic love as the foundational emotion to their migration (Harding 2009); they constitute and recognize themselves through love, something they return to several times in their narrative. Their love legitimizes Jasmin's move to and life in Sweden, but more importantly, they understand it to be fundamentally important in the sense that it means they *should* be together. As I discussed in the previous chapter on love, if one is in love, the 'good' and 'true' story of love (Nordin 2007) says the love should direct one's life. This means that despite describing herself as being very hesitant, Emma in the quote above

still says, “we continued, of course.” Love, in Jasmin and Emma’s narrative, is an unstoppable force, similar to Nelly’s narrative in the previous chapter.

The Importance of Work and Financial Privileges

After this first visit, Jasmin and Emma tried to meet up every two months, which usually meant that Emma went to the US, as she had more annual leave available to her. At this point, Emma could not move to the US as Jasmin’s partner as their relationship was not recognized for migration purposes there⁴⁴, and Jasmin did not want to move to Sweden right away as she wanted to stay in her new job for two years to pay off the loans she had taken to put herself through graduate school. The plan was that Emma would eventually move to the US to study for a year⁴⁵, but in order for her to save up enough money to pay for her studies and stay out of work for a full year, they kept up the long-distance relationship for a year and a half.

This part of the narrative helps position Jasmin and Emma in relation to their work situations, and their narrative often comes back to the importance of work and professional identity. The fact that they met through work is significant, as is that they had both been working abroad in several countries. They share an understanding of the importance of their work, and they express that they thrive on the challenges that working in new environments bring. They are used to work being the reason they move around in the world, and, as I discuss later, work had also previously grounded them in their new contexts abroad.

44. In 2013, partner migration to the US was extended to queer couples who have been legally married in an American state or other country or jurisdiction in which same-sex marriage is legal. However, at the time of my interview with Jasmin and Emma, these rules were not in effect.

45. As a fee-paying student, Emma is allowed temporary residence based on her studies rather than on her relationship to Jasmin.

Jasmin and Emma are in line in the sense that they are quite comfortably aligned along lines of gender identity, race, class, education, and nationality: they are not stopped or brought out of line for these reasons. Work is another factor that brings them into line and orientates them correctly. Their professions work as alignment tools by placing them in middle to upper-middle class. Also, the kind of jobs Jasmin and Emma both had before Jasmin moved to Sweden meant they had the financial resources and the flexibility to visit each other often, as well as the capacity to save up money for the year that Emma spent as a student in the US. Their narrative positions them as financially stable, and Jasmin has worked most of her time in Sweden, even though, as I discuss below, these have not always been jobs that correspond to her qualifications or to her perception of where she belongs in the labour market. This has, however, meant she has not had to depend financially on Emma in ways that, for example, Nelly, on the one hand, and Alejandro and Fredrik, on the other, describe in their narratives in the previous chapter. For Jasmin and Emma, this produces an equality in their relationship.

Entangled Privileges

Jasmin and Emma are the only participants I interviewed who had lived together in the country of the non-migrating partner before moving to Sweden, and thus the only participants who were able to compare their relationship and life this way. The year they lived together in the US was more difficult than they had anticipated. Emma describes it as “my hard year” and that she felt lost, in particular because she could not work. She says: “I had to go to school, and that’s not what I wanted or had any... need for or... Even if it feels like fun, after the fact.” Jasmin admits having difficulties understanding this at the time – “It’s so great to study! It’s so much fun!” – and acknowledges she did not consider that Emma taking courses she had no need for in her already established professional life, or studying with students 15 years her junior, could be challenging rather than fun. Jasmin was also working up to 14 hours a day, which left Emma home alone much of the time, even though the point of

Emma's move had been to develop the relationship and get to know each other better.

Jasmin: I could see her getting sadder and sadder and not wanting to have friends visit and stuff. And I thought, what's the big deal? I really didn't understand because it was only going to be for a year, it wasn't permanent.

Emma: We had said that after a year we would move to Sweden and try it out.

Jasmin: And I was going to leave everything so I kept thinking, that's a big jump, and it is. You have to be positive about it. But I think I understand better... a little bit better now. So after... after that year, by the end of the year I was thinking, wow, our relationship doesn't feel totally steady. But I love Emma and there's nobody else I want to be with, there is... ehm, I have a sense of home with Emma. And it felt good to leave my job and say I was going off to do something exciting, for one, and for two, this was right when Obama was running for the presidency and everyone felt that they really needed a sense of hope about the US. So many people came into my office and said, "If Obama doesn't win, can we move to Sweden too?" So there were a lot of factors that made Sweden the only way I could... I could go, be with Emma... you know, kind be that part of myself that lived in other countries and... and... and above all take a big chance on love.

Jasmin describes Emma as getting "sadder and sadder" while they lived in the US. This feeling is also what allows Emma to position herself in their joint narrative as understanding what Jasmin experienced once they moved to Sweden, as I go on to discuss below. As such, this particular feeling of sadness 'does' something in their narrative, as it means Emma can relate to Jasmin's losses and understand them as tied to the migration, something I discuss more in the section

following Jasmin and Emma's narrative in this chapter. This sadness connects to love, which is what both Jasmin and Emma understand as the reason for Jasmin's move to Sweden. However, in the quote above, Jasmin describes the decision to move as coming about for more complex reasons than 'just' love. She was "going off to do something exciting," she "needed a sense of hope" about the place she was in at that moment, and she wanted to "be that part of [herself] that lived in other countries." This connects to a part of Jasmin and Emma's narrative that includes stories of living and working abroad that I mentioned above and will come back to later. While Jasmin describes their relationship as not "totally steady," she still chooses to move, and she looks at the move as something fun and exciting.

I want to briefly stop here and emphasize the privileged strands that intertwine to make up the entanglements that Jasmin and Emma are caught in, and that they create their narrative in relation to. As I discussed in the chapter on academic backgrounds, Jasmin and Emma certainly could be positioned as non-privileged because they are queer and so cannot choose to live in the US. However, in regards to all other aspects brought up in their narrative, they enjoy a number of privileges that align them and allow them to move through life without being stopped, including having their relationship recognized for migration purposes in Sweden. Kathryn Choules calls privileges "characteristics [that provide] an individual with a unique set of 'credentials' that they bring to any situation" (2006: 283), while Michael Kimmel compares privilege to a wind: "to walk with [that] wind at your back is to float, to sail effortlessly, expending virtually no energy. [...] You do not feel how it pushes you along; you feel only the effortlessness of your movements. You feel like you could go on forever" (2003: 1). As Ahmed (2007) points out, privileges are rarely *experienced* as such: while in the comfortable chair that extends our body, we cannot feel where our body ends and the chair begins until something occurs that questions or removes a certain privilege.

From a privileged position, one has the power, as Edmund O'Sullivan writes, to name the world as well as the ability to organize everything "into one's own frame of reference to the exclusion of any other" (1999: 133). However, as I attempt to show throughout

this study, privilege is not static and changes depending on context, meaning “we move in and out of positions of privilege, both on a daily basis and over our lifetime” (Choules 2006: 283). As such, privileges can be lost, and as Jasmin and Emma’s narrative shows, losing them can be quite traumatic and painful. A privileged migration, and an entanglement that aligns the individual to the point that they feel ‘in place’ in most situations, do not insulate from feeling the migration intensely. This is, for example, obvious in Alejandro and Fredrik’s narrative in the previous chapter.

Confusion and Separation in Sweden

While describing their relationship as “not totally steady” above, and later also “not entirely stable,” Jasmin and Emma still decide to move to Sweden together after their year together in the US.

Jasmin: When I moved here I thought, I’m just going to learn Swedish like that and... get a great job and no problem! Because I... everything has always been so easy for me in the US. But during the first year, here in Sweden... ehm... I studied a lot of Swedish. I didn’t get a job right away. I broke my hand. Freak stuff happened. Somebody stole my bicycle.

Emma: [*breaks in:*] The only thing she brought from America.

Jasmin: Yeah, a... a triathlon bicycle, a really nice one. Somebody attacked me on the street, picked me up [*shows how the person picked her by the front of her shirt with two hands*] and said [*imitates in angry voice:*] “How dare you touch my car!?” and I... I could-- I understood what he said in Swedish but I couldn’t say a word. And... and... and... I shook! And afterwards I just... I think I lost it. The only job I got was a good job but part-time and only on a project basis and... I was feeling about that big

[*measures a few centimeters between her thumb and index finger*]. So every time Emma and I had a conflict, even if it wasn't a conflict around us, if I was frustrated, I yelled, and this isn't a side of me that I had experienced before in any other relationship. I yelled and sometimes threw things and... it was a really sad development... I mean, my whole sense of being just felt... so... terrible. And I said, I wanna go home! What I wanted was to feel at home. I wanted the prestige, I wanted my job back. I wanted to feel strong and tall and I didn't feel like any of those things were true for me at that moment. And so Emma said, "Then you get to go home." And... and... she said basically, "This is the end of the road for me, I can't have a relationship like this." It was totally traumatic, I lied on the floor and cried, no, no, no, no, I don't want to go, I don't want to go!

Emma: [*with tears in her eyes*] Mmm... Yes, it was really hard. It's really emotional still. It took all our energy, for both of us.

Both Jasmin and Emma position themselves in their narrative as free individuals who make *choices* about their lives, and, as I go on to discuss below, specifically choices about where to move and where to live. In the quote above, Jasmin speaks of not finding a job in Sweden right away, and when she finally gets one, it is not the kind she would have liked, but part-time and temporary. Given that Jasmin and Emma place great importance on their jobs and strongly identify with their professions, not getting a job at all and then not having a job in her profession makes Jasmin feel she has lost prestige. It means she is stopped and brought out of line as she is no longer the professional she identifies as. Being attacked in the street for brushing against someone's car could have happened anywhere, but it happens during her first year in Sweden, which leaves her feeling more vulnerable than if it had happened somewhere else or at another point in time. The bicycle that is stolen is, apart from expensive, also one of very few items Jasmin has brought with her from the US, meaning it connects

her to her 'old' life and has emotional value. From being a successful professional who felt "strong and tall," who could speak her mind in a language she felt comfortable with and was listened to, the migration reduces Jasmin to feeling small and "terrible": it robs her of the person she understands herself to be, leaving her disoriented. She has lost her ability to 'feel at home,' and Jasmin's feelings of confusion, anger, and discomfort when brought out of line eats its way into Jasmin and Emma's relationship, causing a separation.

Part of telling a narrative is the alignment work that occurs in the telling, when the participants orientate themselves along certain lines in their narrative. Jasmin and Emma's feelings in the quote above help orientate the narrative they are telling in a number of ways. On a basic level, the feelings conveyed 'do' something in the sense that they make Jasmin and Emma separate. But the feelings of their narrative also position and categorize Jasmin and Emma: they orientate themselves as taken by surprise by these feelings, placing themselves in a category of migrants not expecting an emotionally trying migration. This is of course not surprising; the entanglements they are caught in do not prepare them for feelings like the ones Jasmin describes in the quote. Instead, Jasmin assumed she would learn Swedish and get a job "because everything has always been so easy for [her] in the US." The world has always been open (Grandin 2007; Lundström 2014; Tesfahuney & Schough 2010) to Jasmin and Emma, and they both assumed Jasmin's (privileged) experiences in the US could be transferred when migrating. In short, the pain the migration brought was not a pain they expected a white American to encounter when moving to a northern European country.

I will come back to this and tie it to the narrative of 'the migrant' below, but first I want to compare it to the concept of emotional privilege, which Patricia Parker and Jennifer Mease (2009) and Carissa Froyum (2014) examine in relation to whiteness. According to Froyum, part of white privilege is having "control over feeling scripts" in social settings and to "routinely [feel] positive emotions, such as comfort and satisfaction" (2014: 82). Privileged migration is closely tied to whiteness privileges as well as privileges connected with Western nationality. Jasmin feels frustrated, confused, and angry

because the move to Sweden unsettles her, and by extension also Emma's, place in the world. They do not expect these feelings, and they are, if we follow Froyum's argument, not used to feeling them in response to social structures and settings. However, these feelings point to something very interesting: they question and unsettle the assumption of the 'easy' privileged migration. I will come back to this soon, but I want to briefly point out here that this is similar to Alejandro and Fredrik's narrative in the previous chapter on love, as they too are surprised by the feelings the migration conjures.

After Jasmin and Emma separate, Jasmin moves back to the US. She unsuccessfully tries to keep her Swedish job, saying of this that it meant, "I suddenly lost everything again. I had already sold off everything I owned in the US before moving to Sweden, my car, everything I owned except for my bed." During the six months or so that Jasmin spends in the US she finds the exact kind of job she wants, meets people whom she can identify with in terms of how they live and how they view their relationships, feels at home, and feels comfortable again. No longer a migrant, she is once again aligned and orientated along the same lines as those around her. What was lost is restored. At the same time, she lost Emma, the person she loves: no matter what she chooses, she loses part of herself.

The Assumption of the Easy Migration

Both Emma and Jasmin had assumed an easy migration to Sweden, but for slightly different reasons. After what they perceived as a quite challenging year in the US, Emma says, "I assumed it would be so calm back home, everything here in Sweden is so easy. You [Jasmin] would learn Swedish and make friends. And of course you would get a job, it's like you said, everything has always gone well for you in life... always." Emma clearly links 'home' and 'Sweden' with 'easy,' probably because living in Sweden has always been easy for her; she has always been in line, and she assumes that Jasmin, because her life has been going well everywhere else, also will be able to capitalize on this 'easiness' and fall in line. Jasmin similarly thought of her move to Sweden in relation to her previous moves to other countries:

I always said I was here [in Sweden] for the indefinite future, which didn't mean permanent, but didn't mean like a few years either. And... that allowed me to treat it like I've treated every other situation which was, this is kind of glamorous, you know, I can do anything, blah blah blah. The difference for me was that I didn't have a job and I didn't have any friends here. So there was no other structure outside of Emma that... that was already inviting me in. In the other countries, I had my job and my colleagues. There was a purpose for us being there, and it was for short times, and I knew exactly what I was there to do. But... yeah... just [the lack of] the job is... what made me feel so empty.

Catrin Lundström suggests that for privileged white migrants, “contemporary transnational migration is accompanied by a ‘taken-for-granted-ness’ of the right to mobility and access to ‘foreign’ places” (2014: 5). This is captured by Jasmin when she says that previous moves to other countries have made her feel “I can do anything.” Later in the interview, Emma adds to this by saying:

I recognize myself from when I was in the US, and I definitely recognized it in Jasmin now afterwards, especially when you can see that behind the anger, of course you get it... It's damn hard to leave everything and... when you don't have the foundation that going to a job is. Like she often says, we've both done this, if you move to another country for work, well, there are no problems, you're big and strong, you can handle anything! There are no problems you can't handle. Like, whatever it is. Everything from travelling to illnesses to conflicts to threats, basically nothing can... but, damn, it's hard when it comes to love and everything just wobbles like this. *[moves her hand quickly from side to side to illustrate something wobbling]*

Jasmin treating her move to Sweden as “every other situation” when she has worked and lived abroad, and Emma’s assumption of an easy migration, where Jasmin would find a job and friends, point to their joint understanding of who they are and what they can do. However, this time, without realizing it at first, they are part of a different narrative: that of ‘the migrant’ rather than ‘the expatriate’ or ‘the Westerner living abroad for a while.’ Suddenly, Jasmin’s migration status stops them, limits their movements, and orientates them along different lines. In their narrative they describe the loss they both experience as a loss of work and a professional context. However, as I go on to show below, although they do not articulate it explicitly, their narrative also speaks strongly of the loss of privileges that being inserted into a migration context entails.

Emma, however, has a point when she says that moving somewhere for work means one “can handle anything” but “it’s hard when it comes love and everything wobbles.” Migrating for love *is* different from migrating for work or studies, because, generally, the ties of love tie more strongly. While both types of migration cause the migrant to establish bonds to their new context that they may want to keep, the romantic love discourse is so all-encompassing that while one can give up a job because one does not like the place it is located in, not liking where one lives should not mean giving up on love. Doing so would be betraying the love, making it a failure. As long as love is present, this should, according to dominant discourse, be the most important (cf. Langford 1999). Also, romantic love, by definition, means that one’s life is entangled in someone else’s. Whatever one chooses (stay or go back or go elsewhere), one will, like Jasmin, always lose, and one will experience loss.

To Be Aligned along Migrant Lines

According to Butler (2009: 388), we do not exist independently of what we lose, but the attachment between ourselves and what is lost constitutes a part of ourselves. Losing the attachment to her ‘old’ world – her language, her profession, her social network – and being re-orientated along the line of a migrant also means Jasmin loses

herself. Jasmin and Emma did not understand that this attachment could be lost, instead thinking “things have always been so easy” and that moving between different countries was “glamorous”; when the migration to Sweden stopped Jasmin and their relationship, they were bewildered. However, as Lundström argues, when white subjects are “out of place” (2014: 1), that is, no longer in their white northern countries of origin, the term ‘migrant’ does not, in Ahmed’s (2004a) words, usually stick to them. This is the reason terms such as ‘expatriate’ and ‘mobile professional’ are used instead. Jasmin is, however, no longer an expatriate or a mobile professional. She is being written into the narrative of the migrant, instead of being the cosmopolitan individual she is used to being.

Being orientated as a migrant means the ‘here’ that Jasmin is now forced to orientate herself from is very different from the ‘here’ that she inhabited and was able to orientate herself from as a cosmopolitan global subject. Part of the loss she experiences is therefore the loss of feeling she can “do anything,” which is connected to the privileged cosmopolitan position she is used to occupy, and most likely still occupies in some situations. Ahmed (2004a) argues that privileges are invisible to those who possess them, and as I go on to discuss below, neither Jasmin nor Emma seem to have articulated to themselves previously what doors their privileges of whiteness, cisgenderedness, Western-ness, education, and class open for them. However, when some of the privileges are removed, they feel the loss.

A few months after their separation, Jasmin and Emma decided to give their relationship another shot. Jasmin moved back to Sweden. A migration necessitates contact with many different public offices in the first year or two, and in Sweden this always includes contact with the Migration Agency in regards to residence permit applications and residence permit cards⁴⁶ (for those required to apply for residency),

46. All migrants who are granted a residence permit of three months or more are required to obtain a residence permit card. The card features a microchip with the migrant’s photo and fingerprints, and proves the bearer’s right to remain in Sweden. The card is to be presented in all dealings with Swedish government authorities and health care providers (Swedish Migration Agency 2015d).

as well as with the Tax Agency to obtain a civic registration number and perhaps also an ID card. It may also include contact with various Swedish language training providers, the Public Employment Service, health care providers and dentists, banks in order to open a bank account, the Transport Administration to obtain a Swedish driver's license, and many other services only available to residents. Speaking of her first year in Sweden and this part of the process, Jasmin is animated and frustrated when saying:

It stressed me out to know that my life was so dependent on Emma and that there was no place I could go and be independent on my own, loving Emma but still taking care of my own needs here. There was no place I could call to say, "How do you apply for a civic registration number?" or "What are the first steps I should take here as an immigrant?" "What about health care, when do I get health care and when do I not?" And then, with the tax authority... why do I have to come in five times and stand in line each time for two hours or... or more? That seems extremely destructive, you know, I have a life too. And why does Emma have to be there each time? Why can't I just bring a document she has certified? I feel really like a big baby with the way everyone is treating me through Emma. That dependency is huge! And if there were just one non-governmental organization that took care of those aspects, like an ombudsperson, only after the person, him or herself, has exhausted all of their possible solutions or problems on their own. Like, give a person a chance first, of course, you need to empower people but then... I looked around at all of the people who were with me at the Migration Agency, the Tax Agency... everything. And we... I felt like I was in a pool of lost people. And *why* should they all go around lost? Okay, there are brochures, there are little bits of information, not the whole picture but just small bits of information on pieces of paper in different languages. That's great. But you need the big picture, you need

somebody kind of like an administrator or something. Sort of like what the Employment Service does but... but on a... 'Welcome to Sweden' basis.

Emma: It's a lot of things you have to do.

Jasmin: It is a lot of things. And it takes a long time to do each thing.

Emma: [*to Sara:*] It's hard for us too, you know, as Swedish people. I mean, we haven't done that before [having to register for a civic registration number, for health care, etc.], so... it takes time to really find out...

Jasmin and Emma's feelings of frustration are a result of being used to understanding the bigger picture. Their education and class are the particular strands that stand out when we make a cut to examine their entanglements in this particular situation. However, also other strands 'carrying' privileges, such as whiteness and cisgenderedness, mean they expect to understand what is happening to them. However, as countries are mainly organized around residents while little attention is paid to what those who have not previously resided there might need to know, they do not receive this. The quote above shows how Jasmin and Emma through the creation of their narrative as one of frustration and anger around not having enough information, having to wait, having to visit government agencies several times, and Jasmin as a then-temporary resident being treated 'through' Emma, orientate their narrative, and, in extension, the two of them along lines that allow them to ask why this is happening to *them*.

Froyum (2014) argues that higher-status individuals have the emotional privilege to demand empathy and validation of their experiences. Jasmin and Emma understand themselves to be aligned along lines where one is spoken to directly, not through someone else, and does not wait in line in impersonal government offices. The feeling of discomfort when treated this way works to question how 'Sweden' is organized at the same time as it also aligns their narrative along lines that ask the listener to empathize with and validate their

experiences of Jasmin being treated like a migrant as perplexing. The feelings of discomfort, anger, and frustration are Jasmin and Emma's, but they are created through the shared migrant emotion of loss.

Jasmin resents being what she perceives as infantilized in her contacts with government agencies, and wants to be able to find out information on her own. She is quite aware of what *kind* of processes she needs to go through to formalize her life in Sweden, even though she does not necessarily know exactly what those processes are. Not knowing, and not being given the information in a coherent and recognizable form, is what she aims her frustration at: she wants to be able to do it herself, "be independent on my own, loving Emma but still taking care of my own needs here." The migration has caused her to lose her independence, which makes her angry. If she could have her independence back, she would be able to orient herself along a, to her, familiar line.

However, knowledge and understanding how to navigate life is something all migrants lose. As Jeannie K. Wright writes in an autoethnographic article on migrating from the UK to New Zealand, "if knowledge is about power then I've lost any I ever had [...] The worst of it is I don't know what I don't know. People ask me, 'What do you need to know?' How the hell should I know?" (2009: 626). Wright calls this feeling "unconscious incompetence" (2009: 631), and goes on to say that she had not anticipated powerlessness to be such a central aspect of her transition (2009: 635). My interpretation is that neither Jasmin nor Emma had anticipated this powerlessness either, and Emma points out that it is difficult for her as well, as the non-migrating partner, because she is not in a position to help as she does not have all the information or know what needs to be done. Alejandro, in the previous chapter on love, makes a similar observation when he says that he did not realize the migration would be such "a big deal," and that he had "to make [his] way" in Sweden in a way he had not anticipated.

A partner migration, then, means two things: for one, the non-migrating partner is orientated differently from the migrating partner, as someone from 'here' while the migrating partner is pointed out as 'not from here.' As I discuss in the following chapter, in particular

those migrating partners who easily blend into white Sweden, and who are also used to be aligned ‘correctly’ (e.g. through cisgenderedness and middle-classness), are understood both by themselves and their partner to belong in Sweden in ways that make it difficult to also think of them as someone who, in other ways, does not belong. Their bodies are not obviously pointed out as not-belonging, and they can move quite invisibly through the white room that Sweden is until they make a request and either language or lack of knowledge exposes them as not-belonging. This makes those points where they are stopped because they are ‘different’ from the non-migrating partner very obvious.

Second, the non-migrating partner also experiences a loss when Sweden – which Emma describes above as having perceived as ‘easy’ and ‘calm’ before their move from the US – becomes alien, complicated, non-comprehensible, and sometimes unfriendly. Compared to citizens of many other countries, Swedish people are generally not suspicious of government institutions and ‘the state,’ but rather perceive national bureaucracies to be working for them; there is mostly a widespread trust that government institutions will help, not hinder them (Lundåsen & Trädgårdh 2013; Trädgårdh 2009). The non-migrating partner, who may always have been in line before, and thus not experienced being stopped by various government systems, must now reconcile themselves with the fact that their partner and their relationship are consistently stopped in their interactions with the Migration Agency, the Tax Agency, and so on. To go from being aligned to always queering an interaction and thus being stopped takes a toll, and means the non-migrating partner may lose their trust in Sweden as they are used to knowing it. Something they thought they knew is no longer a given.

Losing Prestige as a Migrant

In the interview, Jasmin comes to back several times how the main thing she has lost in her move to Sweden is her sense of self, which neither she nor Emma had anticipated. She says, “The whole experience of that first year was so... ehm... hard for me and, and also so... [*sighs*] I want to say I learned so much but I don’t know

what I've learned but I learned so much. [*laughs a little*] And I had such an identity crisis." This feeling of 'learning' is echoed by Wright when reflecting on her move to New Zealand: "I can't go through this – or put myself through this – without gaining something from it. Character building? [...] [M]aybe I can learn from it. Huh..." (2009: 629). In their narrative, Jasmin and Emma struggle to pinpoint exactly *what* it is that creates these feelings of 'things' being 'difficult.' I would like to tie this to Froyum's (2014) argument that privileged individuals, who are usually 'correctly' aligned, are used to routinely feeling positive feelings while shifting emotional labour and emotional burdens to those out of line, that is, those who queer their surroundings and do not easily move through space without being stopped. These are the subjects who tend to carry emotional burdens (see also Parker & Mease 2009). However, the migration has shifted such a burden onto Jasmin and Emma, which they are unused to.

A focus of Jasmin and Emma's narrative is not having a job or not the kind of job one would like to have. That said, there is more to it, and Jasmin touches on it in one of the quotes above when she says, "What I wanted was to feel at home. I wanted the prestige [...]. I wanted to feel strong and tall." She also goes on to say, "In Sweden, it's like a paradise in so many ways – that was my image. Why would I be so alone as an immigrant? Why? Immigrants are making up a... *huge* part of Sweden's population nowadays. This is ridiculous. We need to help people in order for them to give back to the country and to each other." She perceives herself to be in a "pool of lost people," but emphasizes how she also feels alone. Jasmin has lost her idea of Sweden being a "paradise," and her feelings of anger, frustration, confusion, loneliness, and sadness are at least partly tied to the loss of her privileges, as being aligned along the lines of a migrant necessarily means she loses some of these privileges.

Ahmed writes that whiteness is "worldly"; that "whiteness describes the very 'what' that coheres as a world" (2007: 150). She argues that white bodies are orientated in different ways than non-white bodies, and that it mainly goes unnoticed by white individuals as the bodies and spaces they encounter are orientated around and towards whiteness, making whiteness that which everything else

starts from. It allows white bodies to sink into the comfortable chair without feeling where their own body ends and the chair starts (2007: 158). I argue that cisgenderedness can similarly be described “as the very ‘what’ that coheres as a world”; cisgenderedness, like whiteness, makes the body comfortable in the world.

Just as white bodies and cisgendered bodies are orientated certain ways, migrant bodies are also orientated along particular lines. Jasmin is both white *and* a migrant, and she places herself squarely in the category of ‘migrant’ when I ask whether she thinks of herself as one: “Yes, definitely! Without a doubt! I’m an immigrant.” That said, Jasmin and Emma’s narrative makes it clear that they did not expect a challenging migrant trajectory: while Jasmin identifies as a migrant, she did not expect this to have quite the impact on her life that it has had, nor that she would be orientated along migrant lines the way she has been. Compared to Lisa and Bea, whose narrative opened the chapter on methodology, and who share many of Jasmin and Emma’s Western migrant and cisgendered privileges, but who are not aligned along the line of a relationship including a migrant because they are not incorporated into the migration apparatus through the administrative migration processes to the same extent, Jasmin and Emma are forced to align themselves along the lines of a *particular* migrant narrative. This causes pain, and it is a loss of prestige.

Given that certain emotions stick more easily to some bodies (Ahmed 2004a), emotions connected to migrant discourses also stick to Jasmin. Analyzing hate in relation to migrant bodies, Ahmed (2004a) contends that the surface of the migrant body becomes sticky with negative images. As migrant bodies in a Swedish context are also assumed to be non-white (Hübinette et al. 2012; Hübinette & Mählck 2015), these negative emotions stick to non-white bodies in general, as non-white bodies are almost always perceived to also be migrant. While it does matter that Jasmin is white (‘migrant hate’ sticks less to her than to a person of colour like Max, whose narrative I discuss later in this chapter), migrant discourse emotions still do stick to her. This ties her (and, in extension, Emma) more closely to the category of migrants. They have previously moved through space comfortably, as the space has taken the shape of their bodies,

but it is now more uncomfortable; the space rubs up against them and has become more restrictive. Once one loses what one had, one becomes aware of it.

In the interview, Jasmin shows with her words as well as her body language and voice the anger and resentment she feels about her migration stopping her in her everyday life. This can be compared to Max, whose narrative I discuss below, who does not express this anger and frustration, but instead had assumed before even arriving in Sweden that a migration would stop him. Based on her narrative, little in Jasmin's life is likely to have prepared her for being stopped, and their narrative does not show signs of Jasmin and Emma having reflected on what a migration process would entail in terms of feelings and emotional labour, apart from what is intrinsic to a romantic relationship and being in love. They had both envisioned a fairly uncomplicated migration. What Jasmin "learned so much" about in her first year, Max already knew when he arrived. Although the knowledge Max had is not identical to what Jasmin learned, he knew the migration would not bring him in line due to the fact that his black, transgender, non-Western body has never been orientated or been allowed to become one with the comfortable chair in the white, cisgendered, Western-orientated world it lives in. He had already experienced being stopped and brought out of line, and did not need to learn it.

It is not that Jasmin and Emma are unaware of, for example, race; Jasmin states that she believes that being white has worked in her favour, saying, "It's been easier for me to get a job [in Sweden] and it's one less factor to work against." However, Jasmin and Emma's position in Sweden, but also in the world, allows them to *not* imagine a challenging migration trajectory or a loss of independence or status. Being cisgendered, middle class, educated, and from a Western country – and perhaps specifically because she is American, a nationality which is generally positively perceived in Sweden – means Jasmin has rarely had to question her place in the world as these privileges has allowed her body to, in Ahmed's words, 'extend into spaces that have already taken [the body's] shape' (2007: 158).

Coming 'Home' to Sweden

Both Jasmin and Emma position themselves as very independent individuals who are used to moving around freely and, in particular, invisibly. Being a migrant stops one, brings one out of line, and also makes one visible in new ways no matter where one is from. However, having moved through life without being stopped, Jasmin and Emma did not expect this to happen. While they kept their sexual orientation hidden in some countries they worked in, those countries were only temporary stops along the way, and also ones where their whiteness, nationalities, and the work they performed likely overrode other social processes of power, such as gender and a queer sexual orientation kept under wraps.

Sweden is now *home* to both of them, and, what is more, Sweden acknowledges their relationship and welcomes them. While they are literally stopped at the US border for being queer, Sweden does not stop, making it even less likely to envision being stopped for other reasons. Being orientated as a migrant always means less freedom and invisibility. This feeling is uncomfortable: instead of sinking into the comfortable chair, like they are used to, the migration queers them in ways they did not foresee. While the chair is still relatively comfortable, thanks to their whiteness, cisgenderedness, Westernness, education, and class, they are now much more aware of the chair and how their bodies fit into it. Jasmin's loss of a sense of self is, as I interpret it, a loss of comfort as well as awareness of that loss.

Jasmin and Emma's narrative shows that neither of them was prepared for how being orientated along the line of a migrant would have practical effects on their lives. Neither politically nor in our world of experiences is a migrant 'everyone' or 'just anyone'; the idea of 'the migrant' is a particular type of person (cf. Fechter & Walsh 2010; Lundström 2014). When the migration brings them out of line, Jasmin finds herself becoming a person she does not recognize, as becoming a migrant means becoming part of a category. For someone who is used to count as an individual only, this can be a difficult experience. As I discuss elsewhere (Ahlstedt 2015), I interpret the sad and melancholic, sometimes bitter and resentful, feelings in Jasmin

and Emma's narrative as feelings felt by someone who is not used to being treated like 'them,' the 'others.' Rather, it is someone who sees themselves as part of the 'us' of a country, but who is, to the migration apparatus, simply another migrant who needs to be incorporated into the national systems.

At the same time, Jasmin and Emma are not 'them' or the 'others' either, at least not in the way that we are used to understanding these terms. They still belong with 'us' much more than most other groups of migrants, but they no longer *feel* that they are included to the same extent that they used to be, simply because they are not used to being stopped. An example of this is when Jasmin describes the process of applying for Swedish residency for their child. As Jasmin gave birth to their child, he had no legal connection to Sweden, given that Emma had to go through an adoption process to legally become his second parent.⁴⁷ The story is told as part of a bigger story about being a queer person in migration process bureaucracies, and Jasmin is highly critical of this bureaucracy and the laws regulating it.

47. In Sweden, queer female couples and straight couples have equal access to government-funded insemination. If inseminating within the Swedish health care system, and if the couple is married when the baby is born, both partners in a straight couple automatically become the child's parents, while the non-birth mother in a queer female couple needs to sign a confirmation that the insemination occurred in Sweden in order to be assigned parenthood. In the case of non-married couples, whether queer or straight, the second parent needs to confirm their parenthood by signing relevant documentation showing that they confirm they are the child's second parent, and, in the case of queer couples, that the insemination occurred in Sweden. For straight couples, the above applies if the child is conceived through insemination in another country than Sweden as well. However, for queer female couples, when inseminating abroad only the birth mother is considered the child's parent at birth. Whether the queer couple is married or not is then irrelevant, as the non-birth mother always needs to go through an adoption process in order to become the child's second parent. As Jasmin and Emma inseminated in another country, these regulations applied to them and meant that Emma was required to adopt their child.

Jasmin: Emma and I were married when our child was born. And if Emma had been a man... and our child was born in Sweden, her fatherhood would have been immediately and automatically assigned to her regardless of whether I had an affair or whatever else. But because we are a same-sex couple, Emma had to adopt him. And it also meant that he was born stateless. So until I reported him to the US embassy, he had no country.

Emma: [*breaks in:*] So he was here illegally...

Jasmin: Yeah... When I reported him to the US embassy, he was an American but had no status in the Swedish system. He had a civic registration number because he was born here but he was otherwise a tourist. Although he had never been in the country where he was supposedly a citizen. So I called the Migration Agency and said, what should I do, you know, we don't want our child to be shut out of the country. So they said, "He needs a residence permit and it can be based on yours." So then I went to the Migration Agency and applied for a permanent permit for myself and then based on my own, a permanent permit for our child too. Even though I knew he was going to become a Swedish citizen as soon as Emma's adoption went through.

This example shows a fairly straightforward process, yet Jasmin is clearly frustrated as she recounts the story. The Swedish law in the case of queer parents is problematic and discriminatory, but Jasmin's frustration seems to be equally aimed at the migration process, the administrative hassle it creates, and the fact that she is stopped and orientated as a migrant. She comes across as having *no time* for being stopped, similar to when she earlier in the chapter laments other time-consuming bureaucratic processes, saying, "I have a life too." Becoming part of the category 'migrant' makes one both very visible – a person who needs to be made part of a particular political and social system – and simultaneously invisible, a 'nobody.' It also

creates a process where the migrant's emotional needs are placed last and, as I pointed out earlier, higher-status individuals, including privileged migrants, are used to having their emotional needs come first (Froyum 2014). As I argue above, it also makes one a little less white in a white world because whiteness does not stick as effectively to a migrant body as it does to non-migrant bodies.

Swapping Feelings

While Jasmin and Emma, in their narrative, do not connect their feelings in the migration process to the loss of privileges, which is what I argue is the cause of these feelings, I want to make clear that this does not make them ignorant. Rather, it shows that loss of one's self through migration can and is experienced by all migrants, no matter what kind of strands make up the entanglement they are caught in. Jasmin's life and experiences are written into a larger narrative of Western cosmopolitanism and the global independent subject (Ahlstedt 2015), which is, as I will show when discussing Max's narrative in the last section of this chapter, very different from being written into a narrative of racism, colonialism, and out-migration. Given there is no larger story of out-migration for white Americans that Jasmin can draw on, she is more likely to understand her feelings of loss as separate from being orientated as a migrant. While Max, who moved from an African country, is conscious of the story he is written into, Jasmin and Emma are not; rather than being steadied and rooted in a known narrative, things 'just happen' to them, they just 'become' and 'are.' Because they cannot fully grasp their own story, they are brought out of line in ways that shake them to the core. Their narrative shows the confusion and pain that being brought out of line can trigger, but also the connection between alignment and narrative. The feeling of disorientation that Jasmin and Emma experience is linked to other types of stories and narratives that they do not identify with.

As such, the losses caused by migration produce strong feelings, even if one is in possession of numerous privileges. As to the feelings of anger that Jasmin expresses in her narrative, Winterson uses the term “feelings-swap,” writing:

I know our feelings can be so unbearable that we employ ingenious strategies – unconscious strategies – to keep those feelings away. We do a feelings-swap, where we avoid feeling sad or lonely or afraid or inadequate, and feel angry instead. It can work the other way, too – sometimes you do need to feel angry, not inadequate; sometimes you do need to feel love and acceptance, and not the tragic drama of your life.

(Winterson 2011: 170)

I argue that the disorientation of being brought out of line requires both Jasmin and Emma, but in particular Jasmin, to do such a ‘feelings-swap,’ swapping fear, sadness, and disappointment for anger and frustration instead. What the feelings of anger and frustration do in their narrative is position Jasmin and Emma as not understanding why the world comes across as alien and uncomfortable, why it *feels* the way it does to them. Had they instead placed, for example, sadness and disappointment at the center of their narrative, these feelings would have worked in different ways to explain their migration. However, I would argue that it is not strange that this particular feelings-swap occurs in a migration between two northern countries, as the underlying assumption is likely that the migration will be easy: the disbelief at the lines one is aligned along is turned into anger.

Being Brought Back in Line

Jasmin and Emma's narrative is also one of loneliness and the loss of family and friends. However, this changes when their child is born. While Jasmin still feels the loss of her family, their child has brought them much closer to Emma's family:

Emma: My family visits more and more after we had our child, before we didn't have much contact with them. But it's been working really well.

Jasmin: Emma's mom never came up to visit us and we went down there [where Emma's mom lives] to... just for short visits. But since we've had our child... her mom comes up and stays with us and is a doll. She's *really* sweet. And so that has been really helpful in my feeling like, ah! [*relieved sigh*] And Emma's brother came to the hospital the day after our child was born. I wanted so much to have my mom and sister there. [*with emphasis:*] *So much!* But I... you know, accept also that's of course my... my dream situation and that's not the way it is. So I was really happy when Emma's brother came. Even if my own family is not going to be right here all the time or... or most often not, to have Emma's family here feels really good.

Running through their narrative are also the difficulties Jasmin has experienced when trying to make friends or even just to make contact with Swedish people. The loss of her social network is difficult for Jasmin, and she feels that as Emma's circle of friends are Emma's only, she is expected to make her own friends. However, as Jasmin asks rhetorically, "But how easy is that in Sweden? I mean, it's really hard." Yet, without having anticipated it, having a child has meant that Jasmin has made friends with other parents, and been written into the narrative of 'the mother':

Jasmin: I think the thing that has drastically changed everything for me has been becoming a mom. I, I didn't see that coming. I thought, well, it'll be nice just if our child has some friends. But I've made friends on the bus, and through the baby health care center, and through the mothers' group and... it's... and everything is *so* easy! It's so easy to talk to people! And there are a lot of activities for rainbow [queer] families. *So cool!* Way different than anybody would have been in the US. Plus I have the all this time on my parental leave and [*turns to Emma*] you have time coming up now.⁴⁸ Incredible! So, *so* great! This is way better than it would have been in the US. For the first time in my life in Sweden, this feels really positive.

Sara: What is it that, what's different in terms of making friends, that makes it easier now?

Jasmin: It's that we first get introduced to people who are in a similar situation. Lesbian moms with their baby. Then that we're all in the same situation and then that we all have time off. That we're not leading these busy lives running around, the most important thing is to get the kids together and let them play. Then we find out, oh, we have a lot in common! So suddenly I'm in this situation where... I really feel incredibly... positive about being here! And it feels really hopeful. Before it was enough, and it's still enough, that I feel home when I'm with Emma, and this is the only place we can be together. That's always, that's my biggest... but then you have our child and then the whole network in this system. There's even an open preschool⁴⁹ for rainbow families. Even like my professional

48. The Swedish policy of parental leave allows 480 days of paid leave per child.

49. An open preschool is a preschool available to children between zero and five years of age in which the child does not need to be registered in order to attend, that is, it is 'open' to all children. Parents usually attend together with their children. Some open preschools are open to specific groups of children, such as

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network has suddenly expanded because I'm talking to other moms that are lesbians, women who work in my profession. And *then*, as if all that weren't enough [*Sara laughs*], through the baby health care center, I have met a few women who count themselves as immigrants because they come from immigrant families. I feel a certain freedom... I just feel seen!

Telling me about Emma's family's involvement in their and their child's life, and her new contacts and friends, Jasmin is animated and excited. Her body language and tone of voice change: she is happy. Apart from meeting other parents in their capacity as parents, she also feels she has met them in their capacities as lesbians, professionals, and migrants, meaning she has expanded these networks as well. By becoming parents, Jasmin and Emma have re-orientated themselves and been brought in line again. Once again, the room extends their bodies, however, this would not necessarily have been the case had they not been white and cisgendered; having a baby makes them like 'everyone else' because they are so close to being 'everyone else' already, and can be understood in homonationalist terms. This is because lesbians become part of the (homonationalist) nation in quite particular ways by having access to *the family* in a manner gay men do not. This way of being brought in line is something that is not available to, nor would work to the same extent for, for example, Alejandro and Fredrik, whose narrative I discussed in the previous chapter on love. Giving birth to a (genetic, biological) child, and so being in line with discourses of the Swedish family is one place where differences between women and men becomes evident in homonationalist discourse. While this does not mean that Jasmin will not continue to experience losses, she has been aligned in a way that makes the chair she is sitting in much more comfortable again.

children with queer parents, adopted children, or children with young parents.

LOSS

The work that the emotion of loss, which I connect here mainly to the loss of privileges, does in Jasmin and Emma's narrative is to create confusion and disorientation. It makes them ask why this is happening to them. However, because of the entanglements they are caught in, which when cut to analyze their migration process, show intra-acting strands consisting of cisgenderedness, whiteness, Western nationality, middle-classness, higher education, financial resources, not being written into an out-migration narrative, and a geopolitical positioning as cosmopolitan subjects with 'access' to the world, they lack experiences to help them understand the feelings the migration causes. They become angry, frustrated, and feel badly treated. Yet, if we are to understand migration "as a structure of mourning" (Eng & Han 2003: 352), loss is an emotion they share with most migrants. Jasmin and Emma's narrative shows that what in different ways and on many levels can be interpreted as a privileged migration can still include very intense feelings of non-privilege; as Jasmin says several times in their narrative that the migration to Sweden has caused her to "lose herself." To lose oneself, to have the ground pulled out from under one's feet, is a profound and deep feeling. Jasmin and Emma's narrative shows that no migration is simple, regardless of how the entanglements we are caught in intertwine history, experiences, and the various ways we are inserted into social processes of power. Rather, losing who you are is always a strong feeling.

Making her own friends has not only made Jasmin feel "incredibly positive" and "seen," it has also made her more independent in relation to Emma. I will now move on to examine how partner migration causes partners to (re)negotiate independence and dependence in the relationship. This is connected to the previous chapter on love and my discussion there about the importance of equality and independence in order for a relationship to be perceived as 'correct.'

LOSING THE INDEPENDENT RELATIONSHIP

At the beginning of this chapter I noted that queer partner migrants experience loss differently than many other migrants because they do not migrate together with or to their extended family, or as part of a larger migration movement from the country they have roots in and thus generally have no obvious national community to tap into. It would then be possible to imagine that they create their own queer partner migrant community. Since queer partner migration to Sweden has been possible since 1989, it would perhaps not be surprising if this was the case. However, when I asked interview participants about friendships with other queer partner migrants and/or partners of queer partner migrants, a couple of participants said they had one or two friends with similar migration experiences, but most participants answered they did not know anyone. Jasmin was the only participant who mentioned a close queer partner migrant friend who is also from the same country as her. A handful of other participants mentioned other queer partner migrants or couples, but none of these friends seemed to be very close, and none were from the same country as the migrating partner. Most also expressed that they did not find it particularly important to know someone with similar experiences.

Out of Line with Straight Diasporic Communities?

Neither did any of the interview participants bring up that they are explicitly tapping into the diasporic communities of the countries the migrating partners are from, nor that making friends with straight migrants from migrating partners' countries is important. They also did not mention knowing queer people from the countries they have roots in who may have come to Sweden for other reasons than a relationship, for example for work, studies, or to apply for asylum.

Rather than creating a queer partner migration diaspora, my impression is that queer partner migrants in Sweden are very isolated and do not tap into any diasporic communities at all. This may partly be due to sexual orientation and gender identity – that being queer

stops the participants in their interactions with straight migrants from the countries they have roots in. For example, Timo and Ida, whose narrative opened the chapter on academic backgrounds, tell me about meeting a woman from the African country Timo moved from at their gym:

Ida: First she wanted-- she was all excited like, oh, to meet a [person from African country] in [city], like, you should come for supper and then... all of a sudden she didn't even... pick up the phone or she didn't call back or...

Timo: Yeah... she... she didn't call back. I called and then she didn't call back and... it was so strange. And then I... I saw her at the gym and she would pretend like she didn't see me. So... I just thought, oookay, this is weird, maybe I should just... stop. [*laughs softly*]

Talking about the woman at the gym, Timo and Ida also say they “sensed homophobia” and that the woman reacted negatively to the T-shirt Ida was wearing, which had the words “HIV positive” printed on it:

Timo: I don't know whether she ran away because she realized that [*in alarmed and sarcastic voice:*] not only HIV but they are homosexuals! [*everyone starts laughing*] Then she was like, woow, this is too much for my liking! Run! And hide!

Timo and Ida are clear in their belief that the woman at the gym ignored them because they are queer: she was initially interested in talking to them and planned to ask them over for dinner, but once she became aware of that Timo, who is often read as male, is not cisgendered and that Timo and Ida therefore are a queer couple, she was no longer interested in getting to know them. Homophobia and/or transphobia, or perhaps just sensing that a straight diasporic

community cannot accommodate them because they are brought out of line in their interactions with this community, might mean that queer partner migrants stay away from, or at least do not actively seek out, these communities. It also means losing (out on) a transnational connection to the country one has roots in. Ida describes the woman as ‘all excited’ to meet another person from the African country, and Timo and Ida show in their narrative that they are happy to meet the woman too, as they imagine her to be a future friend. Knowing others with roots in the country one moved from can be important as it can create a sense of community, a sense of that there is someone other than me, as well as a person who ‘gets it,’ someone who is able to share one’s reflections and comparisons of the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ countries. However, Timo and Ida lost the expected friendship and a possible feeling of community because their sexual and gender identities meant the woman ignored them, making it a moment when they are firmly stopped and brought out of line instead. They were, as Timo puts it, “too much.”

There is a sense of disappointment tinging the story when Timo and Ida tell it. Timo has few friends in Sweden, and the woman they met brought hope of a friendship. What feeling disappointed does in their narrative is to rob them of a hope that Sweden will ‘work out’ for Timo, that, in particular, zhe will find work and a friend network.

To Depend Emotionally on the Non-Migrating Partner

None of the migrating partners in the study have family in Sweden besides their partner’s family. Some knew a couple of people apart from their Swedish partner when they arrived; however, most knew no one except their partner, and none had close friends. This means that, for the migrating partner, the Swedish partner at least initially becomes very important as they are often the only person they know in Sweden. They need to rely on their partner as well as their partner’s family and networks more than they most likely would have, had they had their own family or other types of networks to tap into. Discussing Latina migrants to the US from a psychological point of view, Olivia Espín (1997: 119) argues that migrants who migrate on

their own may need to acculturate faster and that problems presented in therapy by women who migrate on their own differ from those presented by women who migrate with their families.

The migrating partners in this study lost all types of social connections as a result of their migration: family, friends, acquaintances, and, in the vast majority of cases, also work. This can be a very isolated existence, and some, like Jasmin and Max, whose narratives I analyze in this chapter, describe this very well. Most of the narratives I gathered speak of loneliness, of not having friends or a social network, of missing family and important individuals, and of having to build every new connection from scratch. Both migrating and non-migrating partners spoke of this loss and how it worked to make them realize that the migrating partner, after the migration to Sweden, became dependent on the non-migrating partner in ways or to an extent that they had not anticipated.

Timo, however, describes being aware of, and scared of, this prior to migrating, saying zhe felt that:

I'm giving up my life, sort of. Like... I'm giving up everything that I am about. I'm leaving my country, I'm going to learn a new language, I'm going to be around... people that I don't know and it's like, basically I wouldn't know anybody except Ida. My life is going to depend on her with [*with emphasis:*] *everything*. So it... it was a scary thought. It was a scary thought, very much of a scary thought. And... I, I, I mean, I remember... having these conversations with my best friend. And... I would say that I... I am, I am... I'm really scared. It was a scary thought that I was giving up all I am and moving to a foreign country, a foreign language, foreign everything. And it's like I'm going to start from scratch again. I didn't even have an idea of what this scratch I'm going to start from is.

In this quote, Timo, like many interview participants, points not so much to financial or practical dependence, although this is

also a recurrent theme in the narratives. What zhe and most other participants focus on is the emotional dependence caused by only having one close person in one's life: "I wouldn't know anybody except Ida. My life is going to depend on her with *everything*." While we on one level expect romantic love, as Wendy Langford (1999) argues, to fulfil all our emotional needs, in practice we also need more people than our partner in our lives in order to feel fulfilled and whole. Jasmin, in the first narrative of this chapter, speaks of something similar when mentioning the difficulties she had reconciling that her partner Emma had close friendships that Jasmin felt were not open to her, at the same time as Jasmin felt she did not have any friends of her own. Of this, Jasmin says: "Of course I want to be my own person and I want Emma to be able to be her own person and go away and do things with her friends. But it's not the same when I don't have *anyone*. And when she has everyone." Not having 'anyone' renders a person very vulnerable, especially in relation to someone who has 'everyone,' and can make one lose the sense of being one's own person. Timo points to this when zhe says zhe is "giving up everything that [zhe is] about." If we take seriously Butler's (2009) claim that loss transforms us forever, we might never be the same after having experienced the vulnerability that the loss of emotional independence entails.

Aligning the Migrating Partner

As I point out above, sexual identity and gender identity may stop queer migrating and non-migrating partners from making friends with straight migrants from the countries the migrating partners have roots in, and there is also no organized queer partner migration diaspora to tap into in Sweden. I also argue that the fact that the migrating partner lives with a Swedish partner means they look to other Swedes, rather than diasporic communities, for friends and networks. Living with a Swedish partner orientates the migrating partner along different – Swedish – lines than if they had moved to Sweden together with a partner and/or family from the country they have roots in. If that had been the case, they would have been more

likely to be orientated along migrant lines as well as national and ethnic lines. As Jasmin and Emma's narrative earlier in this chapter shows, this is complex, and one is never only orientated along one straight line; rather, the context and the situation are important. Yet, 'Swedish lines' are more readily available to partner migrants compared to other types of migrants, and this is partly a result of the emotional labour carried out by the non-migrating partner, as I discussed in the previous chapter on love when analyzing Nelly's narrative.

In the next chapter on belonging, I will go on to discuss the fact that partner migrants, in a sense, would seem to already belong in Sweden because of their partner. All interview participants live their lives in a Swedish context, many with a partner who actively performs emotional labour to 'make' them Swedish and orientate them along Swedish lines. While these participants may have what some of them call 'international friends' or friends from the countries they have roots in, they are orientated towards an idea of 'Sweden' rather than any type of diasporic community. Like adopted children, their connection to their Swedish partner often makes them 'one of us' in the eyes of white Sweden, at least if the migrating partner is mostly in line otherwise in terms of race and nationality, but also gender identity. However, it also means the migrating partner is more likely to be and feel alone and more emotionally dependent on their Swedish partner than if they had migrated as part of a 'family-reunification family.'

Losing social networks and depending on one's partner is, however, not something all migrating partners experience negatively. Lisa, who moved from a Western European country to be with her partner Bea, and whose narrative opens the chapter on methodology, feels that 'taking over' Bea's friends was helpful when she first moved:

Lisa: I have got my own friends too; I haven't just taken over yours [Bea's]. Of course I still have your friends as well. But I have managed to connect with colleagues and friends. I sing in a choir here in [city] and...

Bea: [*breaks in:*] I think that's great. It feels good for me that Lisa has her own friends and I get to know them as well, and that's fun, but I also feel like, then it's a bit more okay that I do things with my friends, on my own. In the beginning we always did stuff together with my friends which... Although I wanted to, because I always wanted Lisa to come along, even though we see each other all the time. And then, after a while, it was you [*turns to Lisa*], really, who said, "Don't forget to see your friends on your own, I don't always have to come along." Because often... because I have a friend group from university, we're five girls who are pretty close, and usually we just hang out us girls, and their boyfriends don't come along. But then Lisa came along all the time. That was really... [*laughs a small, embarrassed laugh*] And my friends thought it was fun, I don't think they... I haven't talked about it with them one on one, but it felt like they really did think it was fun and that it didn't make much of a difference. And they have said I wasn't very different whether Lisa was there or not too.

As I discuss in the chapter on methodology, Lisa and Bea's narrative is one where the migration process is, on the whole, absent. As Lisa was able to transfer her work position to Sweden when she moved, she never had to face a period of unemployment or exploring the Swedish labour market, and she was never financially dependent on Bea. Being from a Western European country means her family and friends are, at least, geographically relatively close. As the quote above points to, Lisa also quickly built up a social network, much thanks to Bea sharing her friend group. This is made possible because Lisa, like Bea and her friends, also is white, of Western nationality, and a cisgendered woman and so 'makes sense' to this group. As Bea says, "usually we just hang out us girls and their boyfriends don't come along," and it is safe to assume that a non-normatively gendered body would have greater difficulties being aligned in ways that fit into Bea's group of friends.

The feeling of being comfortable and falling in line works to render the migration process absent from Lisa and Bea's narrative,

and to position Lisa as something other-than-a-migrant. This means their migration process is also not described as causing loss. However, while Bea may not interpret it as a loss, negotiating one's friendship and family relationships to fit one's migrating partner into them because that partner lacks such networks, means a very different relationship than having a partner who grew up in Sweden, with their own established social connections. It is possible to read from Bea's quote above that while it was great that Lisa came along to see Bea's friends, it was also problematic, because it meant they lost the feeling of being independent individuals. My interpretation is that this is the place in their narrative where Bea *feels* her and Lisa's migration process, as she becomes emotionally responsible for Lisa as a migrant.

Emotional Responsibilities

The non-migrating partner loses their independence when they need to share much more than just themselves with their partner. This, however, does not mean that the non-migrating partner is not ready to do so for the migrating partner: in the interviews, several non-migrating partners express feelings of anxiety because they know their partners have given up their (usually well-functioning) life in another country to be with them. Karin in the narrative that opened the introductory chapter, describes her conflicted feelings of having 'made' her partner Mona move to Sweden:

I felt guilty because I made you [Mona] move here; it's basically my fault that you're not doing well. You wouldn't have moved here if I hadn't been here, so I felt responsible for the situation. And my life changed a lot too, instead of hanging out with friends lots and doing spontaneous things, I had to consider a new person and include you. I was really happy you were here, that I could be with you whenever, I didn't have to go to Denmark to be with you. But I spent a lot of time on our relationship.

Ida, whose narrative introduced the chapter on academic backgrounds, similarly describes her partner Timo as “really sacrificing something” when zhe moved to Sweden. She is therefore, like Karin in the quote above and many other non-migrating partners I interviewed, anxious to make sure Timo is happy, feels comfortable, and has hir own networks and independent life. The emotional labour the non-migrating partners carry out is crucial in many narratives in order to keep the relationship together, as well as acting as an interlocutor, the link between the migrating partner and Swedish society. I will return to this in the next chapter on belonging.

Being emotionally responsible for both individuals of the relationship means the loss of an ‘easy’ and equal relationship, in which the non-migrating partner would generally not need to be in charge of the emotional wellbeing of their partner to quite the same extent. Sometimes a partner migration relationship means giving up all hopes and fantasies of an equal and easy relationship, such as Nelly’s narrative in the previous chapter on love. This is closely related to whether the individuals in the relationship are mainly orientated in the same direction as most people around them or consistently stopped and brought out of line. Lisa and Bea’s relationship is one of the most in-line relationships of all the interview participants in the study: whiteness, cisgenderedness, middle-classness, Westernness, education, class, and Lisa immediately having a job and thus her own context as well as financial resources, all contribute to both aligning them and allowing them to sink into Ahmed’s (2004a, 2007) metaphorical comfortable chair. Sharing one’s friendship group with one’s partner then becomes one of very few emotional tasks the non-migrating partner has to perform.

Acknowledging Emotional Struggles and Dependence

At the same time, it can also be difficult for the non-migrating partner to understand, or perhaps to *want* to understand, the ways the migrating partner experiences the loss of their independence. It might be quite painful to realize that the migration process, which in many participant narratives was underwritten by a certain feeling

of ‘love conquers all,’ *also* has meant that the relationship is brought out of line. In those cases, the non-migrating partner becomes the migrating partner’s ‘everyone’ and ‘everything,’ as in Jasmin’s quote earlier in this section; an uncomfortable burden is placed on the non-migrating partner that might be difficult to acknowledge, as this also means acknowledging that the relationship is no longer the equal and independent relationship it ‘should’ be in order to be correctly aligned.

I discussed Alejandro from Chile and his partner Fredrik’s narrative in the previous chapter on love, and Alejandro says that “sometimes you feel like a small child and yes, I guess this brings stress to the other person because... this cool, independent person that you [the non-migrating partner] fell in love with is no longer as cool and independent as you thought.” Just like Jasmin and Emma in the first narrative of this chapter, Alejandro and Fredrik did not necessarily understand before Alejandro’s move that the migration would be, as Alejandro puts it, “a big deal.” However, Alejandro has come to realize that even if he enjoys his life in Sweden with Fredrik, creating a new life in a new context can be both challenging and difficult, and that it changes the relationship. The cool person you fell in love with is less cool when they depend on you to take care of everyday practical matters, have no job or friends, spend all their time with you, and speak Swedish like a child.

However, as Alejandro and Fredrik’s narrative shows, Fredrik comes across as having difficulty acknowledging the emotional struggles that Alejandro’s loss of independence has resulted in. When Alejandro points out that the migration has caused him to feel small and dependent, and that moving to “a whole new world is scary,” Fredrik moves the conversation to less sensitive topics, signaling that the subject is closed. This shows how complex the feeling of loss can be for the non-migrating partner as well. Perhaps Fredrik really does not understand Alejandro’s feelings. However, perhaps he does, but acknowledging them would mean needing to take a certain responsibility for these feelings of being small, scared, and dependent. Sweden is ‘his’ country, and even though he has no control over how Alejandro is stopped as a migrant, what types of migrant lines

Alejandro is orientated along, and what kinds of migrant discourses and emotions stick to him, Fredrik feels forced to defend the situation and, in extension, Sweden. If he did not, he would lose the feeling of living in and belonging to a ‘good’ and ‘welcoming’ Sweden. It would also mean losing the feeling of Sweden as ‘calm’ and ‘easy,’ as Emma described it in her and Jasmin’s narrative. Losing this feeling would result in having to re-orientate oneself as the partner of someone who does not belong, meaning migrant discourse emotions also stick to the non-migrating partner. This makes the non-migrating partner more visible, and they lose universality.

The Loss of the Simple and Happy Life

As I show in the previous chapter, Fredrik, as well as Nelly, who constantly negotiates with herself about the inequalities that partner migration has brought to her relationship, have lost the possibility of having an equal, or ‘easy’ and ‘irresponsible,’ relationship, a relationship with ‘anyone.’ A partner migration relationship is a relationship with a specific ‘someone,’ a ‘someone’ one is responsible for, emotionally and sometimes also practically and financially. Sometimes, that responsibility may prove too overwhelming. The ideology of the autonomous subject (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 1995; Giddens 1992; Langford 1999) is so strong that realizing that one’s relationship does not and perhaps never will consist of two equally autonomous and independent individuals, that is, will never be the ideal and correctly aligned love relationship, might lead the non-migrating partner to deny that the lack of this is even an aspect of the relationship. Being the one who ‘takes care of business’ can be exhausting – and it can also feel dangerous to admit that the emotional power (perhaps in combination with financial power) in the relationship is distributed unevenly, when this goes against every notion of what a ‘good’ relationship should look like. In the next chapter on belonging I discuss the narrative of Eliza from the US and her Swedish wife Viktoria. In their narrative, Viktoria describes how she takes on a lot of responsibility because Eliza does not know the answers to the practical questions Viktoria grapples with in their

everyday life – tax forms, bill queries, questions about how to go about something. The emotional labour the non-migrating partner is required to carry out means they also lose being able to depend on their partner for help. As Emma puts it in the narrative that started this chapter, there is a stress inherent in her relationship with Jasmin that would not be present if both partners were from Sweden.

The losses the migrating partner experiences, the way they may be brought out of line and stopped, also affect the non-migrating partner in the sense that they partly lose the possibility for a happy relationship, as they must watch their partner face setbacks every day. While some interview participants did not experience this, for many others, this was a struggle. Emma says:

I watched Jasmin shrink. And it is really, really difficult watching the person you love become so small. I mean, by then I had been in the US already [meaning they had lived in the US for a year, which Emma experienced as very difficult], so I thought I'll be strong as soon as I get back to Sweden – and then she ends up there instead [*short laugh*] which just makes you feel like, but what the fuck! So it was... it was... I think neither she nor I were prepared for it. Partly that she didn't really understand how... how hard it was for me in the US and then that... that she really fights and struggles to not feel these feelings but you can't get away! Because there's no way out and there is no... no network if you don't have any friends you trust. Really, it was incredibly tough to watch.

Earlier in this section I quoted Alejandro saying that the migration process sometimes makes him feel like a “small child,” while Jasmin, when I analyzed her and Emma's narrative earlier in this chapter, describes how the migration made her feel “about this big” while indicating a few centimetres between her thumb and index finger. Other participants also used the word ‘small’ to describe what the migration made them feel like. In the quote above, Emma talks about

watching her partner shrink and become small, showing how the migration works to make Emma lose her hope of a simple migration process and, in particular, a simple(r) life. She watches Jasmin die a little every day, and, as she puts it, “there is no way out.” Jasmin being small hurts Emma too, and it creates a new understanding of Sweden, one where Sweden turns out to be ‘easy’ for Emma, but not for Jasmin, the migrating partner.

A hope for the simple migration process and the simple life is not, however, present in the next narrative I will now go on to discuss: the story of Max, who moved to Sweden from an African country. Because of the entanglement he is caught in, which if we make a cut to examine it in relation to his migration to Sweden, shows, for example, historical processes of out- and in-migration, colonialism, the relationship between Africa and Europe, and social process of power such as race, nationality, gender identity, and class, Max positions himself in very different ways in his narrative from, for example, Jasmin and Emma, meaning his migration narrative produces different losses.

MAX’S STORY: FINDING YOURSELF LOST WHEN YOU’RE AWAY

Max is from an African country and has been living in Sweden with his Swedish partner for just over two years. He is a quietly spoken person, and is serious and thoughtful during our interview. At thirty-one years old, he met his partner when he visited Sweden a few years earlier as a member of an activist organization. After a few weeks together in Sweden, a few months apart, and finally a longer visit from his partner in the African country he is from, they decided to apply for Swedish residency for Max.

Max is black, and positions himself as an LGBT activist and trans man early on in his interview. When I meet him he has just started transitioning from female to male, and his gender identity and story of transition is closely intertwined with his migration story. As I will discuss, there are also parallels between his transition process and his migration process, as they are both symbolized by waiting.

Max completed vocational training after finishing high school, but since he came to Sweden, he has not been working, and his partner supports him financially, which he finds difficult. He does not explicitly position himself as working class, but when talking about his partner, he says with a smile, “She’s from the upper class people... middle class, somewhere,” indicating that this is not where he positions himself. When I meet him he has been studying Swedish fulltime for the past year and a half.

Max has two children with a former partner in the African country he moved from. He says: “It’s her biological children but I raised them as my own. And I lived with them since forever.” Not having his children in his life is one of the first losses in his migration narrative, and as he tells me how he tries to keep in touch with them while living in Sweden, tears roll down his face. He says, “They can’t come here and live [because he is not legally their parent] but... it’s good with me if they come and visit and stuff like that. And it’s... then it’s... yeah... I can live with that.”

A Less Straightforward Migration

Apart from Timo, whose narrative opened the chapter on academic backgrounds, and who in the previous section tells of his fears of moving to Sweden, Max is the only other participant who more explicitly describes conflicting feelings when making the migration decision, and the only participant who narrates what the moment of leaving felt like. Alejandro, whose narrative I discussed in the previous chapter on love, also describes not really having decided whether he actually wanted to move to Sweden when he and his partner Fredrik applied for Alejandro’s residency, although he does not describe feeling torn, or the pain of parting with ‘home.’ In comparison, Max describes the decision to migrate and his residence application process like this:

When we decided I was going to apply for a Swedish residence permit, we were going to see how things went. But we didn’t plan that I was going to stay here in Sweden,

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we just said, yah, let's just apply and see. I would go for six months and then I would see if I liked it or not, then I could go back [to the African country]. And after applying for the residence permit... it was a bit tough. I went to another country to do the interview [as part of the residence application process] because that's the only place that... you can do that. And then I went back to my country again and I was waiting and waiting and waiting and my partner was also waiting... and, ah! I was getting tired of waiting. I was... I don't know, maybe I was scared of moving here, I don't know. I was just thinking, this shit is not going to work, I'm tired of waiting. I was going to leave my country but I didn't know when... when I was going to get the answer [whether the residence permit had been approved], if it was going to be yes or no and I had to prepare myself for both answers. So it was kind of... it was kind of tough. I was deciding I was going to give up. [laughs] Let's just forget about it. It was crazy! But finally I got the... papers... and I decided, we decided, I'm going to move and then I travelled to Sweden. Once I got the papers, I was... feeling like, it's finally done [the residence application process] but it was also like, whoa, I'm leaving to someplace else which I don't know... what the fuck! I don't where I'm moving. Yeah, it was crazy, I was leaving everything I knew! Everything that I knew! I always took care of myself, I was managing everything on my own. Now I had to move to a place where someone had to take care of me basically and that's the thing I have been doing myself, and I never got that from my family. I decided I'm going to go but it's crazy. I wanted to move... but I was still scared a bit.

Max describes “waiting and waiting and waiting,” and he puts his finger on why this waiting was difficult. He says, “maybe I was scared of moving here” and “I was going to leave but I didn't know when [...] [and if the answer] was going to be yes or no and I had prepare myself

for both answers.” The waiting is stressful because it might come to nothing; his life may change drastically or it might not change at all, except that he will have lost one possible life trajectory. He does not know what to expect, and once his residence permit has been approved and the move has been decided on, Max feels overwhelmed.

However, Max also positions himself in his narrative as (not always consciously) being aware that leaving for Sweden was a complex decision that both caused and would be causing a number of less pleasant feelings. Deciding to go was not a cut and dry decision: from being a highly independent person who had always taken care of himself, he assumed he would need to turn into a person whom his partner would look after in a new place that he was unfamiliar with. The feelings that Max describes above – the stress, fear, and being overwhelmed – work in his narrative to position him as not assuming he has a *right* to migrate or that the migration will necessarily be straightforward.

Max’s narrative speaks of few assumptions of what life would be like when arriving in Sweden: compared to some other interview participants, who envisioned quickly finding a job, imagined there would be little need to learn Swedish, or thought of the move as an exciting new opportunity, Max does not seem to have imagined anything with the exception that he would likely lose his independence. This assumption is partly connected to how Max’s friends and colleagues thought he was “crazy” and worried about him when he told them that he was moving to Sweden, which in turn is based on their experiences of other friends who had left for Europe to be with European girls. In one such case, a friend had their return tickets – which the European girlfriend had bought for them – cancelled by the girlfriend, and was left stranded in a country where they did not speak the language. This could well be influencing Max’s feelings about the migration, and Max says that it is what made his friends say, “‘That white girl is just going to leave you there and you won’t know how to get back home.’ And I said, I’m not scared, it’s okay. I trust her so I’m going to go. And it’s good. I think this one [his partner] is a good person. She’s not going to kick me out. [*laughs*]” Max starts from this particular point, and so orientates himself along

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migration lines that include the foreign partner buying his tickets and possibly leaving him stranded. In comparison, this is very different from, for example, Jasmin and Emma in the first narrative of this chapter, or Alejandro and Fredrik in the previous chapter on love.

Max's narrative shows that he is scared of what the move will entail, but that he still wants to take the plunge. At the same time he positions his partner as the driving force behind his migration: while he wants to be with her, he is holding back and is a little bit hesitant. His partner, on the other hand, is described as much more forceful in making the migration happen and as taking the lead in making decisions and tending to administrative matters. Max describes "two split emotions," saying:

I was excited to go but... I would also have wanted to stay a bit longer. It was just two split emotions, I would say that I felt. And I would have liked to stay a little bit longer. To spend some time with my kids and to hang out with some people and... yeah, for that. But I thought, it's the same... it's just the same old stuff all the time so maybe it's time for me to... try something new so I decided, okay, it's okay. My partner said, "You can tell me when you want me to book the flight." And I said, okay, just... just book it for next month. So maybe I should have left... maybe a month later. But I made it quicker because, well, maybe it's just the same old routines I'm used to. But it was a bit tough to leave everything that you know, just like that. It was tough, I was... leaving home.

Max positions himself in this part of the narrative, which describes his move from the African country, as the person in the narrative who waits and hangs back. He is, but at the same time he is also not, in charge of when he is leaving the African country. As I discuss in more detail later, he understands his geopolitical position – a young African wanting to migrate to a northern European country – in a way that makes him not take for granted that he will receive his

Swedish residence permit. Also, as his partner books his tickets, it would seem that he does not have the financial resources to pay for them himself. Both these aspects add up to giving him few options other than the position of waiting and not being in charge.

Being Written Into an Already-Existing Migration Narrative

While Max says in the quote above that he might have wanted to put off his departure to spend more time with people who are important to him, he also points out that “it’s just the same old stuff” happening over and over. Staying longer does not mean he will not leave the important people in his life behind. Going on to describe the actual departure for Sweden, he says:

The flight was a bit... emotional. I was leaving early in the morning, maybe four o'clock, from home. Because the airport is far away from where I lived. So I left around four o'clock and I was with my kids and their mother and my sister... and my... ah, my mom just said, “Okay, goodbye.” So it wasn’t anything in particular. But it was sad to just leave like that. All my mom said was, “Go, and just behave yourself when you get there.” That’s all she told me. But I was a bit sad, all the time, all the time, the whole night, I was sad, because a lot of people were coming and saying goodbye, friends of mine. I couldn’t say, okay, this is goodbye, so I was strong and I... said, yah, we’re just going to talk and not going to say goodbye because it’s... been too... it’s been too... too many emotions. I’d been crying a lot the past days before leaving. And when I was leaving and we reached the airport, I was just... I was sad the whole time.

In the quotes above, Max describes feeling torn about the migration and how he, while he wants to be with his partner, also knows it will cause him significant losses. This is, as Eng and Han (2003) point out,

a classic migration dilemma. Very early on in his migration narrative, Max tells of a loss when he goes from everything – social, financial, and emotional independence, and a community of people he cares about and who care for him – to, as he experiences it, nothing except his Swedish partner. He is, however, not surprised by the losses he experiences, and this, I argue, is because he is written into an already-existing migration narrative, which I will come back to. As I also go on to discuss later, Max feels he has lost ‘his’ group of people from the African country by the time I interview him two years after his move, something he seems, in the quotes above, to have sensed would happen already when leaving. In this, Max narrates his migration as much more permanent and definitive than most other interview participants.

Max’s narrative is very detailed about the decision to migrate and the actual trip to Sweden. I interpret the reason for this to be that he does not take his international mobility for granted (Choules 2006; Grandin 2007); he lacks access to ‘global travel privilege’ (Tsfahuney & Schough 2010). Examining globally privileged citizenship, Choules writes, “I come to this research as a citizen of a [Western] country (Australia) who has easily been able to travel to Asia, Europe and the Americas and also work in Guatemala, Japan and Switzerland. There is nothing special about me that merits this privileged position. In contrast, the ability to enter, let alone work in, foreign countries is denied the vast majority of the world’s population” (2006: 276). Max is part of this ‘vast majority,’ and he is aware of it: he knows he is written into a particular migration narrative where his migrating body is generally not welcome to cross borders. Instead of feeling that the world is ‘open’ to him and that it is a “room of possibilities” (Grandin 2007) to take advantage of, he knows that out-migration from any African country to Europe cannot be taken for granted and may not be extended to him. He is aware that he might be stopped. If cut to analyze Max’s understanding of the migration process he is part of, the entanglement that he is caught in consists of, among other things, messy strands of nationality, class, race, colonialism and colonial history, European migration policies and Fortress Europe, migration control, and racism, and Max’s narrative makes clear that he understands himself and his migration to Sweden in light of this entanglement.

Being aware of the entanglement he is caught in, and thus being aware of the emotion of loss, makes Max feel certain feelings, in particular sadness and fear. These two feelings work to make him wary of his future life in Sweden, and they also set the tone for his migration. They make him anticipate having to orientate himself along the lines of the migrant in the narrative that he will be part of now.

I will continue discussing, in particular, the feeling of sadness further into Max's narrative, but it is worth noting here that his going to Sweden is not laced with excitement, but rather is depicted as something he 'has to do.' His whole narrative also speaks of an immediate understanding of the migration trajectory as challenging. Max comes from a country where a discourse of out-migration already exists, meaning he is aware of other people who have migrated to, in particular, Europe, but maybe also other places. He is also aware that this migration has not always been easy because of racism and the lack of jobs and money, but also, as in the quote about white European girls earlier in his narrative, because the power in intimate relationships can be abused. This means that Max is already written into an existing migration narrative and orientates himself in accordance with it, even before leaving the African country. Because he is in line in this narrative, he does not need to analyze what is going on, and this differs from how other participants used to being written into more cosmopolitan narratives may need to re-orientate themselves when they understand they are now part of another narrative. In comparison to many other interview participants, migration exists in Max's narrative as a more tangible possibility: migration comes across as something that he may not necessarily have imagined himself doing, but that is present in the context he moves in.

In addition, there is also a history of colonialism and being colonized as part of the entanglement that Max is caught in, and thus embedded in his narrative: his friends who worry about him refer to his partner as "that white girl" and remind him of their experience with and the power of white, European girls. This means Max has a relationship with Europe already that is based both on colonialism and being a black person in a relationship with a white European. As such, the migration narrative that Max has access to, and is able

to write himself into, is not necessarily a narrative of easy migration. This makes it possible to imagine the losses a migration will entail, and Max positions himself in his narrative as knowing something difficult might be coming of it.

The Loss of Independence

Given that Max seems to have anticipated the loss of his financial and practical independence in particular, he does not express surprise or indignation when speaking of it:

Max: I can't get any student grants or loans since I don't have permanent residence.⁵⁰ I don't have any income since I don't have a job. So... nothing [no money] is coming in, my partner takes care of everything.

Sara: How do you feel about that?

Max: Oooooh... it's not cool! It's not cool. I've never been taken care of by someone, with my financial situation so... yeah, it's kind of different that someone takes care of you. It's not that I'm limited, that I feel limited by not having my own money and my partner doesn't say, "No, you can't buy that or that," but for me, as a person, I don't feel...

50. Swedish for immigrants, SFI, does not entitle students to student grants or loans. Having graduated from SFI, students can choose to move on to Swedish as a Second Language at first junior high school level (*högstadium*), and then high school level (*gymnasium*). It is also possible to study variations of Swedish as a Second Language at university level. Studying Swedish as a Second Language (as opposed to SFI) does entitle students to financial aid, however, while there are exceptions, this generally requires the student to be a permanent resident. Since partner migrants in newly established relationships generally are ineligible to apply for permanent residency until two years after their temporary residence permit has been approved, this migrant group usually does not have access to financial study aid for at least two, sometimes up to three, years (to account for the time it takes to process the permanent residence application).

comfortable with it. I'm depending on her, it's not... it's not a nice feeling. And first it was very strange for me, when I moved here, it felt like... [*laughs a little*] I don't know, I... just didn't feel good to... to be taken care of and... only now do I accept my situation, how it is. I never knew how to ask for money. It wasn't part of me. [*laughs a little*] Back home I just tried to make my own money, and have money on my own. If I needed something, then I'd always make a plan to get money. But here now, there's no way of making these plans. No way of... getting money so I just... It's very tough, it's not good for me, I don't feel good that I'm depending on her financially. I don't feel like my own person.

Not being surprised does not mean that Max does not express frustration and a certain sadness: previously in life, he has not had to depend on anybody else financially, and if he wanted something and did not have the money, he planned how to earn the required money. He says that that asking for money is “not part of” who he is and expresses that he has lost his “own person.” At the same time as he grieves his independence, he comes across as resigned; he has accepted that he has become aligned along the line of the dependent migrant.

Max's partner also helps him practically by making the necessary phone calls – to the Migration Agency, to his Swedish language teachers, to the Tax Agency, to the job center, to the doctor – and sometimes also comes along when he needs to visit a government agency or other type of public office. This is because, as Max says, “Swedish is the problem. Talking on the phone with Swedish people, they don't have the patience or they don't try to understand, so it limits you. I tried making calls or do some things on my own but... how you're received at the other end is not so cool,” indicating that he is met with, at best, indifference and impatience. He seems to have come to the conclusion that attempting independence is not worth the emotional cost of being stopped and forcibly brought out of line by the person at the other end of the phone line who does so by refusing to understand him.

According to the authors of the research report *Afrophobia: A Systematic Review of the Situation for Afro-Swedes in Contemporary Sweden* (Mångkulturellt centrum 2014), Swedish relationships and attitudes to Africa and to black people are similar to those found in the rest of Europe and the Western world. These relationships and attitudes are “characterized by a global history of slave trade and slavery, and the colonialism and racial thinking that Sweden and Swedes also participated in and contributed to. Taken together, this is manifested in different conceptions of Africa and racial stereotypes about black people that are still viable in contemporary Sweden, both in everyday life and in the cultural world” (Mångkulturellt centrum 2014: 79-80; my translation). The report points out that surveys show that Afro-Swedes is the group that white Swedes feel most distanced from, and that few white Swedes report having any black friends or colleagues at all (see also Adeniji 2010; Habel 2008; Sawyer 2000, 2001; Schmauch 2006). This suggests that Max, as an African migrant, becomes orientated along the line of a particular migrant, that of the ‘African migrant in Sweden.’ As racism and histories of colonialism entangle with queer masculinity to create certain ideas of ‘Africans’ and ‘African migrants,’ I argue that this is partially responsible for Max’s dependence on his partner.

While, as I discussed earlier in this chapter, many interview participant narratives include feelings of dependence, this dependence seems to become stronger and less easily breached the more the migrating partners are brought out of line because of gender identity, race, nationality, class, and education. However, it also matters how the entanglements they are caught in include ideas of colonialism and colonial histories. I will come back to this later in Max’s narrative. However, as I discussed in the previous chapter on love, Sara Ahmed (2004a, 2009) argues that words, or ‘signs,’ to use Ahmed’s term, can become ‘sticky.’ Feelings and other words stick to the sign as it circulates. This is because “if a word is used in a certain way again and again, then that ‘use’ becomes *intrinsic*” (Ahmed 2004a: 91; italics in original), meaning that once other words get stuck to the sign, these words become part of the sign. ‘Immigrant’ is one such sticky sign, where emotions of fear and hate stick to the sign but also words such as illegal,

handouts, and bogus. Once those words and emotions have stuck to the sign ‘immigrant,’ there is no need to use other words because it is intrinsic to the sign what is meant – an immigrant ‘is’ someone who is illegal, expects handouts, and hands in a bogus asylum claim.

Ahmed connects these ‘sticky signs’ with bodies, as the sticky signs help shape bodies: “when the body of another becomes an object of disgust, then the body *becomes* sticky. Such bodies become ‘blockages’ in the economy of disgust: they slow down or ‘clog up’ the movement between objects, as other objects and signs stick to them” (2004a: 92; italics in original). Certain emotions and words stick to Max as an ‘African migrant in Sweden,’ slowing him down. His body is stickier than many other migrants’, and this, I argue, works to increase his dependence on his partner.

Going Back Will Never Be the Same

I quoted Ursula Kelly at the beginning of the chapter, stating that the migration narrative “holds peculiar tensions of loss and hope as its central premise” (2009: 23). A queer partner migration, like any migration, is often about the loss of the hope for a fantasy that the migration was expected to fulfill. In the narratives I gathered for this study, the most common fantasy and hope was that as long as the couple loved each other and were together, everything would work out. However, if this failed to occur, many narratives included an assumption that the migration could be reversed: in Max’s case, he would go to Sweden, and if he did not like it there or if the relationship did not work out, he would return to the African country. This is a common migration narrative that he shares not only with a number of participants in this study, but also with other types of migrants (e.g. Bolognani 2007, 2014, 2016; Ganga 2006; Leavey, Sembhi & Livingston 2004; Žíla 2015). However, after two years in Sweden, Max has realized that he will never be able to go back to his ‘old’ life: too much has changed.

When Max left the African country, he had been working for a national activist organization for some time. This means that, had he stayed, he would now, as he says, “have had a steady income and

employment,” but if he were to go back, he would instead go into unemployment. However, there are also other, more important losses, at stake.

Max: There are a lot of people there who need a job so I think it would be tough to go back to that. That would be the hardest. And also... You know, I'm used to the way you live there, how you do stuff, how you relate to people, how you hang out with people and stuff like that. All that. And when you are not with people, you lose that...you lose that. And that is much more important than finding work or something like that. Just the way you live. So if you leave that, you can't just go back. Then it's not going to be the same again. For me, I would feel lost... if I go back now, I would feel lost. I would not feel that I'm in touch with anything. So that's the toughest thing. You know, you leave something, then... then... that thing is forming in another way, then it's hard for you to go back into that so it's... yah, it's kind of tough. Yah. It's tough. Yeah.

Sara: You know these people and they're your friends but you weren't there so you kind of have to... not get to know them again, but you have to fit in, in the group or... you know, find your place.

Max: Yes. Yes. And so it's kind of tough, you find yourself lost. You find yourself lost and... it's just how it is. I think I realized it only after I was away. Now I would feel that I'm not in touch. I'm not with them. I'm not moving with them, you know, it's kind of... I'm not in that. First I thought, if I go back, I'm just going to fit in. But it's not that easy, is it, as you think, before you leave. Mmm.

In the quote above, Max describes how the migration has caused him to lose the intensity and closeness of relationships: “how you do stuff, how you relate to people [...] Just the way you live,” but that in this process, he has also lost *himself*. Judith Butler (2009) argues that

LOSS

loss can say something about the ties and bonds that put us together, and that losing a place or certain people disrupts these ties, causing us to lose ourselves. She writes:

It is not as if an 'I' exists independently over here and then simply loses a 'you' over there, especially if the attachment to 'you' is part of what composes who 'I' am. If I lose you, under these conditions, then I not only mourn the loss, but I become inscrutable to myself. Who 'am' I, without you? When we lose some of these ties by which we are constituted, we do not know who we are or what to do. On one level, I think I have lost 'you' only to discover that 'I' have gone missing as well.

(Butler 2009: 388)

Max has also realized that in the process of losing 'you' – that is, his group of friends – he, too, has gone missing, and that he does not really know who he has become as a result of this. This applies not only to relationships, but he goes on to explain that he no longer feels he fits in in the African country:

The problem would be how to fit into the whole society in the way I was, with everything, with the activist movement, with every-- well, the whole relationship with people and... how life really is. Because it's totally different... from here. People here [in Sweden] are different, the way people live and relate to each other, it's very different. Here people don't relate to you. Everyone is on their own. There... we relate to each other every day. We know each other, we have to greet each other every day. We have to know if that person is doing okay. It's like... yah, you just know, you just connect to that person, it's not that you are... alone. So that's the, that's the cool thing, you know. And those type of things you lose. Sometimes for me, I went back [to the

African country] this past year... and sometimes I forgot that I was there [and not in Sweden]. And it's not the same as here... when you get into a taxi you have to say hi to the driver. But then I was already used to just getting on a Swedish train and not talk to anyone, and it's not cool! There you have to--, you have to make contact, you have to be in-- Yes, you have to be that.

Max narrates how not being able to relate to others he meets when visiting the African country, not only his friends but on the level of not being able to “fit into the whole society,” is also a loss. Kelly (2009) argues that returned migrants often end up as someone in between, as someone neither ‘here’ nor ‘there,’ and that the feelings of loss can intensify as a result. Max feels it is a loss that he does not “connect” with strangers he meets as part of his daily life in Sweden, describing sitting quiet on the train and “not talk[ing] to anyone.” At the same time, he has ended up in between Sweden and the African country: he forgets to talk to the taxi driver when he visits the African country; he no longer relates to others in the way he is used to, and this, I interpret, makes him feel even more lost.

Kelly writes about an “often romanticized register of loss” that “propels the desire of return” in migrants (2009: 5), and this is evident in many of the participant narratives I gathered for this study. In particular, many participants speak of wanting to share their time between Sweden and the country the migrating partner has roots in, hoping, at some point in the future, to be able to spend six months of the year in each. I interpret this to be what Alejandro, whose narrative I analyzed in the previous chapter on love, calls a ‘romantic migration idea’ as these couples do not really seem to have considered the practical implications of and financial resources required for such a set-up. Max, however, has lost this romantic idea of return completely. While his friends are still his friends, the fact that he is not physically present in their everyday lives means the connection he had with them previously is lost and, as a consequence, Max “finds [himself] lost” (cf. Butler 2009).

Throughout his narrative, Max is able to connect and understand his feelings as stemming from the more overarching emotion of loss. Rather than feeling anger or frustration in the face of his losses, he describes sadness and resignation. He also positions himself in his narrative as a permanent migrant, which is at least partly a result of the migration narrative he is written into, where people do migrate but where keeping a presence in both the place they started out in, and the place of the migration, is difficult. The sadness on the final day before leaving for Sweden and wanting to stay another month, just a little bit longer, shows Max's awareness of this. Being written into a migration narrative of loss and permanency but also, as I go on to discuss later in Max's narrative, racism, means the feelings he experiences because of the migration do not surprise him. He was aware they could happen, and he did not need to migrate to understand which way migrants are orientated, how they are brought out of line, and how uncomfortable this feeling is.

The Loss of Close Relationships

In order to understand the importance of Max's friends in his life, and thus the importance of losing them, it is essential to understand Max's relationship with his family. Although Max lived with his mother up until his move to Sweden, his narrative speaks of a distant relationship with his family. This is particularly in relation to his non-normative gender identity: each time he talks about being a trans person in relation to his family, Max gets visibly upset and raises his voice, making it clear that he is angry with his family for not understanding, supporting, and accepting this part of him. Because of his gender identity, he has always had to manage on his own:

I was mostly on my own. Because I was different, of course. And my family also always gives me a tough time for being different and I chose myself to be... away from them all the time, so yeah, they never took care of me emotionally or anything like that. So yeah, I've been on my own with

all my thoughts and all my feelings and everything. Yah... that's how it was. And when I grew up I was just taking care of myself and when I got older, I was taking care of myself financially and stuff like that. Trying to manage myself. [*sighs*]

Max has always had to take care of himself emotionally, and once he got older, he chose to also take care of himself financially in order to distance himself further from his family. In his narrative, his gender identity is positioned as the most important aspect of his life, both growing up and now. Not being able to share his thoughts and feelings with or being supported by his family has made his friend relationships extremely important. The friendships he talks about in his interview seem to all be with other queer-identified individuals, and it is clear that he feels both seen and understood in these relationships. Max's partner is also supportive of his transition and offers emotional support. However, his trans identity required Max to take care of himself in ways that made him fiercely independent, probably more so than had he been cisgendered. However, as I discussed earlier, the migration has caused Max to become dependent on his partner, and also as an effect of this he has lost the person he understands himself to be.

Harriet Westcott shows in her research with migrants to Australia that it is common that friendships are disrupted and loosened by migration, calling it “a hidden emotional cost of migration, along with emotional labour, which is rarely acknowledged [...] in the academic literature or by lay people” (2012: 90). The fact that Max feels he has lost the close connection he previously had with his friends is thus an experience he shares with many migrants. However, his loss is also entangled with class and economic resources. While Max has been back to visit his family and friends since moving to Sweden, and also ponders how he will be responded to next time he goes to visit as he has now started to transition and his body will have changed, showing that he expects he will visit again the future, he never once in his narrative mentions that he assumes friends or family will visit him in Sweden. Several other interview participants narrate visits from family and friends, of wanting parents to visit ‘more often’ (indicating

that their parents do visit already), and of having many visitors from the countries they have roots in. Max instead specifically points out that *he* phones his friends, they do not call him, and when he and his Swedish partner were keeping up their long-distance relationship while he was still living in the African country, he had to borrow a friend's mobile internet connection in order to be able to Skype and chat, as he did not have a connection of his own. This makes it very likely that most of his friends and family do not have access to the kind of resources needed in order to keep any close contact. They can text and keep in touch via social media, and sometimes Max calls them, but the lack of economic resources may mean, for example, that they cannot visit him to see what his life in Sweden is like. It does not allow Max to keep in touch with them in a way that lets him "move with them."

Max not being able to keep in touch with his friends is connected to my discussion above about the permanence of the migration that comes through in Max's narrative, and could partially explain his sadness and conflicted feelings when leaving for Sweden: he and his friends travel less and likely have less access to money for travelling. Lacking global travel privileges (Tesfahuney & Schough 2010) they are quite literally stopped by visa applications (and rejections) in a way that nationals of Western countries usually are not (Syssner & Khayati 2010). It also means they are not written into a cosmopolitan travel narrative where they have the possibility of imagining travelling. Max's migration, then, *feels* more final, than it was meant to be. It also means that Max's feeling of migration differs from that of someone who is written into a more cosmopolitan narrative consisting of mobile global subjects.

Transitioning from a Clean Slate

As I mentioned when introducing Max's story, Max's migration narrative is closely intertwined with his transition narrative. Both processes are signified by the waiting they entail. Both are also processes in which the government, embodied by the Migration Agency and the health care system, decides to what extent one

should be believed and granted what one wants to access. Are you a genuine migrant, meaning, do you deserve a residence permit? Are you genuinely transsexual, meaning, do you deserve gender reaffirmation treatment (Bremer 2011: 76; see also the emerging field of transgender migration, e.g. Bhanji 2012; Cotten 2012; Vogel 2009)? Signe Bremer (2011), in her ethnography on transsexualism and gender reassignment, describes waiting as one of the most salient characteristics of a transition process, and compares it to the kind of waiting that occurs in an asylum-claim process. To this I would add that many types of migration processes, not only those of asylum seekers and refugees, are characterized by waiting, just as Max describes early on in his narrative when he “waited and waited and waited” for the decision on his Swedish residence application.

In Max’s case, once his residence permit has been approved and he has moved to Sweden, his waiting is transformed into waiting for his transition. He explains that it is a process he would have wanted to start when he was younger and lived in the African country, but which he could not afford. As gender reaffirmation processes in Sweden are covered by government-funded health care, he was able to start the process a year or so after arriving in Sweden.⁵¹ His narrative does not mention being stopped anywhere along the way of the transition process, which is otherwise a place where many people are stopped and forced to bring themselves in line in ways they are not fully comfortable with (Bremer 2011). However, Max, speaking fast, in a

51. Before 2013, individuals without Swedish citizenship were allowed to go through a medical sex reassignment, but not to change their legal gender. However, as of 2013 non-Swedish citizens can also change their legal gender, as long as they are registered as residents of Sweden. This means that Max when he arrived in Sweden in 2010 only had the right to medical reassignment but would not have been able to change his legal gender until he had become a Swedish citizen. A migrant married to or cohabiting with a Swedish citizen is required to have been a resident of Sweden for three years and have lived together with (i.e. not only been married to or in a relationship with) the Swedish citizen for at least two of those years before being able to apply for citizenship (while migrants without Swedish partners are required to wait five years) (Swedish Migration Agency 2015:e).

loud and agitated voice, does describe the actual waiting as painful:

The doctor said, “I don’t doubt who you say you are. But we don’t have the next stage people [other types of health care professionals a person seeking to transition is required to see], we’re employing. So you have to wait.” Now I’ve started with the hormones and the staff were good there too, the doctor has been good, and the voice people. And I met with the surgeon too. Yah... it was good. It’s been good so far. But the thing is that when you wait for the answer [whether you will be approved for reaffirmation treatment]... That was the craziest thing, that was the worst I have known. I was feeling like... aaah...! Useless, I couldn’t take the waiting, it was just... I was giving up, I never thought that I-- It was that tough that I--... I didn’t think that I would make it, that I was going to kill myself. Because that waiting killed me, you know. You don’t know what you can do with your life. You’re just waiting for these people, and everything is in their hands, everything of your life. You can’t do anything. All you’re told is to wait. It was [*emphasizes every word:*] *driving me crazy!* I had to leave my body and just be some stone... no feeling and no nothing. Aaaah, it was... shit!

There is no questioning the strong feelings this waiting brings out in Max when he describes how he “had to leave [his] body and just be some stone... no feeling and no nothing” in order to survive it. He goes on to wonder how people he knows will react to him and the physical changes he has gone through the next time he goes back to visit the African country he is from; he feels that the fact that he is physically in another place means the transition “is not real to them.” However, at the same time, transitioning in a new country allows him a clean slate. Max says: “No one knows me here, that’s the good thing. I’m starting from scratch, new city, new country, far away, I don’t know anyone, people that I know just know me as a man.” So while

CHAPTER 6

the migration has caused Max to lose his independence, important relationships, and a way of life and relating to other people, it has also brought him the possibility to transition, which he did not have before. Further, it has offered him a place to transition where he does not need to explain the changes occurring to his body because no one knows him as anything but a man.

Max also perceives it as easier to be transgender in Sweden than in the African country, saying:

I think it's much easier. People respect your rights. Yes. People respect you when you define yourself. They don't have to define you themselves and say, "No, you're this, and we're just going to tell you it's like that." That's how it is in the country I'm from. I think I'm trying to find myself now and find my ways and try to live my life as who I was supposed to be from the start, you know. And I don't have to explain myself to a lot of people that I know, why I do what I do. No one knows me, that's the good thing, I just live... my life, you know. It's like... transitioning and starting a new life, it's like a new slate with nothing on... in Sweden, for me.

At the same time as Max lost himself in the migration, his transition narrative speaks of advantages as part of this loss. In the quote above, Max states that he instead can focus on "liv[ing his] life as who [he] was supposed to be from the start," which is different from the person he was expected to be growing up. Max's gender identity and trans body have meant that the chair (Ahmed 2004a, 2007) he has been sitting in has been uncomfortable for most of his life, and this part of the migration, the transition, actually helps to align him and make it more comfortable. Max's narrative does not show him as having expected this to happen, but he does acknowledge that it is an unexpected benefit as a result of the losses of migration.

*Creating Relationships with Others While Negotiating
Transphobia and 'Being Different'*

The community Max lived in in the African country was small: people knew him, and his gender identity was, if not fully accepted, at least understood in the sense that everyone knew about it and saw it as part of him. This orientated him, and worked to not stop him in everyday life. His move to Sweden has meant meeting many new people and also offers the possibility to be geographically mobile in a new way. The physical area he moves in has expanded, and, for Max, meeting new people means renegotiating how 'out' he should be about his trans identity over and over again; he cannot just 'be' anymore. While not passing creates intense feelings in Max, as evidenced when he says, "If someone asks me if I'm, you know, a guy or a girl, I can't even answer. It makes me feel really bad. I feel like I'm less of a person," his narrative also shows that passing can be equally hard, but in a different way:

I met this one guy at SFI [Swedish for immigrants]. I don't want to come out to him because, maybe he's going to reject me. And for me it's scary to lose him, because he's the only friend I... I've made on my own in Sweden. We've known each other for two years, since I moved here. He's a very important friend and the relationship that I have with him is very important. And I don't want to lose that because of... who I am. But I know he's going to start asking questions because my voice is changing now and other things are going to change. And I don't know... I'm just going to say, I don't even know what I'm going to say. It's going to be very tricky to explain that to him... since we've known each other for... for so long. Making friends is hard because of coming out to people... Most of the friends that I've made are not from Sweden. They're from different countries. And in different countries people have different ideas [about gender and gender identities] and... and it's more complicated, you know, explaining

stuff... and if people don't understand, it's difficult for me. I don't want to make things complicated because I... won't feel comfortable. So I've decided that okay, I don't want to make friends. No. Because of that coming-out story. Because it's tough and if people don't understand, it's tougher than you expect, they start to judge you, you know. But there was another guy in the SFI class who was trying to... He was always coming to sit with me or when I came late, he always wanted me to sit next to him. He would always talk to me and we would talk about soccer and stuff. But I didn't want to talk to him because I knew he was coming close. But he didn't, he didn't give a shit, he just... [*laughs*] came closer and closer and closer. So I [*exasperated laugh*] had to just sit and talk to him. It's tough to keep people away! I want to have friends too... it's isolating to not... get to know people. It's kind of tough. [*short laugh*]

Not only is Max very lonely in Sweden, he also actively tries to keep friends away because he is scared of the possibility of rejection. Because of his trans identity, he tries to stay away from people who want to befriend him because being gender non-normative brings him out of line and has the potential to really hurt him, if the person he comes out to is not able to handle or understand it. This means the loss of new friendships until his transition is complete, at which point it seems that he hopes to make friends without having to mention his trans identity.

However, Max not only stays away from friendships. The entanglement he is caught in makes him experience himself to be too out of line on too many accounts. Being black in a white context, trans among cisgendered individuals, working class, and speaking limited Swedish, he has also made a conscious decision not to spend time with his partner's family. The only members of his partner's family he has met are her parents, even though many other family members live in the same city. Comparing his partner's parents to previous partners, whose parents did not want him for their daughters because he is trans and 'different,' he says of his current partner's

parents: “Her parents are cool, I like hanging out with them. It’s a new experience for me, you know. Very new experience [*laughs*] to hang out with your partner’s parents. Yah, it feels good. They are good. And I like them and... I think they like me too. [*laughs a little*] I think they like me too, I don’t know.” However, he has not met his partner’s siblings or extended family, explaining he feels like he is on the “outside” and that he is not “ready to meet them.” Once he has finished his transition, he will feel more ready for these relationships, he says.

For Max, the migration has meant losing the possibility of having, and creating, friendships and emotional relationships apart from with his partner. His fear of encountering rejection because of transphobia, but also his feeling of being too out of line makes him lonely. While his narrative starts in possible negative reactions to his trans identity as a reason to keep away from closer relationships, the entanglement he is caught in is such that other strands also work to make him feel hesitant to move closer to others. One such aspect is being black in a white-dominated country.

Standing Out in White Spaces

While not passing is what Max describes in his narrative as the most painful and emotionally difficult aspect of not being in line, being black in a white-dominated country also frequently stops him. When I ask Max whether he feels that he is the target of the conversation when Swedish people discuss migration and migrants, Max immediately links this to race and racism, and the words tumble out of him very fast:

People just stare at... both of us [Max and his partner]. Especially white people, of course. Sometimes I’m the only black person, you know, among white people and we go to places, and I’m the only black person and it feels *very* weird. I feel out of place. It’s not so comfortable and I know it’s because of my colour. And... what can I do? I just have to be there. With those people, you know. We go

to maybe... a theatre or something and, and... there's only white people. And there's only me. People are just looking, you know. And it's kind of strange but what can you do, you just have to feel like shit. You feel like you don't belong there. It's not your place to be there. And... yah... sometimes they even ask us if... we're a couple.

Ahmed argues that spaces are orientated *around* whiteness, rather than toward it. This is because whiteness is always assumed to be given, always in line, which means that whiteness goes unnoticed. White bodies can move more easily; the white body is not an obstacle, it does not have to get 'stressed' in encounters with objects and others the way Max describes being stressed in the quote above. This is how the white body expands: "objects, tools, instruments and even 'others' allow that body to inhabit space by extending that body and what it can reach" (2006: 132).

Max describes the uncomfortable feeling of being the only black person in a room and the feeling that "it's not your place to be there." According to Ahmed, "when we talk about 'a sea of whiteness' or 'white space' we are talking about the repetition of the passing of some bodies and not others" (2007: 159). However, as she goes on to point out, non-white bodies also inhabit white spaces, like Max moving through white spaces in Sweden. "Such bodies," Ahmed argues,

are made invisible when we see spaces as being white, at the same time as they become hyper-visible when they do not pass, which means they 'stand out' and 'stand apart'. You learn to fade into the background, but sometimes you can't or you don't. The moments when the body appears 'out of place' are moments of political and personal trouble. As Nirmal Puwar shows us, when bodies arrive who seem 'out of place' [...] we have a process of *disorientation*: people blink, and look again.

(2007: 159; italics in original)

Max's black body is both invisible and hyper-visible, and his presence in white spaces make people stop and look again. Because of this he positions himself throughout his narrative as trying to "fade into the background." However, most of the time, he neither can nor does: just him being in a white space makes people disorientated, as he explains in the quote above. Each look he gets from white people stops him by reminding him that he is out of line, different, and does not belong. He tries to mitigate this by not drawing attention to himself, for example by not holding his partner's hand or letting her kiss him in public. As Max points out, an interracial couple attracts attention, even to the point that people ask him and his partner whether they are actually a couple, and once the attention is directed at him, passers-by start trying to place him in a gender category, making him feel vulnerable and exposed.

Being 'open' with his sexual and gender identities and his romantic relationship generates quite different feelings in Max's narrative compared to, for example, the narratives of Felipe and Krister, which opened the chapter on theory, and Lisa and Bea, which opened the chapter on methodology. As Max is consistently 'out of place' in Sweden because of his gender identity, race, and 'being African,' being 'open' is nothing he chooses actively. His migration has caused him to leave a context where he, as far as race goes, experienced himself as orientated and in line. While his trans identity still brought him out of line in the African country, the migration has meant losing the comfort moving in black spaces provided. As almost every space in Sweden is white, Max cannot be in line. Sometimes this 'only' means looks and "feel[ing] like shit," but sometimes, as I go on to discuss below, it means fearing for his physical safety. Limiting those times his body draws attention to itself is Max's way of protecting himself emotionally as well as physically. Compared to bodies passing as white and cisgendered, who are allowed to blend in and do not stand out until they make the choice to be visible, Max narrates a life after migration as always being out of line.

Being Angry and Fearing Whiteness

In one of the quotes in the section above, Max describes what it feels like to stand out as the only black person in a sea of whiteness. One of the feelings this creates is anger. This is an anger that affects him at home too, as he lives with a white partner, and he shows how this can be complicated:

[*in raised voice:*] Sometimes I take it out on my partner! If I'm pissed off with all the white people and all the shit that is going on. And she says, "Max, if you really have something to say to me, please say it to me. I want to understand what you mean. It's really unfair." And I say, "Yah, I'm not saying it's you but..." I know that I'm taking it out on her because she's white. And sometimes it's very clear, you know, this fucking racist stuff here in this country, it's sometimes clear. I don't just take it out on her as in it's about her and me, I take it out because... it's coming [*makes exploding noise*] like that. But she has a clear understanding of it. I think she's a bit black. [*laughs*] She's black too! But light in complexion! But yeah... she understands.

bell hooks (1992) discusses white supremacy in the US and the feeling of exhaustion she, as a black person, feels after spending too much time around white people. Talking to a black colleague who has a white partner, she asks: "What do you do, when you are tired of confronting white racism, tired of the day-to-day incidental acts of racial terrorism? I mean, how do you deal with coming home to a white person?" Laughing, [hooks' colleague] said, 'Oh, you mean when I am suffering from White People Fatigue Syndrome. He [her partner] gets that more than I do'" (1992: 346). In the quote above, Max shows how the racism he encounters as a result of his migration to Sweden makes him angry, and this anger works to affect his relationship with his partner. He is aware that his anger is not about their relationship, but he takes it out on her as another white Swedish person when he is

“pissed off with all the white people and all the shit” that he encounters as a result of being a black person in a white country. He then explodes because he cannot keep the anger in. However, like hooks’ colleague’s partner, Max’s partner has shifted locations (hooks 1992; see also Garner 2014): being with Max has made her see how racism works and what it means to be black in Sweden, as is evident when Max laughs and says “she’s black too,” only “light in complexion.” This way he positions his partner as understanding his anger and being able to share it with him, at the same time as he shows how the anger caused by migration and racism affects their relationship.

hooks (1992) also discusses how whiteness is associated with fear and terror in the black imagination. While hooks writes from an American perspective, Max’s narrative is underwritten by similar tones of fear and terror of white Swedish people, as the next quote serves to exemplify:

I don’t trust Swedish people, these white people. I have never felt this unsafe in my own country. There’s always someone coming up with bullshit, you know [in his own country as well]. But I’ve never felt... threatened or... had to be afraid in my country, just walking around. But here, even when I’m just going to the train or somewhere, I’m scared that these white people are going to come shoot me or push me in front of the train, you know. That’s how I... that’s how I feel about white people. Yah... it’s, it’s not a good feeling but that’s... my feeling, I don’t trust them. So it’s crazy. I’m not scared of black people here, no. It’s the white ones that I’m scared of. I’ve never been scared in my life, back home. But here... I’m scared! Just standing there, waiting for the train. Maybe some white person is just going to push me... in front of the train, you know. So I just... always try to... not stand close to the tracks. I think there’s lots of hate in this country, a lot of people, white people, hate other people who are not from here. I’d just say it’s plain hate. I can’t feel safe. Yah, it’s a safe country but still, I don’t feel safe. I didn’t feel this way around white people in the country I’m from.

Max belongs to the just under two percent of the Swedish population who are Afro-Swedes⁵² (Mångkulturellt centrum 2014), while in the African country he moved from, close to ninety percent of the population is black. Max has quite literally been inserted into a sea of whiteness. The quote above is an explosive account of physically feeling racism as fear and terror in one's everyday life. Given that the research report *Afrophobia* (Mångkulturellt centrum 2014: 5) shows that Afro-Swedes are more likely to be subjected to hate crimes than any other minority group in Sweden, and that these crimes often include high levels of physical violence, Max interprets his feelings quite correctly when saying, "I can't feel safe." In the previous chapter I discussed how love sticks more readily to some migrant bodies. Max's quote shows how also the feeling of hate sticks (Ahmed 2004a). According to Ahmed, "it is not simply that any body is hated: particular histories of association are reopened in each encounter, such that some bodies are already encountered as more hateful than other bodies." She goes on to argue that "hate creates the surfaces of bodies through the way in which bodies are aligned with and against other bodies. How we feel about others is what aligns us with a collective" (2004a: 54). As I discussed before, through his migration, Max has become orientated along the lines of the 'African migrant in Sweden.' His body is not aligned with the collective, and he feels hate aimed at him when he moves around in Sweden. The fear he feels works to make Sweden 'not his,' and shows him that he does not belong, as the safety of Sweden is not made his to be had. He recognizes this by saying, "It's a safe country but still, I don't feel safe."

At the same time, Max's narrative is underwritten by an understanding of racism. He did not have to migrate to understand race and racism, despite stating that he did not feel hate from or experience fear around white people in the African country. Rather,

52. This means approximately 180,000 individuals in total, and is a very cautious estimate. The authors of the *Afrophobia* report (Mångkulturellt centrum 2014) point out that as Sweden only records individuals' country of birth and nationality, not race, it is difficult to pinpoint more exactly the size of the Afro-Swedish group.

I interpret his saying he did not feel threatened or afraid in the country he moved from as acknowledging that racism existed there and that he was aware of this. However, he points out that he did not associate this racism with the level of fear he feels from white people in Sweden. Ahmed calls fear, “like pain [...] an unpleasant form of intensity” which involves “an *anticipation* of hurt or injury” (2004a: 65; italics in original): in the quote, Max anticipates being shot or pushed in front of the train by white people.

To sum up, Max’s narrative shows that he is aware of the African story of out-migration that he is written into. As a result, he could reasonably well assume that his migration would make him lose something. He understands his re-orientation as a migrant and as a black person ‘out of place,’ and has resigned to this fact: he often ends his stories with, “But what can a person do?” However, there are more reasons as to why Max expected a more challenging trajectory. Being black, he is aware of racism and what it means to be black in a world orientated towards whiteness. He does not only have a non-Western nationality, but is a citizen of an African country, which makes him very differently orientated compared to a person of Western nationality, both in Sweden and elsewhere. In addition to this, Max’s trans identity, which he positions as the most important part of his identity in his narrative, has also ensured that he has never had the opportunity to sink into Ahmed’s (2004a, 2006) comfortable chair, where he would not know where his body ends and the chair starts. Max’s body extends very uneasily into space, and he has always lived out of line, in one way or another. Even though his migration has increased the number of times he is stopped and brings him even more out of line, he has always experienced a fairly lumpy, uncomfortable chair. This means he understands his losses differently compared to someone who is used to be in line and whose body much more easily extends into the room.

CONCLUSION

Migration is per definition about giving something up. What one has within reach here, one does not have access to there, but the other way around is also true. Loss is a universal migrant experience, and no matter how many privileges one has access to, one cannot help but lose something – one’s language, one’s friends, one’s self – in a migration. However, different feelings of loss are associated with different entanglements, and what structures what we experience as a loss depends on the point we start orientating ourselves from. Some bodies have never been allowed comfort in Ahmed’s (2004a, 2007) metaphorical chair, and so do not assume that migration will bring any, either, while others are so used to their bodies being extended by the room that they very quickly notice the discomfort that the losses of migration bring. This means that loss can ‘do’ very different things to our lives.

Being black, transgender, and non-Western means Max knew about being uncomfortable, being stopped, and being brought out of line: he is less angry and more resigned when the migration brings more of the same, but he understands why it is happening and has words for his discomfort. Jasmin and Emma, on the other hand, do not: their bodies have always been comfortable, except for certain homophobic moments. As a result of the migration process they are brought out of line because of Jasmin’s migration status. The migration places them somewhere they have never been before, and the loss of the familiar causes disruption and disorientation.

However, not only migrating partners experience loss in the migration process; non-migrating partners do, too. As I discussed in the previous chapter on love, there is a kind of love ‘script’ that should be followed if one’s relationship, and, by extension, one’s love, is to be understood and read as ‘good’ love (Nordin 2007). A partner migration, and perhaps in particular a queer partner migration, means the loss of the ‘good,’ equal, and independent relationship. For the non-migrating partner this often entails emotional responsibilities and emotional labour to counter dependency of the migrating partner on the non-migrating partner. However, there is also the

LOSS

loss of hope for an easy relationship and a life like ‘everyone else’s.’ A partner migration relationship is not a relationship with just ‘anyone,’ and the interview participants realize this through the emotional responsibilities placed on the non-migrating partner.

This chapter shows that losing oneself and losing one’s place hurts. No matter who we are, or where our place is, loss makes one vulnerable and is painful. We all grieve and mourn our losses, but in different ways. ‘Privileged’ migrants, that is, migrants who are caught in entanglements where the cut made to examine their migration process shows that the strands of the entanglements contain relative privilege, particularly in terms of social processes of power such as race, gender identity, nationality, class, and education, still experience loss. Every departure risks entailing losses, even for queer partner migrants who are written into a cosmopolitan discourse as a result of which they assume that they can go anywhere they want, and that they are unhindered by national borders, making loss is an emotion inherent in migration.

Loss is also connected to the feeling of belonging, which I will go on to examine in the next chapter.

Chapter 7

Belonging

Leaving home can only happen because there is a home to leave. And the leaving is never just a geographical or spatial separation: it is an emotional separation – wanted or unwanted. Steady or ambivalent.

For the refugee, for the homeless, the lack of this crucial coordinate in the placing of the self has severe consequences. At best it must be managed, made up for in some way. At worst, a displaced person, literally, does not know which way is up, because there is no true north. No compass point. Home is much more than shelter; home is our center of gravity.

Jeanette Winterson (2011: 58-59)

A migration means leaving one place to start a life in another. We might feel ‘at home’ or not in the place we leave, but no matter how we feel for it, it is a place where we have lived, making it ‘a home.’ Leaving home is, as Winterson writes in the quote above, “never just a geographical or spatial separation: it is an emotional separation.” Similarly, to feel that one belongs – or does not belong – in the new place is also emotional, and causes one to feel. Aimee Carrillo Rowe asks us to think about the word ‘belonging’ as two: be longing.

She writes: “placed beside each other, not run together, [the words] phrase a command. The command is to ‘be’ ‘longing,’ not to be still, or be quiet, but to be longing” (2005: 15). Migrations complicate belonging, remove us from home or perhaps deliver us *to* home, and cause us to be longing to ‘be with’ (Sicakkan & Lithman 2005).

In this chapter I focus on belonging as an emotion in queer partner migration. I do so from the points of view of a *sense* of belonging (Fenster 2005), that is, to feel ‘at home,’ and the *politics* of belonging, which relates to inclusion and exclusion of groups and individuals in the society they live in. The chapter starts with a theoretical outline of how to understand the emotion of belonging. I then go on to analyze the narratives of Luke, who migrated from England, and of Eliza from the US and her Swedish wife Viktoria, in relation to notions of belonging. Their narratives show that Luke, on the one hand, and Eliza and Viktoria, on the other, experience belonging in their migration processes very differently, and that this is connected to the entanglements they are caught in as well as to how they have been aligned previously, and how they are able to orientate themselves in Sweden. This chapter also examines residence application processes and queer belonging by bringing together several interview participant narratives.

THE INTENSITY OF BELONGING

To belong – or not belong – can be an intense feeling, as bell hooks describes in *Belonging: A Culture of Place* (2009). Her yearning and longing for Kentucky, the place where she grew up and which is the place where she feels that she belongs, is so strong that she carries it with her during the thirty years she lives away from Kentucky. hooks describes how living away from this place caused her to “live in a state of mental exile, [in which] the condition of feeling split was damaging, [and] caused a breaking down of the spirit” (2009: 15). Similarly, in her autobiography detailing her move from Australia to France, Sarah Turnbull describes different, yet similarly strong, feelings after a month-long visit to Sydney when boarding the plane to Paris:

BELONGING

I guess the reason for my tears is no great mystery. I'm crying about leaving home. [...] Paris is my actual home: it's where I live. [...] But Australia is the home of homesickness and my history – a powerful whirlpool of family and friends, memories and daily trivia that I used to take for granted but now seem somehow remarkable. [...] Living in Paris requires constant effort: effort to make myself understood, effort to understand and to be alert for those cultural intricacies that can turn even going to the post office into a social adventure. Yet in Sydney everything had seemed so familiar, so easy. [...] It was as though back in my old environment I could finally drop the guard I didn't even know I'd been carrying.

(2002: 165-166)

Turnbull describes Sydney, where she feels that she belongs, as “the home of homesickness,” “family and friends, memories and daily trivia” in a mix that makes “everything [seem] to familiar, so easy.” This is very different from hooks’ description of her place of belonging, which is not a longing for a perfect or ideal place, and which I will return to below. Instead, hooks remembers how “the fundamentalist Christian patriarchal power that determined the public world of the State in my native place was mirrored in the structure of my primary family life and family values. Concurrently, white supremacy shaped the psyches of black and white folks in ways that constrained and deformed” (2009: 19). While hooks and Turnbull both describe the feeling of belonging as connected to the place they grew up in and have left, this does not necessarily need to be the case as the narratives I analyze in this chapter show: to feel a sense of belonging or to be with does not always coincide with the place of one’s childhood. In particular, to belong as a queer person may very well mean moving away from the place we are from (Gorman-Murray 2009; Waitt & Gorman-Murray 2011; Weston 1995).

hooks and Turnbull describe belonging as an emotion producing strong feelings, as do many of the interview participants in this study. Despite this, as Marco Antonsich maintains, the concept of belonging

is vaguely defined and under-theorized, and its meaning is often taken for granted, frequently subjected to “an uncritical conflation with the notion of identity and citizenship” (2010: 645). He builds on the work by Nira Yuval-Davis (2006) in trying to divide belonging into two different but interrelated analytical notions, the first of which he calls “place-belongingness,” which is “a personal, intimate feeling of being ‘at home’ in a place”; the second one is “politics of belonging,” which is a “discursive resource which constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion” (Antonsich 2010: 645). As Antonsich points out, the majority of literature discussing belonging does so from the perspective of politics of belonging, although the two dimensions build on each other and are impossible to separate since the politics of belonging affect how a person experiences their place-belongingness, while place-belongingness contributes to and shapes the politics of belonging.

In this chapter I prefer to use the term “sense of belonging,” which I take from Tovi Fenster (2005), rather than “place-belongingness,” as I feel “place-belongingness” does not adequately account for the fact that belonging does not always mean belonging to a material place; queer individuals, for example, may express feeling a sense of belonging to a queer community. As I have already alluded to, a sense of belonging can also be expressed by Hakan Sicakkan and Yngve Lithman’s (2005) term “to be with.” I use this term for the feelings it conjures: to be with is to be part of something, to count. To not be with, then, is to *feel* like you are on the outside, that you are not counted. Other than this, I in this chapter use Antonsich’s understanding of the term belonging and his analytical framework to make sense of the study’s participant narratives.

FEELING A SENSE OF BELONGING

Our sense of belonging is, in hooks’ words, “the making of lives that we feel are worth living” (2009: 1). According to Antonsich, it is the feeling that is created through the emotional attachment a person forms with a place and which makes the place feel like ‘home,’ where that individual can feel ‘at home.’ ‘Home’ should be understood as

something non-material, “a symbolic space of familiarity, comfort, security, and emotional attachment” (Antonsich 2010: 646; see also Yuval-Davis 2006). hooks reinforces this when stating that “home was the place I longed for, *it was not the place where I lived*” (2009: 215, italics added). This means ‘home’ is not necessarily an attachment to one’s actual home and, importantly, one’s sense of home, as well as one’s sense of belonging to somewhere, does not inevitably produce warm feelings, as hooks alludes to when she refers to her sense of belonging to a place of “fundamentalist Christian patriarchal power” and “white supremacy” (2009: 19). As Yuval-Davis writes, the feeling of being ‘at home’ “allows the safety as well as the emotional engagement to be, at times, angry, resentful, ashamed, indignant” (2011: 10). As Luke’s narrative in this chapter shows, the feelings of trauma and pain of a particular place can sometimes be the more familiar ‘home’ and be felt as the place where one belongs.

Fenster (2005) describes sense of belonging as private and intimate and growing out of everyday practices. Antonsich (2010: 646) links the question of “Who am I?” to the question “Where do I belong?” (see also Probyn 1996: 13), meaning that one’s sense of Self is closely linked to a sense of belonging. Asking “Where do I belong?” is also “usually prompted by a feeling that there is a range of spaces, places, locales and identities to which we feel we do not and cannot belong,” which is the reason belonging “involves an important affective dimension” (Yuval-Davis, Anthias & Kofman 2005: 528), as both Luke’s and Eliza and Viktoria’s narratives in this chapter show. Antonsich points to hooks’ (2009) account of her struggles with her sense of belonging, maintaining that “for the individual, belonging is a personal, intimate, existential dimension which narrates and is narrated by the Self” (2010: 647).

Five Factors of Belonging

According to Antonsich, five factors (can) contribute to a sense of belonging: auto-biographical; relational; cultural; economic; and legal factors. **Auto-biographical factors** relate to a person’s past and history: “personal experiences, relations, and memories which attach

a particular person to a given place” (Antonsich 2010: 647). This can be, but is not necessarily, the place one grew up in, like hooks’ childhood memories of Kentucky or Turnbull’s feelings for Sydney.

Relational factors are those ties we tie with other people in a place, be they close, dense relationships like family and friends, or the weak ties we share with strangers whom we happen to share public spaces and small everyday encounters with. Not all relations matter in the same way, and in order to generate a sense of belonging, relationships must be “long-lasting, positive, stable and significant” (Antonsich 2010: 647). There must also be “frequent physical interaction” in these relationships; everyday encounters and shared public spaces alone do not create a sense of belonging to a place.

Cultural expressions, traditions, and habits are part of the **cultural factors** creating a sense of belonging (Antonsich 2010: 648). However, according to Antonsich, language is the most important cultural factor: it “can be felt as an element of intimacy,” “the ‘warm sensation’ to be among people who not merely understand what you say, but also what you mean” (2010: 648, quoting Ignatieff 1994: 7). Language includes not only the spoken words but also the underlying message of what is being said, including codes, signs, and gestures that remain unspoken, yet are still understood by others who speak the same language.

Economic factors, while not sufficient on their own, are also important in feeling a sense of belonging. Antonsich refers to several studies that show that being fully integrated in an economy, rather than relying on casual and unstable jobs (or, I would add, various types of social benefits or one’s partner), is a necessary factor in order for this feeling to occur. Having a work life, and being embedded in the economy of the place in which one lives not only means one is more likely to be economically and materially secure, but it also makes “a person feel that s/he has a stake in the future of the place where s/he lives” (Antonsich 2010: 648). The narratives of Jasmin and Emma and of Max that I analyzed in the previous chapter on loss showed the importance of both having a work life and being economically independent in order to feel like one belongs in Sweden.

Finally, **legal factors**, such as citizenship and residency, are essential in order to feel safety and security. Antonsich quotes Michael

Ignatieff stating that “where you belong is where you are safe; and where you are safe is where you belong” (2010: 648). To have a ‘legal’ status in the sense that one has the necessary permits to dwell in a place is also a pre-condition in order to “participate in and actively shape one’s environment” (Antonsich 2009: 648), and a number of empirical studies (e.g. Fenster & Vizek 2006; Nelson & Hiemstra 2008; Yuval-Davis & Kaptani 2008) have highlighted that being able to do so increases one’s sense of belonging. These studies, as well as Antonsich, take migration and life as a migrant as it relates to legality as their starting point when discussing belonging and, by extension, safety and security. However, one’s sexual identity being criminalized or one’s gender identity not being legally recognized are other legal factors that create a sense of insecurity and alienation. Simultaneously, the legal recognition of one’s queerness can create feelings of belonging, as I discuss when analyzing Eliza and Viktoria’s narrative in this chapter. Feeling like one belongs by having one’s queer relationship legally recognized also connects this personal sense of belonging to discourses of intimate citizenship.

All these factors contributing to the personal and intimate feeling that is a sense of belonging simultaneously connect the individual to the politics of belonging. To feel at home and to belong is also a social matter (Antonsich 2010; Probyn 1996), and I will now outline the politics of belonging and its connection to the personal feeling ‘to be with.’

THE POLITICS OF BELONGING: INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION

Elsbeth Probyn writes that “belonging cannot be an isolated and individual affair” (1996: 13); it must also place the individual in a social context. If a sense of belonging is experienced as a feeling originating within the self, the politics of belonging instead refers to belonging as something ‘awarded’ one by others, and as something extended to one by the larger social world. It is the construction of boundaries around that which is ‘awarded’ which separate ‘us’

from ‘them’ in a discourse of who belongs where (Antonsich 2010; Crowley 1999; Yuval-Davis 2006, 2011). The politics of belonging is, as Antonsich (2010) points out, more thoroughly investigated and theorized (see e.g. Anthias 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2010; Brubaker 2010; Castles & Davidson 2000; Geddes & Favell 1999; Westwood & Phizacklea 2000; Yuval-Davis 2006, 2007, 2011; Yuval-Davis, Anthias & Kofman 2005; Yuval-Davis, Kannabiran & Vieten 2006) than is the more personal and intimate sense of belonging. Yuval-Davis, who arguably has produced one of the most comprehensive analytical efforts to study the politics of belonging, particularly from an intersectional and feminist perspective, defines the concept as “not only the construction of boundaries but also the inclusion or exclusion of particular people, social categories and groupings within these boundaries by those who have the power to do so” (2011: 18).

The boundaries established to include or exclude can take different shapes, but in migration studies these boundaries are usually understood as national, ethnic, or racial, or a combination thereof (Antonsich 2010; Brubaker 2010; Castles & Davidson 2000; Geddes & Favell 1999; Qvist, Suter & Ahlstedt 2015; Yuval-Davis 2006, 2011). The politics of belonging are also strongly connected to both the membership of a group and the ownership of land by groups. This is the reason why “belonging to a place becomes one and the same as belonging to a group of people, i.e. belonging becomes synonymous with identity, both social and individual” (Antonsich 2010: 649).

Being ‘granted’ this type of belonging, however, may not be enough to generate a *sense* of belonging. It means more than citizenship (in the wider sense of the term), political entitlements, access to welfare, or equal treatment; it is possible to live in a place and be granted and have access to various political and institutional rights but still feel excluded. Referring to a number of empirical studies, Antonsich (2010: 650) argues that not being recognized, listened to, and accepted into a community for *who you are* creates feelings of exclusion and alienation. From the perspective of migration and ethnicity this causes a problem in that “any dominant ethnic group tends to fill the notion of belonging with a rhetoric of sameness, which clearly prevents any recognition of difference” (Antonsich 2010: 650).

By being *made* unwelcome through various discourses and practices, one will *feel* unwelcome, and, consequently, social discourses and practices also create feelings of (non)belonging in individuals. Feelings of isolation, alienation, and not ‘being with’ does not mean one is *actively* excluded through policies and regulations. That said, it shows the close links between how the politics of belonging are practiced and an individual’s sense of belonging.

As I have noted already, and as I continue to discuss in this chapter, belonging does not necessarily mean belonging to a particular nation or ethnic group, but may also include belonging to other types of places (cities, a particular type of nature, a neighbourhood) and other types of groups and identities (queer groups, non-heteronormative groups, or non-normative gender identities, for example). For this study, belonging is intrinsically connected to intimate citizenship and the recognition of queer relationships. It also ties in with other types of ‘intimate trouble’ and recognition, such as gender-neutral marriage.

LUKE’S STORY: FALLING IN LOVE WITH THE IDEA OF SWEDEN

Luke and I meet over coffee in an alternative café-cum-bar in the city where he lives and goes to university. Coming across as a relaxed and laid back person who laughs easily, Luke is warm and charming. At twenty-six, he is tall and lanky, and he uses the term ‘mixed race’ to describe himself: his mother is white and his dad black. Having grown up working class, being cisgendered, referring to himself as ‘gay,’ and defining himself as ‘English’ (rather than British), Luke came to Sweden when he was nine-teen after meeting his then-boyfriend in England.

Luke’s narrative includes more background information than most other participants’, and while everyone’s present is influenced by their past, Luke makes it very clear in the interview that his migration experience cannot be put into context unless he also tells me about his life before migrating to Sweden. Having a firm idea of how he wants to construct his narrative, Luke takes charge of the interview

and tells me his story rather than waiting to be asked questions. In the seven years since meeting his then-boyfriend he has mainly lived in Sweden, and Luke's sense of belonging in Sweden is firmly connected to his experience of growing up in an abusive family environment, migrating at a young age, and becoming an adult in Sweden. He is aware of how narrative orientates, and he wants to orientate his story when telling it by including these aspects.

Luke describes his boyfriend, who was a couple of years older than Luke, as "cool" and someone who had "a really different style." He also recalls the fact that the boyfriend was Swedish as important and fascinating, and laughs when he says: "He was *so* exotic! Oh, Sweden! I knew virtually nothing about Sweden at the time and so it was just like, wow! I was very taken in!" Luke positions himself in his narrative as living in a fairly limited and closed world with few ways 'out' until he meets his boyfriend. The first part of his narrative centers on two main issues: school and his relationship with his mother, both which contribute to feelings of being stuck and suffocating.

Growing Up Out of Line

As an only child, Luke lived alone with his mother growing up; his father left the family when he was three years old and Luke did not see him again until he was sixteen. He describes his childhood as "really, really nice," and although he thinks his mother had problems during this time as well, he did not notice them until he got older. Then, however, things changed, and Luke's narrative from the time he was about the age of ten tells a story of an emotionally but also physically abusive home life. Trying to give an example of how this could play out, Luke says he had very little privacy because his mother demanded access to his bedroom, but, he says, "I had this big wardrobe right next to the door and I'd push the wardrobe in front of the door so she couldn't come in. And... so she kicked and kicked until the whole wardrobe fell over. When she didn't break into my room, then she'd like... say... things, like call me names... and say things through the door and stuff."

Around the same time his mother started being abusive, she also managed to get him into a private school which Luke says was “a very good school” but, with a short laugh, also “very, very strict and my childhood was not one built on all these rules and regulations and... so it was a big change for me, basically.” Soon after starting the new school, Luke got in trouble for hitting another student, and he says, “I got suspended for that. And I remember feeling that that was really unfair.” The school was mostly white and, being one of only four non-white students, Luke says that while he did not think of it at the time, he now remembers how this factored into the conversations that followed at school, implying that others around him connected his non-whiteness to his aggression. This is one of very few places in his narrative where Luke reflects on race, and how being non-white may stop him and orientate him differently compared to white people around him. While being non-white in white contexts is part of the entanglement he is caught in, he does not express that this plays a central role – or a role at all – in his migration narrative, neither as something that has brought him out of line nor, conversely, helped him orientate himself. Luke grew up in a white context in the sense that he went to white schools and only spent time with his white mother’s side of the family. In Sweden, this continued, as his boyfriend and his boyfriend’s family also were white. However, as I go on to discuss, it is Luke’s class position, rather than race, that is the most prominent and important in his narrative.

Because he did not follow school rules and because the workload was too heavy for him to keep up with, Luke often received detention. He had few friends at school, “was in a lot of trouble,” and describes himself as “angry.” Instead of going to school, he would skip and hang out with friends from neighbouring schools: “We’d like leave school and go to town and... go hang out there for the day, yeah, we had each other, basically. We were all kind of in the same... shitty situation, [*laughs a little*] yeah, with parents who were... kind of abusive and... hated us. That was where a lot of my energy went, basically.” Being unwanted is something Luke comes back to several times in his narrative, and I will discuss this in more detail later in the analysis of his story. However, it is important in order to understand

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Luke's sense of belonging in Sweden that he positions himself as having no one and nothing available to him from the age of ten until he moved to Sweden.

By the time Luke was expelled from school in his final year, he had been suspended sixteen times:

Because I got worse and worse and more angry and more angry and fell even further behind in my school work. And then... my mum, because of course it was affecting her as well. I guess she felt like... she's... gotten her son into this--, well, we come from a working-class background and she's, you know, managed to get me into this... amazing school with... all these opportunities and... and I was fucking up, basically. But her... her way of, ehm... [*sighs*] Well, I don't think she dealt with it in good way. Well, I don't know what she could have done differently but she added to the... the stress. She was screaming and yelling at me about being gay and me getting detention in school.

Luke started running away from home, drinking more, and doing more drugs. Around the same time as he got expelled from school his mother "became more abusive and... like physically violent and... and... when I was like-- When she found out I was gay she, she..." Luke finds it difficult articulating what happened when his mother went into his room, read his diary, and found out that he was gay, except that she called him at the house of a friend where he was staying at the time, and "she wanted me to come home, she was furious and... I don't remember what happened that night but... it... just... nothing." Luke quickly moves on in his narrative after telling the story about being outed this way, not willing or able to divulge more, but later comes back to how after this initial reaction, his mother "did not care" about his sexual identity:

I remember my mum being very sort of like, she never really cared about it. When she knew the fact that I was

gay, she was like [*imitates his mother in an agitated voice:*]
 “I don’t care! I don’t care!” She didn’t understand that it
 was difficult, she just wanted me to do what was good.
 She was very sort of like focused on... [*sighs*] almost like
 the function... my function in... in life was to do well
 at school. Your emotions and having feelings – does not
 matter. Sort of thing.

In his mid-teens, Luke also attempted suicide but survived. He then decided that “I would carry on living to seventeen and if it doesn’t get better, I’m done. And it did, it did get better. It did.” Luke laughs as he tells the story of deciding to not live past seventeen unless his life improved, but it is a downhearted laughter. Narrating his story is obviously difficult and he sometimes has tears in his eyes as he is talking. His is a narrative about growing up out of line and not belonging anywhere except with friends who also do not belong elsewhere. In Luke’s private school, his working-class, non-white, scholarship body that did not behave correctly (by getting into “trouble,” not following the rules, and not carrying out the schoolwork well enough) did not belong. Luke spends his school years feeling uncomfortable as the ‘here’ that he is required to orientate himself from differs from that of his classmates, making him disorientated. The bodies that create the school space are white, straight, middle-class bodies that do not run away from home or drink and do drugs as a way to escape; in this space, Luke’s body cannot be extended (Ahmed 2006) because the space is not made for him. If we make a cut to Luke’s entanglement to be able to bring the most prominent strands of the knot into focus, class, race, and sexual identity stand out in this part of his narrative. Compared to Sara Ahmed’s comfortable chair, which makes it ‘hard to distinguish where one’s body ends and the world begins’ (2004a: 148), Luke’s body is brought out of line as a result of the entanglement he is caught in. His body rubs and chafes against the chair, being allowed no comfort. Also, by being expelled from school and being queer, he fails his mother’s expectations of the kind of person he should be. His “function in life” is reduced to “do what [is] good,” something he is not able to do the way she would like.

A Romantic Relationship as an Opening to a New World

There is an enormous vulnerability and lack of safety in this part of Luke's narrative. However, things "got better" once he finished secondary school and although his grades were not great, he went on to do his A-levels as a friend's mother who worked in administration at a college⁵³ helped him be admitted. "And it was *so* much better," he says, "so much better than school! I did better in college, definitely. And I was a lot happier. I met some really nice friends in college, they felt... you know, there were gay people and... people were suddenly okay with that. Things at college were so much better and I was so much happier but things were still bad at home." When he met his Swedish boyfriend he was eighteen, in his last semester of college, and was at a stage in his life where things were looking brighter, even though he was still dependent on his mother and tried to negotiate this relationship by staying away from her.

When they met, Luke's Swedish boyfriend was at the beginning of a semester-long exchange at a university in Luke's home town. Luke had never been in a relationship before, had never had a boyfriend, and, having mainly straight friends, had also not spent any significant amount of time around other queer people. As I mention at the start of the narrative, Luke was quite swept away by his boyfriend, whom he saw as exotic, cool, and worldly, and it is obvious that he looked up to his boyfriend as someone who had 'done' 'more' and 'was' 'more' than Luke had 'done' and 'was' at the time. At the same time, he remembers:

I wasn't really in love from the first moment, he was a lot more into me. Yeah, he was a lot more into me. Like I remember when he said he loved me the first time, I said

53. Students in England complete their secondary education between the ages of 11 and 18. From the age of 16, however, they leave 'school' and enter a two-year period of education (year 12 and 13) known as 'sixth form' or 'college.' These two years typically lead to what is usually called A-level qualifications, which is similar to a high school diploma in many other countries.

“I love you” back but I didn’t feel it. I thought, whatever, he’s leaving in a few months and this is nice, I like him. Anyway. When he left, I was very, very sad. And I kind of realized, oh yes, this, this is what it feels like, [*in pitying voice, softly mocking himself:*] oh, crying, I hate being alone, ooh...

Luke paints a picture of not being as ‘into’ and in love with his boyfriend as his boyfriend is with him. He likes his boyfriend, but tied in with these romantic feelings is a realization that he “hate[s] being alone.” It is also connected to wanting to visit Sweden: recalling his boyfriend saying Luke should come for a visit, Luke says: “Which of course I wanted to do. Because we had a good relationship and... Sweden! Like, wow! I’m never going to get a chance to go there!” This part of Luke’s narratives shows how narratives are retroactively constructed: as Luke is no longer in the relationship that is part of his narrative, he is able to construct the ‘love story’ as perhaps not actually being love, at least not initially. He is also able to construct the ‘love’ as being more about loneliness and wanting a new experience than actual love, something he would likely not have been able to do had he still been in the relationship. I will come back to this later in the narrative. In addition, having described a life up until then with very few trusting relationships and also a sense of being stuck in a vulnerable place, I interpret this part of Luke’s narrative as, on the one hand, it feeling good to be loved, wanted, and cared about, and, on the other, an opportunity to ‘get out of here’ for however short a time. His boyfriend is important because he brings with him a new world, a chance to feel, do, and see something different.

To Experience a Sense of Belonging in Chaos

Luke went to Sweden to visit his boyfriend for what was going to be a two-week holiday, but he stayed for good. His boyfriend picked him up at the airport, and they drove to his boyfriend’s parents’ house where they stayed that first summer. This is a turning point

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in Luke's narrative, when he tells of his realization of, first, who he is in relation to his boyfriend's family, and, then, as he gets used to this new type of life, a dawning understanding that a different life can be within reach.

We drove up to his parents' house and... [*Luke laughs and sighs at the same time*] that was weird! Because he'd shown me pictures of his parents and his dog and his two sisters and his nice big old Swedish house with the flag like in the middle of the lawn. And to me that's like... a giant house. It looked really nice anyway. And... and... very, very normal, like *nothing* I'd ever come in contact with ever before. His dad didn't speak a word of English. His mum... was lovely! She was so nice! She spoke a little bit of English. His sisters... no, not so much. I think I spent a lot of the time hanging out with the dog. Because it was so weird for me and I felt so awkward there. It was definitely the language, but think about the contrast of my life up until that point and then to come to this family and the idyllic Swedish countryside. They lived outside the main center, there were just trees and it was so pretty and I felt like I was this disturbance in all this... this harmonious existence and I was like... this chaotic... thing. I didn't really know how to react to... to... what they were really like. Because for me it was so different. Like we'd sit at the table and eat dinner together [at his boyfriend's family's house]. Me and my mum, we'd both just sit and eat and watch TV. And not talk. [*starts laughing*] Because we hated each other. And I'd be away [from home], sort of thing. So I guess I missed that one, socializing at the dinner table, which is the only form of eating that they did. I was just supposed to kind of catch up, in a way. I felt like I was really lagging behind, like I had to really [*slaps his hands together*] make an effort to get enthusiastic [*laughs somewhat sarcastically*] about eating [and, in extension, socializing], even though I didn't understand anything they were talking about at

the table and even if they were speaking English it was questions about me and my life and my family and... I didn't really want to tell them about... what I... I didn't feel comfortable sharing who I... who I was. Any of my past or... stuff about my parents or just anything because it felt so out of place in that context. I felt really kind of vulnerable, sharing that stuff with them. In the beginning. But they made such an effort, they really made an effort and... I loved them.

Luke paints a very vivid picture of a Swedish small-town middle-class family, the kind of family that exemplifies *the* family in Swedish discourse of what a family 'should' look like: a white, middle-class, heterosexual nuclear family with three children and a dog, living in a house they own, surrounded by beautiful nature, eating all their meals together and interacting with each other as they do. His initial reaction to this type of family is something close to being shocked by the 'normality,' which is "like *nothing* [he]'d ever come in contact with ever before." He is also awed by the size of the house ("I mean, they had a *library!*" he says and laughs a long, astonished laugh) and its location. The fact that Luke uses the word 'normal' is also significant, as this term comes back several times in his narrative: he positions himself as 'not normal,' and says, "Normalness scares me." However, Luke does not connect this "normalness" with class. The description of Luke's life up until this point is a description of a particular kind of English working-class life, while, when he arrives at his boyfriend's family in Sweden, he is brought into a Swedish middle-class life. However, while Luke has an understanding of class in the sense that he specifically mentions that he comes from a working-class family, he does not read his encounter with his boyfriend's life in terms of class. This points to how difficult it can be to understand class in intimate situations.

Luke describes his life in England as out of line, but this does not mean that he feels he belongs to his boyfriend's family's kind of life. What this feeling of non-belonging does is make him distance himself from that life and instead think of where he does belong. I

quoted Nira Yuval-Davis, Floya Anthias, and Eleonore Kofman at the beginning of this chapter, who state that asking where we belong is usually prompted by feelings of *not* belonging, those places and instances where “we feel we do not and cannot belong” (2005: 528). Luke calls himself “this chaotic thing,” and a “disturbance in all this harmonious existence,” this way positioning himself as feeling a sense of belonging with chaos rather than in harmony. In this he is similar to bell hooks (2009) whose sense of belonging also is with a place that is neither kind to her nor warm or caring. At the same time, Luke feels that his boyfriend’s parents make an effort to make him feel welcome, included, and like he belongs. Although he does not make it explicit in his narrative, the fact that he is welcomed as the son’s boyfriend and their queer love is not questioned is also different from his previous experiences.

To Realize That Home Is Not Where You Belong

Back in England, particularly at school, Luke was brought out of line because the entanglement he was caught in consisted of too many ‘wrongs’: working class, mixed race, queer, troublesome, and causing disorder. In school he was explicitly pointed out as deviating, and he was brought out of line for everyone to see. When he arrives at his boyfriend’s family, however, the way he is brought out of line is much more subtle. He is welcomed and included, yet there is an expectation to fit in; an assumption of a universal white harmonious middle-class life applicable to everyone, everywhere. He feels this expectation and notices the dissonance between the expectation and who he understands himself to be: as he puts it in the quote above, he is “supposed to kind of catch up” to how the family lives and socializes with each other. The way he is brought out of line is not as obvious or violent; instead it becomes a feeling Luke carries inside him, and it causes him to question his childhood:

I was definitely quite kind of down, maybe the first week in Sweden. Because obviously I was like starting to think

more about, like it was putting my experience into a wider context, I guess. I felt like no one really loved me, at that point. And I remember saying that and it felt like I was realizing that and it felt awful. And I remember crying. And my boyfriend cried as well, and he held me. He was very, he was very... supportive. But I had a really nice time. Apart from the dark thinking about my mum... and... and everything, and comparing... not feeling I was up... to standard. Because I was... basically failed, well, I felt like I'd failed at school. And I felt I can't be social with these people because... there's nothing normal I can talk about in my life. When you're meeting people for the first time and you have limited [shared] language, you talk about very general things. And obviously I could just talk about England and stuff like that, but I didn't feel like I knew... that much. I had specific experiences of growing up in England. They'd talk about when they'd been to the Lake District and how lovely it was. I didn't know what to say about that, my experience is, is... it's just so-- I couldn't answer any of their questions, I didn't feel I could be that English person they had in mind. And I still can feel like that when people ask but I don't care as much now [*laughs*]. But I really felt like I... had to... perform a role I didn't feel like I had any experience... to... perform. I could have done the role of crazy crackhead teenager perfectly! Perfectly! But I couldn't obviously tell them-- there was nothing I could say!

There are two types of feelings present in this quote, the first one being Luke's feeling of not being loved. This is strong feeling, and Luke says he cried and "it felt awful." hooks understands home to be "the safe place, the place where one could count on not being hurt. It was the place where wounds were attended to. Home was the place where the me of me mattered. Home was the place I longed for, it was not the place where I lived" (2009: 215). This shows that belonging somewhere and feeling at home are not necessarily one

and the same, but the two are connected, overlap, and blur the each other's borders. Luke, however, realizes when arriving in Sweden and his "experience [is] put in a wider context," that although he feels a sense of belonging in the chaos that has been part of his life until then, he simultaneously does not feel *at home* in it. It is not a safe place "where wounds [are] attended to." Instead, as I go on to show, the support he receives from his boyfriend, and also his boyfriend's family, makes Luke start feeling attached to Sweden, and develop a sense of belonging.

Second, as I have already alluded to, class is very important in this first half of Luke's narrative, and the "specific experiences" he has of growing up in England, that he speaks of in the quote above, are classed experiences, just as his boyfriend's family's experiences of the English Lake District "and how lovely it was" are classed. When Luke describes being out of line in this quote, he is also describing what class felt like at this point in his life. While he no longer cares so much about being stopped by his working-class background and not being able to "be that English person [others have] in mind," the feelings he felt by being brought out of line because of class caused made him try to perform a role and be someone else. In the end, though, they silence him because there are no points of contact between his reality and that of the white, middle-class Swedish family he is brought into.

Belonging through Feelings of Safety

During these first months, Luke also meets his boyfriend's friends. He says: "We had wonderful, wonderful times, riding our bikes, swimming in lakes at three in the morning and drinking Swedish cider and I had a really good time. And that was essentially what made me stay. I kind of fell in love with the idea of Sweden, I guess." While Luke's narrative of this first summer in Sweden is a story about confusion and being out of line, it is also about feeling safe and starting to build a feeling of being at home. It is this feeling of home, I argue, that makes Luke "fall in love with the idea of Sweden" as the realization of there being 'something else' available settles in him. At

the same time, this is another place where the retroactive construction of narrative becomes visible in Luke's narrative. Luke specifically does not say he fell more in love with his boyfriend, which he would have been required to say if they were still together, at least if he had wanted to make the feeling of love stick to them (Ahmed 2004a). Instead he says that he fell in love with *the idea of Sweden*. It is also significant that it is 'the idea' of Sweden rather than just 'Sweden.' By phrasing it this way, Luke positions himself as understanding that there is nothing 'true' about Sweden as such that makes him feel this way but, rather, it is a feeling that he *associates* with Sweden that makes him want to stay.

At the end of the summer, Luke moves with his boyfriend to another city. Of this he says, "My boyfriend's parents helped us move. [*Throws his arms open and continues in amazed voice:*] I mean, they did so much for their kids! So much! They were so supportive!" They live off his boyfriend's student loans and apply for residency for Luke, a process that makes little impression on him: "It was pretty easy to fix the residence permit. Is that what you call it? I was interviewed, it was no hard questions, just like how we met and... blah blah... it was fine. So I got that." In his narrative, this process has little significance, which is something I will return to and discuss in more detail later in this chapter. The importance of the residence permit does come back later, however, "as something practical" when Luke describes things as "very bad" between him and his boyfriend, making him worry about the fact that they need to stay together in order for him to receive permanent residence.

The couple shares an apartment with three friends of Luke's boyfriend, and Luke starts studying Swedish. Emphasizing that his studies were "for free," Luke goes on to narrate how the studies and life in Sweden affected him:

It was in January, I guess, that I got into the Swedish course. I went to a meeting at the school and a teacher gave me this card and said I could use it for public transportation for free during school hours, during the day,

and it was to last for eight months or a year or something. And I was like, [*in incredulous voice:*] “I get this for free?!” And she reached over to me [*imitates reaching over and patting someone’s hand*] and she was like, “Don’t worry, you’re in Sweden now!” [*Luke laughs hard and loudly for a long time*] So when all this happened [the move to Sweden, his relationship with his boyfriend, his Swedish studies], it just felt like, aaaah [*sighs with relief*]. I had this space, and the support from people on the outside, I had adults in my life, like my boyfriend’s parents essentially and my boyfriend himself and... there was a system [*short laugh*] as well that was there to kind of make my life easier. And then... [*long pause*] It just started to make more and more sense to... stay. I was studying hard, for the first time! [*laughs*] For the first time in my life really and doing very well, I was at the top of the class and... It felt like... [*long pause*] I was good [meaning he felt good], I was good, yeah. I was good, I was... I didn’t feel like the workload was too much. I got into a good, steady routine because school started at *eight* in the morning [*voice indicating that this felt very early, making Sara laugh*], Jesus, which I was *not* used to. And then... I’d do my homework in the evening. I was focused! I was focused. For the first time, really. Yeah, I felt like what I was doing, it felt doable. Rather than previously when I’d had seven pieces of assignments that needed to be handed in and I missed like half of it and... I had to go to detention on this day and that day and... I was being screamed at at home and-- It was, it was-- I could focus! It was way different. [*long pause*] Yeah, I kind of realize, I ran away and that was it. I wanted to get as far away as I could from my mum and I did. It was, anything has to be better than this. In my mind, being in Sweden, I realized [*acts out realizing something suddenly*], oh, this can actually be a really good thing. Not just an... escape and then a return but rather... It felt like this would be like a platform to actually... reconstruct... ehm... kind of put myself back

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together or... kind of heal. [*breathes in deeply, is silent for a while*] Yeah, it was a healing place to be. Where I could kind of focus, like I said, reflect. I did a lot of reflecting and... ehm... particularly on the relationship with my mum, I felt like so, so angry. Still. I'm quite angry but... ehm... it gave me space to breathe.

I will come back to this later in the analysis of Luke's narrative, but for now I want to point out how Luke again does not orientate his narrative along the lines of romantic love. What he instead tells is a story of an exit and the need to leave a bad situation, in which his boyfriend and their relationship become exit strategies rather than pull factors for migration. However, when he describes life in Sweden as offering him a platform for reconstruction and being "a healing place to be," Luke also describes going from escape-only to finding a home. He starts building a sense of belonging where instead of feeling he belongs in chaos and disorder, the borders between 'home' and 'sense of belonging' start to blur. As I outlined at the beginning of the chapter, Antonsich (2010) includes relational factors, that is, relationships with other people, as well as legal factors, including access to safety and security as part of that which creates a sense of belonging in individuals. Luke's narrative tells of having the space to reflect, the support of adults like his boyfriend's parents and his teachers but also his boyfriend, and a system "that was there to [...] make [his] life easier." This creates a feeling of safety which works to make him start to feel that he belongs. While Ignatieff examines safety in regards to refugees, his statement that "where you belong is where you are safe; and where you are safe is where you belong" (quoted in Antonsich 2010: 648) is clearly applicable to Luke. In his narrative, Luke expresses making a conscious choice to stay in Sweden: "it started to make more and more sense to stay." He is starting to feel at home.

Belonging as a Young Migrant

Up until this point Luke's narrative is one of expecting very little: he does not expect others (whether people or social structures such as the education system) to be there for him, and when they are, he is pleasantly surprised. He also does not expect to enter Sweden at a specific place or position – as a person with specific professional experience expecting a certain type of job, for example – but positions himself as living somewhat from day to day. Migration becomes an opportunity for Luke; his narrative does not describe instances of loss as a result of the migration, only opportunities and gains. Rather than feeling resentful in the face of being 'incorporated' into a Swedish migration system, Luke embraces it.

Auto-biographical factors – his past and history: his childhood, his experiences from school – strongly influence Luke's sense of belonging in Sweden. At the same time, these auto-biographical factors are influenced by age: Luke was relatively young when he arrived in Sweden, in many ways he was still a child, and he had never lived an independent life away from his family. Theoretically, he lived with his mother until he migrated (although he did not spend much time there), he had always been a student and never had a regular job, and he had never been in a serious relationship before, not even really dated. The fact that he expresses that there "were adults in [his] life" in Sweden (as opposed to in England), and his astonishment over how supportive his boyfriend's parents were of their children speak to this as well. Luke is also young enough to be included in the high school system, rather than in Swedish for immigrant classes for adults, and because the school system he enters is so different compared to that of his previous experiences, with a less demanding workload and more support, he finds peace and a focus he lacked in his previous schooling. Luke is this way brought in line because of his age, and aligned along the lines of a young person. Had he met his boyfriend when he was ten years older, his reaction to encountering Sweden and his sense of belonging would probably have been very different.

Being a (young) migrant *works* for Luke. He is granted legal belonging almost immediately, not experiencing any difficulties when

applying for his residence permit, and is offered to study Swedish (“for free,” as he points out). On top of these free studies, he recalls his astonishment when receiving a public transit card as well. Free public transportation during school hours, a so-called ‘school card,’ is offered all students under the age of twenty enrolled in secondary education in the city Luke lived in at the time. The fact that it is also offered to Luke more firmly includes him as ‘one of us,’ and he *feels* this inclusion. While he laughs uproariously upon enacting how his teacher told him not to worry because he was in Sweden now – by which she indicated that Sweden would ‘take care’ of Luke – his narrative also shows that he appreciates that someone is willing to ‘take care’ of him and look out for him, both people and a ‘system.’ This feeling of inclusion works to create a sense of ‘being with’ and ‘being at home.’

In some sense, being a migrant is becoming a child: one has to learn a (new) language, find one’s place in the world, and is told what to do. Where Jasmin in the previous chapter on loss lamented being treated “like a big baby” after her migration, it works for Luke to be treated like a child, as it allows him to receive the support that he feels has lacked previously. Luke’s migration brings him in line by orientating him along lines that identify him as a young person and a migrant. The effect of this is Luke being offered what he understands himself to need emotionally. He has not previously been in a context where the lines that would bring him in line were available to him to orientate himself along, but as a migrant in Sweden, Luke becomes aligned ‘correctly.’ He wants to be in Sweden, and in his narrative he positions himself as belonging in Sweden in a much more concrete way than he does in England.

Finding a Way to Return to Sweden

At the same time as school was going well and Luke enjoyed his living situation, his boyfriend did not get along with their housemates, resulting in their housemates moving out. As Luke and his boyfriend could not afford to stay in the apartment on their own, they had to give it up. They had no money, and Luke was forced to go back to England as his Swedish was not good enough for him to be able

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to find a job. Luke describes this as extremely distressing and sad. Burying his face in his hands, he says: “It felt like I had failed this chance I had got. I had to be in England and move in with my mum and I was like [*makes exasperated noise:*] aaaah, god!”

Luke stayed in England for eight months during which time he landed a job in a store that was part of an international chain. Still in the relationship, he came back to Sweden a few times to visit his boyfriend, and during one of these visits, he went into a branch of the store he was working at in England and started chatting to the staff. In an excited voice, he recounts how he talked to the staff in Swedish: “Yeah, I got good at Swedish! I was reading Swedish books and stuff while I was away. And I felt quite confident talking about the products. I made a good impression and the manager was like, ‘Actually, we’re looking for someone...’” A few months later, Luke was back in Sweden, having secured a job in the store.

His boyfriend had at this stage moved to another city, so Luke moved in with one of his old housemates and says with emphasis that this

was *wonderful*, we worked *really* well together, we lived really well together. I still had a distance relationship with my boyfriend so there was this vague point in the future that we would live together. But for now it was a *really* nice summer that we had, me and my housemate. I was working in different stores in [city] and people were like, “Oh, we love him!” I was very good at it.

With this part of his narrative, Luke combines all the five factors contributing to a sense of belonging as described by Antonsich (2010). His past and history is something he does not want to go back to (auto-biographical factors); he has close and strong ties with people in the place he is in (relational factors); while he does not share in all Swedish cultural expressions, he speaks the language (cultural factors); he is embedded in the economy (economic factors); and his status as a migrant is legalized while his sexual identity is a non-issue

from a legal as well as more emotional perspectives (legal factors). In addition, Luke experiences that he is included and made to belong in a political sense (Yuval-Davis 2006, 2011) as well. All these aspects taken together help to create a sense of belonging, which makes him choose one direction in life (to move back to Sweden) rather than another (to stay in England, which would have been a more likely trajectory once he moved back there). Luke's narrative describes devastation at having to leave Sweden, and is full of joy when he tells the story about how he managed to return by relying on himself and his own capacities.

A Lacking Love in a Retroactively Created Narrative

As I noted earlier, Luke's boyfriend and romantic love play a very small part in Luke's migration narrative. This becomes even more evident once Luke has moved back to Sweden, and his boyfriend wants Luke to move to the city where the boyfriend now lives so they can be together. While Luke describes being hesitant, he still says:

Yeah, I wanted to be with him. I wasn't sure about living with him again, certainly when it was just us two. I don't think I said this to anybody, but in my mind I was like, it's not forever, let's see how it feels and then, you know, if it doesn't feel right I can just move out – go back to [the city Luke was living in at the time]! It was just to try it out. I mean, he was the one with the big plan for the career and stuff. I would just work for the store. I don't think I was thinking about university then, because things were going so well at the store. I was like, oh, I might just end up working my way up with them, sort of thing. And in that case the move to [the other city] was a good move. So I did finally move. [*laughs a little*] I found myself crying my eyes out having to say goodbye to my housemate, we were both crying. [*makes howling noises, then laughs a little*] I think I had... a serious talk with my boyfriend on the first night in the new city. I was like... so, obviously I just left a really

good thing behind me. Now... if this is gonna work... it can't be like last time.

Luke's sense of belonging is not connected to his relationship, and love in his narrative is not liberating. Compared to other interview participants, who use romantic love as the foundational emotion behind migration, through which they constitute and recognize themselves, as I discussed in the chapter on love, Luke talks about "falling in love with the idea of Sweden" instead. Also, as he explains several times throughout the interview, the love he experiences with his boyfriend has not brought him to a place that fulfills all his emotional and sexual needs the way that love 'should' according to common love narratives (cf. Langford 1999). He is very critical of both the relationship and his boyfriend, and his 'love story' is a story about a love that is lacking. While love partly brought him to the place that he is in, it is not able to offer him everything he needs, and it is not necessarily what keeps him there.

Towards the end of his narrative, Luke describes how after moving to the city his boyfriend now lives in, things got "really bad" between them:

I thought about the residency permit. Basically. As... as... something practical. It was like, things may change [to the better] in this relationship, and if they don't change, then at least I have my residence permit, and it won't have been... for... nothing, sort of. Which felt really shady so I never really said that. [*laughs*] But it felt like, Jesus, well, if I'm going to go for this I might as well have something concrete at the end of it, that I can actually use, that can contribute to, you know, the future. Which was, you know, part of the reason for the move to Sweden in the first place. Not... a huge part, it was just an idea, but it was there, as an idea. When things were rough I was still bound by this temporary residence permit. So it kind of forced you to stay together.

This quote shows two things: first, it reinforces that a partner migration must be based on love and nothing else, as I discussed in relation to Alejandro and Fredrik's narrative in the chapter on love. Luke could not say out loud at the time that he stayed in the relationship because of his residency and not because of love, and he felt "shady" thinking it. Secondly, it reaffirms the retroactive nature of narratives. As I noted earlier, it is possible for Luke to construct a narrative that is critical of his relationship because he is no longer in the relationship and is not interviewed with his then boyfriend. Luke is at much more liberty to tell his own story, squarely from his own point of view, instead of creating a joint story together with a partner. Once the relationship is dissolved, it becomes 'natural' that the narrative belongs to the individual rather than to 'us'; it is part of detaching from the relationship. It makes it easier to be critical of a love story once it no longer is, as there are fewer (or no) requirements left to keep up the façade of the 'good' or 'serious' love (Nordin 2007). This gives Luke the possibility of being very honest about what he felt worked and did not work in his relationship. Had he told his story while he was still in the relationship and the love was more present, his narrative would likely have looked very different, especially considering the fact that he stayed in the relationship for five years and he does not construct it as bad, only as *lacking*. He may then have focused more on the love and its being the reason for his migration. Because he gets to tell his own story, 'my story' rather than 'our story' (which was not the case for most participants I interviewed as the majority were still in the relationship the migration occurred in), Luke does not need to consider another person's feelings and their interpretation of the relationship. This way he can construct a love story with Sweden rather than with his boyfriend. It also helps that he feels safe in the place where he is now, which makes it (more) possible to talk about that which is difficult.

I will now move on from Luke's narrative and turn to a more general discussion about residence permit applications and how this process makes queer partner migrants feel that they belong in Sweden. However, Luke's story and the feelings he expresses (or does not express, rather) when talking about the initial residence permit application process are significant for what I go on to explore next.

RESIDENCY AND QUEER BELONGING

As I have mentioned several times earlier in the dissertation, most migrating partners interviewed for this study were required, just like Luke, to apply for family-tie residence permits. As my research progressed, I increasingly came to see that very few, if any, of the interview participants described experiencing this application process as invasive or uncomfortable. Nor did the majority describe it as something problematic or difficult. Some (albeit not many), like Max, whose narrative I analyzed in the previous chapter on loss, worried about whether they would be granted the initial, temporary residence permit. Luke also mentioned in his narrative above that when his relationship turned sour he did consider his residence permit “as a practical thing” because he wanted to stay in Sweden, and receiving his permanent residence hinged on staying with his boyfriend until the permit was granted. However, considering the importance of the residence permit, it is interesting to note that most participants had very little to say about the actual process. Luke’s statement, “It was pretty easy to fix the residence permit. [...] ...it was fine,” sums up most narratives: on the whole, the process barely registered in the participants’ migration narratives.

Proving a Queer Relationship to Migration Authorities

In comparison, Melissa Autumn White’s (2010; see also White 2013a, 2013b, 2014) interview participants in her study of so-called queer family class migration to Canada narrate their residence permit application processes very differently. White’s study centers on the administrative migration process, that is, the actual residence permit application, and how relationship recognition is produced through the requirements stipulated by Canadian immigration authorities and, by extension, how the applying queer couples prove their relationships and intimacy in their migration applications. White interviewed her participants specifically about their application processes, asking them, for example, what stories about their lives they told the immigration authorities in their applications, what type

of evidence of their relationship they included, and how they decided what to include and not include (2010: 224-225). This administrative migration process is described by White's participants as emotionally charged, uncomfortable, and creating "a deep sense of ambivalence over compiling adequate relationship 'evidence'" (White 2010: 135), particularly in relation to 'how much' should be revealed.

White also discusses the dossiers, which she calls 'intimate archives,' that family class migrants to Canada are required to put together as part of their residence applications and which can include, amongst other things, a 'relationship essay' detailing how the couple met and their relationship up to date, photos, letters, emails, phone bills, proof of joint bank accounts, insurance policies where the partners name each other as beneficiaries, and statements from family and friends. One of White's interview participants says that "some of it was for us, but it was also for show" (2010: 150), meaning that what they included as proof of their relationship was not always something that mattered to them as individuals or to their relationship, but was rather what they thought the immigration authorities would like to see as proof of an intelligible relationship. White's participants also worried about creating an unintelligible and 'too queer' relationship by saying too much and therefore having their application rejected. 'Too much' could include, for example, mentioning an open or non-monogamous relationship, or showing too much skin in photos, both which might lead migration authorities to connect the application to sex rather than love, making it 'too gay.' They were also worried about not saying enough and not telling their story to the fullest extent, which could result in leaving out important details that may turn out to be deciding factors in the immigration authorities' decision on their residency.

A difference between the Canadian and Swedish migration systems is the use of interviews. According to White, only those whose applications show 'irregularities,' or whose applications are selected 'randomly,' are called for an interview in Canada (2010: 135). In the Swedish resident permit application process, however, interviews are standard procedure, unless the couple is married or has

lived together for two years or more outside Sweden.⁵⁴ This means the interview participants I met made reference not so much to their applications as such, but to their interviews. The dossiers or ‘intimate archives’ discussed by White also have no equivalent in the Swedish residence application process, although the application does include a section where the couple is asked to describe their relationship and how they met, which is similar to the ‘relationship essay’ described by White. It is also possible to submit evidence, such as copies of tickets to show that the partners have visited each other, with the application. Alejandro and Fredrik, for example, whose narrative I analyzed in the chapter on love, did put together a kind of intimate archive; Fredrik mentions below “all these letters and pictures we brought [to the interview] and everything.” However, they were not required to do so, and no other interview participants mention putting together anything similar.⁵⁵

The Residence Application Process as Barely Worth Mentioning

White’s interview participants recount the application process as difficult and demanding. As one of her interview participants states:

I think the problem is that you know logically the only way to get it [the residence permit] is to be totally out. *More than out*, in a way. And, but... emotionally, [the feeling is]: “This is not safe, this is not safe, this is not safe!”

54. Of those interview participants who were required to apply for residency, only two were not interviewed: Eliza and Viktoria, the only interview participants who were married at the time of their application, were only interviewed when they applied for Eliza’s permanent permit, and Joan and Ellen, who instead undertook a type of written ‘exam’ when applying for Joan’s temporary residency. Ellen says: “There were lots of couples at the same time and then they just split us [divided the couples so they were not sitting together] in the same room and we filled out a form about how we met and our life together.”

55. Which is not to say that they did not, only that I did not ask and so cannot know for sure.

BELONGING

Everything in your soul is shouting, “Don’t do it, don’t tell these people anything”, it’s none of their business and at the same time, “I *have* to do this.” [...] Even though we really are among the most “out” dykes on the planet... it still feels like a bad idea, you know.

(White 2010: 208; italics in original)

In the narratives I gathered, however, the residence application process is barely present. When I asked Nelly, whose narrative I analyzed in the chapter on love, about her and her partner’s application process, she briefly talks about worrying that her partner would be treated badly because of his trans identity. However, once it is established that the case officer at the Swedish embassy in the non-EU, non-Western country where her partner first applies for his residence permit “had dealt with different gender identities before” and was “kind of used to it,” the application process loses its significance in Nelly’s narrative. While her narrative includes many references to the Migration Agency, it is only in the sense that she is frustrated by how difficult it is to get through on the phone and how long it has taken to get a case officer assigned to her partner’s case now that they are applying for his permanent residency. She does not express concern about whether her partner will receive his residence permit, or what kind of story of their relationship they should create.

Timo and Ida, whose narrative opened the chapter on academic backgrounds, tell a similar story of not experiencing “hassle,” something that surprised Ida who had been through a migration process once before with a cisgendered man. In her previous relationship, Ida says:

They interviewed both of us and they asked questions that were... I mean, they were a bit odd. But this time they didn’t interview me, they just interviewed you [Timo] and they didn’t really ask anything.

Timo: No, they didn’t ask anything [odd or

uncomfortable]. The case officer just said that this is going to be treated as a conversation between friends and I was like, okay. And she just asked about how we met each other and how we are keeping the relationship going, are we in contact. And she didn't go... she wasn't personal. I didn't feel anything she asked was uncomfortable.

Eliza and Viktoria, whose narrative I analyze later in this chapter, were married when they applied for Eliza's residence permit and so were not required to go through an interview when applying for the first, temporary two-year permit. For them, the process did not make enough impact to even register as something to reflect on in the interview when I asked them to talk about the contacts they had had with the Migration Agency:

Eliza: We haven't had that much contact, just the things that we've had to do, you know, when I applied the first time. [*Turns to Viktoria*] And then someone called you, when I had-- Because I never actually talked to anyone except for the time I called and said, "Can you send me my passport? I need to go visit." Um... because I just sent in all my paperwork...

Viktoria: And I actually contacted the case officer when you were going to come here for just a few days when my granddad was about to die. I think I called that person and asked to just make sure we didn't screw anything up about the process.

Eliza: Oh, and that's when she said you should get the decision in the next two weeks or something like that. And then I got my... passport back in the mail with my, like a letter and my permit in my passport and then... and then I moved here. The next contact I had [with the Migration Agency] was... this past spring [two years later], when I just sent in my forms to extend.

Nelly's, Timo and Ida's, and Eliza and Viktoria's reflections (or lack thereof) on their residence application processes are quite typical for the participants I interviewed for this study, and I use these examples to show the difference to White's participants' reasoning around the same type of process. Also, the interview participants' queerness very rarely came up in these reflections, which is another difference compared to White's study.

To Belong in Sweden through Queer Love

The only interview participants who reflected on their application process to any greater extent were Alejandro and Fredrik, whose narrative I analyzed in the chapter on love. They also explicitly tied the easy application process to their queerness, and in the interview they went back and forth between themselves while they considered this process. In particular, they talked about their interviews: the interview Alejandro attended at the Swedish embassy in Chile as well as the ones they both attended at the Migration Agency⁵⁶ in Sweden when applying for Alejandro's permanent residency:

Fredrik: It was nothing really... I guess the case officer thought that we were [*emphasizes the word in an ironic voice:*] cute. Alejandro went in first for his interview and I guess the paperwork showed two men, I think she thought it was cute. Yes. They don't get gay couples everyday perhaps.

Alejandro: I had the same feeling in Chile when I went to the embassy interview. It felt like it was going to be easy to get the permit because the case officer was so 'unmean,' I could see she was trying to be very impartial. But she

56. Interviews are often organized so that both partners go to the Migration Agency office together. They are then interviewed separately, one at a time, by the same case officer, and asked similar questions. The answers they give to these questions are then compared by the case officer.

seemed very amused and I kind of got the feeling, “Oh, this is cute!” as you said. Because of our story [how Alejandro and Fredrik met]--

Fredrik: *[breaks in:]* And all these letters and pictures we brought and everything.

Alejandro: --I was thinking, “But that’s not helping *[starts laughing]* to make the right decision! Perhaps we are trying to scam you.”

Fredrik: At the Swedish embassy in Chile, she said after ten-fifteen minutes, that “Yeah, I don’t think this will be a problem.” It was like... *[starts laughing, indicating that it went much easier than he thought it would]*

Alejandro: I thought it was going to be harder. I honestly, honestly thought it was going to be harder. I also thought it was going to be more invasive in my private life but it wasn’t! And also when we had this meeting [the interview] to extend my permit here. It wasn’t harsh, it was easy... it was simple, very simple questions. I feel that there’s a lot of trust and goodwill. Good faith in what you’re saying to the Migration Agency. They believe, “Okay, you’re actually a couple.” I never felt judged or like it was a negative experience. But I don’t know if they are more soft-handed with gay and trans people. That perhaps that’s why. Or not... They treat everybody equally or perhaps we are in a special situation.

Fredrik: On the other hand you also hear about how the Migration Agency kicks people [queer asylum seekers] out to Iraq and Afghanistan, you hear that on the one hand, and then us saying that it was so easy. Depends on what country you come from.

Alejandro: Or the motives, why you’re moving...

Fredrik: *[breaks in:]* ...if you’re moving for love or if your life is threatened. That’s a better reason than for us, actually

| [to migrate because your life is threatened]. What's better,
| to stay alive or to... try out a summer fling, see if it's real?

Using the concept of homonationalism, Maja Mons Bissenbakker Fredriksen and Lene Myong (2012), Myong and Mons Bissenbakker (2016), and Michael Nebeling Petersen and Myong (2015) discuss love in relation to race and migration in a Scandinavian context.⁵⁷ While their discussion concerns Denmark, it can readily be transferred to a Swedish context. As I outlined in the chapter on theoretical frameworks, homonationalism relates to an understanding of gender and sexuality as a fundamental part of Western countries' modernity narratives. To be modern – and to be Swedish – is to embrace gender equality and include homosexual subjects in the Swedish national project. This narrative is constructed as something specifically Western, meaning another narrative is simultaneously created, positioning non-Western countries as gender unequal and homophobic. When Alejandro says he “never felt judged or like it was a negative experience” when interviewed by Migration Agency case officers, and when Alejandro and Fredrik perceive the case officers as thinking their relationship is “cute,” this is illustrative of Swedish homonationalism: to include the homosexual individual in the national project based on equality. The case officers are in this case the human extension of the Swedish equal, tolerant, modern nation-state.

Fredriksen and Myong also connect love, a “politically mobilizing affect” which promises “inclusion and liberation” (2012: 188), to homonationalism. Being in love and being able to ‘prove’ it opens up national borders. As I discussed in the chapter on love, the sign of romantic love has been extended so that it now also sticks to queer bodies, making queer individuals' partner migration intelligible while aligning this type of migration along the line of ‘good’ love (Nordin 2007). Viewed from the point of view of Swedish homonationalism, a queer relationship in Sweden is most often considered a modern

57. The Scandinavian countries consist of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.

type of relationship: it is an expression of individual autonomy. I argue that this, in particular, applies to relationships in which one of the partners come from a non-Western country. Writing from a Norwegian perspective, Eileen Muller Myrdahl (2010) discusses how the notion of the autonomous and liberated subject is applied differentially to people perceived as racialized Others in Norwegian society. She argues that when racialized Others are engaged in romantic love relationships, as opposed to, for example, arranged marriages or other non-love-based relationships, they are seen to have been ‘brought’ to modernity. She calls this “modernity-through-affect” and ties it to liberal, modern personhood. The Other is this way able to fit into the national community by “possessing identifiable love skills and an internal affective potential for ‘genuine romantic love’” (Myong & Bissenbakker 2016: 4).

When Myrdahl’s modernity-through-affect discourse becomes entangled with Swedish homonationalism as well as intimate citizenship, migrants of queer relationships are positioned as ‘us,’ that is, as equal and free individuals who have used their individual autonomy to choose romantic love. The point is that they do this in a context assumed to be less modern, open, and accepting of queer relationships. Queer partner migrants have chosen their ‘true love’ despite assumed difficulties because of this choice, and this causes them to belong to something which belongs to Sweden already – a modern and accepting position on sexuality and gender equality. This, in turn, means they belong to Sweden through their queer love. That Alejandro has ‘chosen’ Fredrik automatically makes his application ‘serious’ and his love ‘good,’ meaning he meets ‘trust and goodwill’ in his interview. Their narrative is in line with the Migration Agency’s expectations of a queer relationship.

Fredriksen and Myong (2012) also argue that queer bodies are racialized as white and presumed to be Western, or, alternatively, as bodies needing to be protected by whiteness and Western-ness (2012: 201).⁵⁸ The outcome is that queerness is linked to whiteness and

58. This is evident, for example, in discourses on queer asylum and refugee

Western-ness, meaning that when the body in front of the migration case officer is not white, the fact that it belongs with a white, Swedish body (i.e. the non-migrating partner) extends the non-white body: it is aligned and orientated along lines of whiteness and Western-ness, and ultimately, included in 'us.' Because homophobia is assumed to belong in non-Western countries while tolerance of homosexuality is presumed to be a Western quality, queerness is this way made to naturally belong 'with us,' in a white, Western late modernity.

The Privileged Partner Migration Process

Having the privilege to consider one's residence application process as something of little significance is, I would argue, quite different from the experiences of the majority of migrants to Sweden. While there might be other migrant groups that experience their administrative migration process the way that, for example, Alejandro and Fredrik, or Eliza and Viktoria, describe theirs above, as I go on to discuss below, most family-ties migrants would probably argue that theirs was a process much less coloured by a certainty that their applications would be approved. There is a feeling of being believed, listened to, and included in some sort of larger community in the interview participants' narratives. They feel the inclusion in a Swedish homonationalist discourse, and it works to make them feel a sense of belonging. There is also an assumption in the participant narratives that the Migration Agency understands their relationships, and that they come across as intelligible relationships that make sense to the case officers. Participants further perceive that Migration Agency case officers assume they are telling the truth. As Fredrik states above, Alejandro's case officer in Chile "said after ten-fifteen minutes, that 'Yeah, I don't think this will be a problem,'" while Alejandro feels "that there's a lot of trust and goodwill. Good faith in what you are saying to the Migration Agency."

migration (e.g. Murray 2016).

In this section I compare the queer partner migrants I have studied with other family-tie migrants to show how some migrants are allowed to belong ‘more’ and more easily. My point is to emphasize the relative privilege awarded the queer partner migrants in this study. There is little to no research available on the Migration Agency’s credibility assessments of family-tie migrants in the Swedish migration process, but I would speculate that few other family-tie migrants would likely express that they experienced ‘trust’ and ‘good faith’ in their resident permit application process. The report *Family Reunification – an (Im)possibility?* (Swedish Red Cross et al. 2013), put together by four NGOs working on issues pertaining to refugees and asylum seekers, points to the difficulties facing family-tie, or family-reunification,⁵⁹ migrants whose reference person in Sweden is an individual who has received Swedish residency based on being granted refugee or asylum status (which should be compared to the non-migrating partners in my study, who all are majority Swedes who received Swedish citizenship at birth). It should be noted that these applicants make up by far the largest group of family-tie applicants in Sweden, meaning their experiences are more common than those of the queer partner migrants of this study. More research is required to understand how credibility is assessed in this type of family-tie migration, as it is sorely lacking.

While the NGO report emphasizes that it cannot be used to generalize, it offers a clue to the problems family-reunification migrants of refugees and asylum seekers to Sweden face in the application process, as the cases are chosen to illustrate what the four organizations have noticed to be recurring difficulties for this group. These difficulties consist of complications both when trying to submit applications as well as when applications are rejected and applicants are forced to appeal. Complications include difficulties getting hold

59. I refer to this group of migrants as ‘family-tie applicants’ or ‘family-reunification migrants’ rather than ‘partner migrants’ as this group consists not only of partner migrants, but (mainly) of partners and children as well as (to a lesser extent) other types of family members.

of identity documents or other legal documents because the applying migrants have fled their country of origin, or, alternatively, their country of origin is in too chaotic a state to be able to produce the documents; the fact that Swedish embassies in refugee producing countries do not accept family-ties residence permit applications, forcing applicants to travel to other countries in order to hand in their applications or be interviewed as part of their application process, which can be difficult, dangerous, and expensive; not having access to a computer and a scanner in order to submit an online application⁶⁰; and the cost of the application, particularly in those cases several individuals are applying, such as in the case of families with children.⁶¹ In addition, the report shows that family-reunification applicants whose reference person in Sweden received their residency because of being granted refugee or asylum status often experience difficulties proving their relationship to the reference person, either because of difficulties in obtaining the necessary documentation in a conflict situation, or because Swedish authorities in many cases do not accept the documentation that applicants make available.

The four NGOs emphasize that the regulations and the application process for family-tie migrants are not made to accommodate refugee situations and non-functioning states. Rather, they seem to be made for exactly the type of migrants who are part of this study: individuals living in functioning states who can easily get hold of the required documents; who have the financial resources to pay the application fee and can submit their applications online; who have access to a

60. Submitting an online application is to be preferred, as online applications, at least up until 2015, were prioritized by the Migration Agency, and thus processed faster than paper applications. This was criticized by the Parliamentary Ombudsmen (Justitieombudsmannen 2014), and the practice of processing online applications faster was terminated. However, according to the Migration Agency web site, applying online is still to be preferred because the applicant is then “given clear instructions about how to fill in your application and what you should send with the application. This makes it easier for you to apply correctly and increases your chances of a quick decision” (Migration Agency 2015f).

61. The application fee is currently SEK 1,500 for each applying adult and SEK 750 for each applying child (Swedish Migration Agency 2015g).

computer to frequently check their email to find out when they are asked to book an appointment at the nearest Swedish embassy for an interview; and who can, with relative ease, travel to this embassy at the appointed time.⁶²

I use this as an example to show the differences between different migrant groups within the same migration legislation category, but also to put narratives of the interview participants of this study into perspective. A migration process is generally *not* symbolized by feelings of credibility, calmness, and the self-evident, yet this is what many of the interview participants describe. Already in the brief description above of how different migrant groups are treated differently it is clear that the interview participants of my study are included, and are made to fit the prevalent politics of belonging, to a greater extent than are family-reunification migrants to asylum and refugee migrants. The boundaries that separate ‘us’ from ‘them’ are more porous and work less to exclude the interview participants, despite the fact that the interview participants and the migrants discussed in the NGO report apply for the same type of residence permit and go through the same type of migration process. I believe the migration process as I describe above for family of migrants who have been granted asylum seeker or refugee status in Sweden is a situation few of the participants I interviewed could have imagined.

Belonging as a Queer Migrant Subject

As Lionel Cantú points out, queer partner migrants and queer asylum seekers differ from

the larger gay and lesbian immigrant population: their sexual orientation is a salient characteristic of their

62. Only one of the 13 migrating partners I interviewed was required to travel to another country for their interview, and then only to a neighbouring country. The remaining migrating partners who were required to apply for residency could visit a Swedish embassy or consulate in the country they lived in.

identities by which they are making ‘rights’ claims upon the state. [...] [T]his population of ‘queer immigrants’ differs from other immigrants who may also be gay, lesbian, or bisexual but do not make rights claims from a ‘queer’ location; that is, they assume a specific political identity, constructed in part vis-à-vis their relationship to the state, from which they contest notions of citizenship and make ‘rights’ claims

(2009: 68)

This quote shows how homonationalism and intimate citizenship intersect in queer partner migration: for a queer individual to be able to make a rights claim on a state from a queer location, the state must first acknowledge the queer subject and, in the case of queer partner migration, recognize the queer relationship. This means a *particular* type of state is required, and also that the queer individual must be out to the state, as the queer location disappears otherwise. This queer location is shared by queer partner migrants and queer asylum seekers and refugees. However, Alejandro and Fredrik were the only participants I interviewed who explicitly positioned themselves as sharing the migration process with queer asylum seekers and refugees, and who made the connection between their own queerness and that of individuals belonging to other types of migrant categories. They also pointed out that their own credibility was not questioned, and Fredrik compares this to the Migration Agency “kick[ing] people [queer asylum seekers] out” while he ponders the fact that “then [there is] us saying it was so easy.”

While there is limited research on migrants applying for or having been granted refugee status based on sexual orientation or gender identity in a Swedish context (Stern & Wikström 2016), international research shows that “LGBT claimants are only comprehensible (and therefore credible) if they conform to the identity categories which are prevalent in receiving countries” (Spijkerboer 2013: 225). These credibility assessments are often based on queer applicants’ assumed personal characteristics and behaviour (e.g. mannerisms, style of

speech, and dress), a certain type of linear coming-out process (in the case of sexual orientation claims) or ‘wrong-body’ narrative (in the case of gender identity claims), as well as knowledge about queer social environments and laws in the country of origin and the country of asylum (Berg & Millbank 2009; Middlekoop 2013; Spijkerboer 2013; Stern & Wikström 2016). Creating a narrative that is non-contradictory as well as in line with these normative ideas of sexual and gender identity, and thus is comprehensible to migration authorities, would also seem to be much stronger for queer asylum seekers than the queer partner migrants of this study (as is the case in asylum cases generally). The participants rarely seemed to have told their ‘migration story’ previously; I did not perceive that I was on the receiving end of a rehearsed narrative they had told many times before, the way asylum claim narratives are sometimes described (Maryns 2006; Murray 2016).

So what does it mean that many interview participants perceived their residence application process as “easy,” “fine,” and free of “hassle” when other migrant groups do not? Alejandro and Fredrik, and partly also Timo and Ida, and Nelly, expected a different response from the Migration Agency and their case officers. They expected to be stopped and imagined themselves to be out of line. However, I argue that queer partner migrants already belong in Sweden, and that they are seen by case officers as ‘one of us’ because of who and how they choose to love. The fact that they are queer make them already belong to something that ‘belongs’ to Sweden: the acceptance of the queer relationship. Instead of being stopped, they are brought in line in their residence permit interviews. As the human extension of the homonationalist Swedish state, case officers are expected to carry out the state’s tolerant and progressive policies. This means, I argue, treating queer partner migrant applicants in a way that cannot possibly be interpreted as homophobic, instead approaching them in ways that, for example, make them feel that they are, in Fredrik and Alejandro’s words, seen as “cute,” or, at least, that their relationship (and so their queerness) is not questioned. Because it fits into important Swedish discourses of national exceptionalism, homonationalism, and gender equal relationships, the application

process for queer partner migrants create ‘no problems.’ Those participants who did not assume that their residence application process would be smooth sailing expected to be treated as being out of line by the migration system and hence stopped. However, the case officers helped to align them, making them feel comfortable in their encounter with the migration legislation.

There is a second aspect to this that relates to the non-migrating partner’s immersion in and relationship to ‘the Swedish state.’ As I noted in the previous chapter on loss, a strong collective feeling of trust exist among Swedish people in relation to the government (Lundåsen & Trägårdh 2013; Trägårdh 2009), or, as it is usually referred to in Swedish, ‘the state.’ As such, I would argue that many Swedish people would perhaps consider it uncomfortably private, albeit not unsafe, to divulge details about their lives to the government in the way that White’s (2010) Canadian interview participant expressed, and as I discussed earlier in this section. This means non-migrating partners likely do not expect their partner’s residence permit to be rejected, but rather assume that since they are telling the Migration Agency the truth about their relationship, they will be believed and recognized. When the application interviews progress smoothly and their applications are granted, these expectations are fulfilled, and the application process comes across as insignificant in the larger narrative.

Leaving residency and queer belonging behind, I will now move on to discuss the chapter’s (as well as the dissertation’s) final participant narrative, that of Eliza from the US and her Swedish wife Viktoria.

ELIZA AND VIKTORIA’S STORY: EMOTIONAL LABOUR AND BEING ‘ALMOST SWEDISH’

I meet with Eliza and Viktoria in their small apartment with its turn-of-the-century high ceilings; the three of us sit on their big couch while their cat skulks around us. Eliza, who is thirty-eight, and Viktoria, who is twenty-eight, have been together for about four years when I meet them, and it is just over two years since Eliza moved from the US to Sweden. They are both friendly and welcoming and

laugh a lot throughout the interview, but while Eliza is more lively and gestures using her whole body when talking, Viktoria is quieter, more reserved, and takes up little space.

Both Eliza and Viktoria are white, cisgendered, and from middle-class backgrounds with university degrees. Their Christian faith plays a central role in their lives. At the time of the interview Viktoria is working her first fulltime, professional job since graduating with her degree, while Eliza is, also for the first time, working part-time in the area of her master's degree. The two met when Eliza visited Sweden as the leader of a youth group. For the two years they were together before Eliza moved to Sweden they tried to visit each other whenever possible. As Viktoria was a student at the time and quite flexible, it was possible for her to spend longer periods of time in the US with Eliza, which she did several times.

A Shared and Retroactively Created Narrative of Love

Eliza and Viktoria's narrative centers on different ways of creating belonging and feeling like they belong. They create a very interwoven and joint narrative of their migration process. There are few instances where they question or dispute the other's take on an event, and they even talk about feelings as shared. They are in tune with each other at every turn and often add, "We have talked about this," when recounting something from an 'us,' rather than an 'I,' perspective. This is particularly so in relation to a sense of belonging: they clearly position themselves as a couple not feeling they belong in Sweden at the same time as their narrative, as I will show, also creates Sweden as the only place where their relationship is made possible, and so belongs. Individually, their senses of belonging may differ, but together, as a couple, they express their sense of belonging as one, such as when Eliza at one point says: "**Our** heart, there's something with **our** heart in the States." This is later added to by Viktoria, who says: "There are of course positive things too that **we** like about Sweden." While Eliza and Viktoria mention 'the States' as the place where their hearts 'are,' a closer reading of their narrative shows that, in reality, it is to one particular American city they feel this sense of belonging.

As I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, to belong does not necessarily mean belonging to a nation. However, when comparing two places in two different countries, feeling a sense of belonging to a particular place is often conflated with belonging to a nation, just like in Eliza and Viktoria's narrative.

Of all the participants I interviewed, Eliza and Viktoria are the ones furthest removed from a queer identity. Neither one of them had been in a queer relationship before they met. Eliza laughs as she recounts how it took them a year of daily Facebook messages and several visits across the Atlantic to realize that they were actually in love:

Neither one of us-- I mean, we were just developing this really good friendship and... ehm... [*laughs a little, continues in ironic voice:*] clearly this really deep friendship [*everyone starts laughing*], we had no idea where it was going, but everybody else did. [*laughs hard*] We thought it was just totally normal how much we were into each other or whatever! It was weird. But then it was almost like everything clicked that... actually, this probably is not just a friendship, you know, this is that we're in love with each other. And as Viktoria said earlier, it was nothing that she'd ever thought of, *nothing* I'd ever thought of! For both of us, because we've talked about this a lot, it was so natural. It was the person, gender mattered not at all. So it was the person.

This quote demonstrates the retroactive character of narratives: the moment when we 'understand,' which Eliza describes as "it was almost like everything clicked," is the moment that decides everything that preceded it. Had this moment not occurred, everything that happened up until then – Eliza and Viktoria not knowing "where [the friendship] was going" although "everybody else did" – would have been *something else*: it would not have been love on its way to being discovered. This way these moments make narratives what they have 'always' been.

Eliza's quote also illustrates something about retroactive narratives and love stories that is opposite to Luke's narrative that I analyzed in the first part of this chapter. Luke does not narrate his 'moment' as 'I understood it was love,' but rather once the relationship broke up, he aligns the narrative along lines of 'it was not love,' or at least not the 'true,' 'good' love that goes on forever. These two moments show how the 'now' that we operate from changes our narrative: we need to look at a story in the rearview mirror in order to align it, (re)create it, and tell it. This 'moment' in Eliza and Viktoria's narrative also helps them to align their 'love story' along the lines of 'good' love (Nordin 2007).

Emotional Labour to Create a Sense of Belonging

Eliza has always been interested in travelling, and for a long time before she met Viktoria, she nursed a dream of living in Europe someday. However, early on in the interview she tells me about how the summer that just passed had made her realize exactly how much she lives in Sweden because of Viktoria and their relationship rather than because she wants to be in *Sweden*:

I had always longed to live somewhere in Europe, you know. That's something I've always felt. So, it was, that was a dream come true, to have a chance. But... when Viktoria was in the hospital this past summer and I was by myself for three months, I was like, oh, shit, I'm like... on my own now, and I realized how much Viktoria had been doing... but also how much I could do. It wasn't scary... in the sense of, oh my gosh, how am I going to be able to manage all of these Swedish things? That wasn't really a problem. I just did it, you know. But it made me realize, I didn't move here because I want to be in Sweden. I moved here because... I'm married. So that was really clear. And then I, I realized, in a sense, how much I'm not a Swede! [*short laugh*] I'm just not Swedish! Ehm... or maybe how much I don't *want* to be Swedish, not that there's anything wrong with it, but how

much I appreciate being American... which is a crazy thing to say because I've been trying to get out of the States for so long. I don't know, I have... as each year has passed that I've been here, I've embraced being American more and more. And, ehm... yeah, I don't-- How have I noticed I'm not a Swe-- I don't know-- I'm just not a Swede...

Throughout her and Viktoria's narrative, Eliza clearly distances herself from *being* Swedish, although she does not distance herself from *Sweden*: as I will go on to discuss, Sweden is very important in Eliza and Viktoria's narrative as the place where their relationship is recognized and can take place. However, Eliza's American identity and her sense of belonging to the American city she used to live in come across as fundamentally important in their narrative. At the same time, Eliza speaks of her "Swedish family" several times in the interview and, as I discuss later in the analysis, she also states that she "feels" a little bit Swedish in some contexts. Studying American university students on exchange in Australia, Nadine Dolby demonstrates that the students' "national identity is neither simply discarded nor strengthened, but is riddled with contradictions, as it is actively encountered and constructed outside of the physical borders of the United States" (2004: 151).⁶³ As Eliza has lived in Sweden for only two years, I interpret her positioning herself as "not a Swede" and instead strongly embracing "being American" as partly a consequence of this short time period. Sweden is still 'new' to her, and she is not finished processing her initial reactions of what is 'typically Swedish' and her own relationship to what is. She is still thinking about the differences she encounters as they have not had time to blend into the tapestry of everyday life. However, while Eliza has difficulty putting into words what it is that makes her "not a Swede," I would argue it is about lacking a sense of belonging.

63. This of course is not only true of Americans abroad but also applies to other nationalities (see e.g. Ferbrache & Yarwood 2015; Hail 2015).

At the same time, Eliza's quote above also shows her realization of "how much Viktoria had been doing," and the everyday 'Swedish care work' that Viktoria had carried out for their relationship. More than any other interview participants, Viktoria and Eliza narrate the emotional labour that, in particular, Viktoria has undertaken in order to create a sense of belonging for Eliza and their relationship:

Viktoria: I wanted Eliza to feel comfortable being in Sweden and... ehm, to get you [Eliza] in--, into the society. And then it was also the whole social life, because we were actually living in the city where I grew up. So I already have my network so it was about getting Eliza into that network, which has been like, you've been warmly welcomed, I think... [*turning to Eliza*]

Eliza: Oh, yeah.

Viktoria: ...but.... ehm, at the same time, I wanted you to have your own friends too. So it was so many different levels of things, like we wanted to live by ourselves in an apartment, not with my parents [which they initially did when Eliza arrived in Sweden]. I wanted to find a job so I could support our little family, ehm... and get you in... into the society. Then it was also everything was new for me, working as a professional for... the first time. So it was, it was a lot of things to think of. And it was--

Eliza: [*interrupts:*] It was a lot of responsibility!

Viktoria: Yeah.

Eliza: ...when you say all that now, I never really thought about it, how much responsibility you were feeling. And I was like on vacation! [*starts laughing*] No, no... [*meaning it wasn't really a vacation as such but more that she wasn't doing anything 'useful' with her time*]

Viktorija: But it was like I wanted to-- I wanted to show you how all the systems... work. Like you know, to pay the bills, you can do it online--

Eliza: [*interrupts:*] You wanted to raise me. To be Swedish!
[*Eliza and Viktorija laugh*]

Viktorija: Yeah, totally, yeah, yeah... in some ways. It was a process of... getting you into the society. And in the beginning I'm doing it by showing you and then I have to let go and trust that you can do it and then to not have control and then to see if you can do it, which you can.

This part of Eliza and Viktorija's narrative is interesting for a number of reasons. First, it shows the only point in their narrative where Eliza and Viktorija talk about the migration process from their own, individual, perspectives rather than a joint, relationship, perspective. It also shows the emotional labour that Viktorija engages in order to include Eliza in Sweden, to "raise" her, or align her, as Swedish. When Eliza arrives, Viktorija wants to show her "how all the systems work." She actively tries to *integrate* Eliza, that is, make her belong, in Sweden. The reason I choose the term 'integrate' to describe Viktorija's emotional labour is because of Viktorija's use of the term "[getting Eliza] into the society" three times in the interview excerpt above when describing her emotional labour. Getting Eliza "into the society" takes, amongst other things, the shape of explaining the importance of applying for a civic registration number as soon as possible and how this is done, putting Eliza in touch with Swedish for immigrant classes, showing her how to do her banking, and helping her to register with the Public Employment Services, as well as 'integrating' her into Viktorija's family and friendship circles.

To "get into the society" is a direct translation of the Swedish term "*komma in i samhället*," which over the past decade has been used in relation to migrants' integration in Sweden. The discourse of 'getting in' is used to discuss how social structures can simplify integration (often focused on the creation of job opportunities as the singularly most important factor of integration), how migrants can (and should)

create their own integration (by being gainfully employed, adopting Swedish values, and speaking Swedish), and how some migrants resist integration (for example by not working or learning Swedish, or by socializing only in their own national, language, or ethnic communities). In this discourse, to be ‘integrated into society’ or to ‘get into society’ can mean both experiencing a sense of belonging as well as being ‘awarded’ politics of belonging. However, it is also an affective term: ‘good’ migrants integrate, while those who do not are considered ‘problematic’ and perceived to contribute to their own alienation and sense of non-belonging. The term and the discourse surrounding it are both about creating ‘openings’ in Swedish society to ‘allow’ migrants to enter, but it is also – perhaps more so – about the individual migrant taking steps toward ‘becoming Swedish.’ Viktoria’s attempt to “raise” Eliza to be Swedish fits well in here. As (the problems of) migrant (non)integration is ever present in the Swedish public debate, it is not surprising that Viktoria uses this language to explain what she hopes her emotional labour will result in. By “getting” Eliza “into society,” Viktoria wants to help Eliza to feel at home. However, as I go on to explain below, an unintended effect is that it also works to bring Eliza in line in the sense that it makes her ‘less of a migrant,’ and, despite Eliza distancing herself from it, more Swedish.

*Shouldering the Responsibility of Making
the Migrating Partner Belong*

Viktoria’s emotional labour takes place on several levels. While welcoming Eliza and ensuring her wellbeing in an unknown situation, Viktoria’s own life is going through changes at the same time. She shifts from being a student to being a professional, moves from her university city to the city she grew up in, and experiences unemployment at the same time as it is obvious to them that Eliza, as well, will be unemployed for an extended period of time. As Eliza states in the quote above, this is “a lot of responsibility.” Viktoria interprets Swedish professional work life for both of them, makes sure they are embedded in a social context, and takes responsibility for

their financial situation. Following Antonsich's (2010) five factors of belonging that I introduced at the beginning of the chapter – autobiographical, relational, cultural, economic, and legal – Eliza only has access to legal factors, that is, residency, during her first year in Sweden, and it becomes Viktoria's responsibility to help Eliza gain entry to everything else. Viktoria, in a sense, is responsible for ensuring the smooth functioning of both her own life and Eliza's life as well as their relationship, at the same time as she must also align them and their relationship by "raising" Eliza to be Swedish. This work is required because Eliza initially has no way of accessing a sense of belonging.

In comparison to Luke in the first narrative of this chapter, whose meeting with Sweden aligned him, Eliza, much like Jasmin and Max in the previous chapter on loss, has nothing except Viktoria awaiting her upon arriving in Sweden. Focusing on the loss of her professional life, Eliza says: "It was really weird because I was completely... unemployed. And that feeling continued actually from August until May, even though I ended up taking Swedish classes. I felt... [pause] just a little bit useless [small laugh], you know. I was... thinking, I can't do anything here! I have my bachelor's degree and a master's degree and... I can't do anything! I'm like... unemployable, it felt like." While Eliza and Viktoria initially focus on Eliza not having a job, their narrative makes clear that whether one experiences belonging is much more complex than having or not having a job. Continuing on from the last longer quote and still talking about the migration process somewhat from her own point of view, rather than that of their relationship, Viktoria says:

I've been trying to talk a lot with you [Eliza] about that you don't have to feel ashamed if you can't come up with a Swedish word. Like to cheer you up some, because you are really smart and... and I know you how you are in the States, and... ehm, how professional you are and competent you are. So I wanted to let you take your time and believe in yourself. And, of course it was hard to see the frustration, because I could see it in you, how hard it

was sometimes in situations. I was trying to be aware of not taking... over, like, a conversation, and... ehm, I still have to work with that sometimes. I'm trying to be aware of it, and find the balance of everything. And sometimes I succeed in not taking over and [*short laugh*] sometimes I do take over. But at least we talk about it and we're aware of it, both, so... And it was hard for me to see when you were feeling like... like a tiny person who didn't know how to talk or be or... everything. [*While Viktoria is talking, Eliza is nodding and making affirming noises, saying "Yeah" and "Mm-hm" to indicate that she is following, agreeing with, and involved in what Viktoria is saying.*] Sometimes I was a little bit stressed out, because... we're actually two grown-ups but it felt like I had to... do... a lot of things... on my own... in one way. Even though you [Eliza] were there, but I... Like, if I had questions about something, because sometimes I face new situations, new forms to fill in, new things, but I... I knew that I couldn't ask Eliza, like, what do they mean on this form? I don't get it. Because Eliza didn't know, like... at all, you know? So it's, it's been hard sometimes, but I've always had my dad to talk to. I had a back-up, that's my family. But I've felt, I felt like... [*sighs*] not lonely, but a little bit by myself sometimes.

In this quote Viktoria's emotional labour to create a sense of belonging in Sweden and orientate Eliza along Swedish lines is evident. However, she also wants to make Eliza *feel good*. Like Nelly in the chapter on love, Eliza and Viktoria are trying to create an equal relationship. Viktoria describes how she watches herself so she does not "take over" conversations in order to let Eliza speak, and how she is aware of those instances where she shoulders certain responsibilities because Eliza does not have access to the same type of knowledge about Swedish society that Viktoria has. Also, she feels "not lonely, but a little bit by [her]self sometimes" because Eliza cannot help her when she has questions. This ties in with my analysis of the loss of the independent relationship in the previous chapter.

To Be Orientated as Swedish through a Partner's Emotional Labour

While Viktoria wants to let Eliza “take [her] time” to get her bearings, no such time is made available to Viktoria. This they share with almost all the participants I have interviewed: the non-migrating partner’s emotional labour is often not reflected upon but mentioned as something self-explanatory, meaning the work, the responsibilities they shoulder, and the effect the migration process has on them is not made visible. However, Eliza starts to make Viktoria’s emotional labour visible when she says:

I remember having like little arguments probably the whole first year about, “Viktoria, you know, I can do this.” Viktoria was trying to show me things. And I kept being like, “I can handle this.” I remember saying that. At the same time, when I was in my SFI classes I was so thankful for Viktoria and how she was trying to introduce me and bring me along everywhere and show me everything and her family and having so much, *so much* support. So I was able to like fly... through... that and begin... like... taking in the language and everything, not to mention the culture. And I’m talking to all these other people [in her Swedish class] who were asking, [*in inquiring voice:*] “How do we meet Swedish people? It’s so hard to get to know anybody from Sweden,” and that wasn’t my experience at all, mine was completely different. I was around Swedish people all the time. So I was really... *really* thankful for that.

Eliza connects the emotional labour that Viktoria carries out with the expressed intent of making Eliza belong to the actual outcome of this work, which is that Eliza feels that she is more a part of Sweden, she belongs *more* than her classmates do. Through Viktoria she is starting to acquire the relational and cultural factors of belonging (Antonsich 2010). She is thankful that Viktoria has “introduced” her, “brought [her] along everywhere,” showed her “everything,” and the connection she has to Viktoria’s family as it makes her life in

Sweden easier. Because Viktoria's emotional labour consists of making Eliza belong, it means, as I will go on to discuss, orientating Eliza as Swedish. This is visible when Viktoria and Eliza several times in the interview compare Eliza's life in Sweden to other migrants', in particular those in Eliza's Swedish class.

Eliza: I felt a little bit more Swedish than all of my classmates, because as I said before I had so much more contact with Swedish people. Most of them didn't have any contact with Swedish people. [*in astonished voice:*] Even some of the women who are married to Swedish men, they... they were not meeting with Swedish people. Perhaps, like, the man's family at Christmas time or something. But... I think they were at home like mostly, and taking care of kids if they had kids. I was just sooo thankful for Viktoria and how... how she was with me. [*small laugh*]

Viktoria: For example, when you were studying different Swedish traditions, and it was the Lucia. They had never experienced it, but you had been here and experienced it, so it was completely different like for you to read about it because you knew about it, but for them it was completely new... so you were already like a step...

Eliza: [*breaks in:*] Yeah, culturally, I was way more ahead of them, because I'd been to Sweden so many times, and... ehm... Well, even though some of them--, many of them had lived in Sweden longer than me, because I would have just... gotten here and they were like, "I've been here two or three years." I'm not sure what they were doing for two or three years, but, ehm...

Eliza and Viktoria's narrative makes it clear that while Eliza is a migrant, she is a *different type* of migrant, unspecified but different from the other migrants in Swedish class. While Eliza states that

she is not a Swede and has no interest in becoming one, Viktoria's emotional labour allows Eliza to be aligned with Swedish discourses of integration and the 'good' migrant, creating a type of political belonging that would otherwise not be extended to her. Eliza has access to Swedish people in a very different way than her classmates do, and as much as Eliza positions herself as an outsider in Sweden in her narrative, she lives amongst Swedish people to the extent that she mostly blends in: she lives a Swedish life.

The Importance of a Swedish Partner to Create Belonging

Eliza and Viktoria's narrative sets Eliza up as belonging to and included in Sweden as almost an extension of Viktoria. Most participant narratives I gathered describe the migrating partner being included in their partner's social, family, and friend networks, as well as receiving help to understand social and cultural codes. As I noted in the previous chapter on loss, partner migrants often migrate 'alone' rather than together with other family members. To migrate alone but at the same time arrive in an established Swedish social context consisting of the partner's family and networks, however small, is different from migrating without an awaiting context and as one part of a couple where both partners are migrants, or as part of a larger family. My main point is the Swedish social context: while migrants to Sweden may move to already-existing ethnic and/or national networks, many partner migrants with Swedish partners have access to Swedish networks in a way most other migrants do not. Partner migration may be a lonely migration in one sense, but it is also privileged because of the way the migrant can, like Eliza, be 'integrated' and become 'part-Swede' immediately.⁶⁴

64. I base my argument on the queer partner migration narratives I have gathered. I am not attempting to make any claims as to whether this is also the case in (some or all types of) straight partner migration as there is, as I outline in the chapter on academic backgrounds, very little research undertaken on this migrant group in a Swedish context. A number of Swedish domestic abuse organizations have gathered narratives from women from mainly non-

However, this is obviously not always the case: Eliza speaks in the quote above of classmates with Swedish partners who did not meet Swedish people at all or live anything like the ‘Swedish life’ she lives. Also, if we think back to Max, whose narrative I analyzed in the previous chapter on loss, he described his trans identity, class position, and non-whiteness as barriers to establishing relationships with his partner’s family and friends, and with Swedish society. He is brought out of line and uncomfortable in those instances Eliza feels welcomed, meaning the entanglement you are caught in, and the ways this affects the point you can orientate yourself from, play an important role in how one perceives belonging. Eliza lives her life in ‘Swedish’ Sweden, as opposed to her classmates who do not. At the same time as she feels like an outsider because she cannot speak the language like an adult and at a professional level, and also finds it difficult to make her own Swedish friends, her narrative is one of being in line and so of belonging more firmly in Sweden than, for example, Max’s or Eliza’s own interpretation of her classmates. This, I argue, is, in particular, connected to race, nationality, and gender identity, as I come back to below.

The importance of having a Swedish partner, especially a Swedish partner who is aware of the active work required to make a migrant partner belong, as Viktoria does, cannot be underestimated. At the same time, this also makes it difficult to distinguish between ‘being’ Swedish and ‘performing’ Swedish. To belong at a level that allows one to live ‘like a Swede’ means one belongs *more* than other migrants. Eliza and Viktoria tell a story about how Eliza’s astonishment over her classmates not knowing Swedish people, meaning they did not have the opportunity to speak Swedish outside of class, led Eliza and Viktoria to start a Swedish language group. In this group, Eliza’s classmates got to speak to Viktoria and practice their Swedish over a cup of coffee. When Viktoria mentions how poor these classmates’

Western countries who have migrated to Sweden because of a relationship with a Swedish man, and these narratives differ greatly from those I have gathered (e.g. Länsstyrelsen Värmland 2010; Wilén 2010).

Swedish was, Eliza breaks in to tell a story.

Eliza: What's it like when I speak to a fellow immigrants from SFI *now*?

Viktorija: You sound exactly like *them* when you talk!

Eliza: I *cannot* talk [*starts laughing hard*] to an immigrant, I like [*makes a movement with her hand and a noise to indicate descent*], my Swedish goes--

Viktorija: We walked into someone from your [Eliza's] class and you just started to talk and I was just staring at Eliza like [*stares in disbelief*]... [*Eliza laughs hard*]

Eliza: "Who is this?"

Viktorija: [*laughing*] "What the heck are you doing?" You talk, like, crazy! It sounds so bad! You can speak Swedish, not like, immigrant Swedish!

Eliza: She was really bad at Swedish so that was even worse. [*Eliza and Viktorija laugh*]

Viktorija: It was crazy.

Having a Swedish partner who does the kind of active emotional labour that Viktorija does means Eliza is orientated as a Swede: she is aligned, and she belongs. She is married to a Swedish partner, she speaks Swedish, she has a Swedish family, she understands the social world, and has someone who can explain the codes to her in those instances she does not understand. She is *almost* Swedish to the point that in their narrative, Eliza and Viktorija often forget that Eliza is *also* not Swedish. This is despite Eliza explicitly positioning herself as American and not Swedish and despite her moving in 'immigrant environments' such as SFI classes, and is a result of Eliza being in line. As a couple, Eliza and Viktorija's 'here' that they orientate themselves from is a white, Swedish, middle-class 'here,' meaning that Eliza being in line is connected not only to her being the partner of a Swedish

woman, but also the fact that she is white (and so not visibly ‘non-Swedish,’ as Swedish-ness and whiteness generally are conflated), from a Western country (meaning she is perceived as ‘less different’ and more like ‘us’ solely based on her nationality), cisgendered, highly educated, and middle class. In combination with Viktoria’s emotional labour to make her belong, Viktoria and Eliza scarcely experience Eliza being stopped or brought out of line. Eliza’s white body and overall Western looks fit in amongst all the other white Swedish bodies. As Eliza herself sums it up: “I can just move around as a [Swedish person], until I open my mouth [*laughs*], I can just move around as a European. So, I feel totally accepted as an individual, you know, everywhere that I go.”

However, in the story above there is a crack in Eliza’s Swedish-ness, and suddenly Eliza and Viktoria both experience Eliza being stopped and out of line, to be ‘wrong.’ Viktoria emphasizes that Eliza “sounds like *them*” when speaking to SFI classmates and that Eliza “talks crazy.” She stresses that Eliza “can speak Swedish, not like, immigrant Swedish,” and has difficulties understanding who this ‘immigrant speaking’ person in front of her is. Viktoria has worked hard to make Eliza belong; her belonging is created by and through Viktoria. Stopping to make a cut to Eliza’s entanglement, this brings the strands of whiteness, being American, being middle class, being educated, and understanding what ‘Western-ness’ means, into focus. Taken together, it means that Eliza cannot also belong in a migrant category that speaks “immigrant Swedish.” This crack in Eliza’s Swedish-ness stops them, but the privileges inherent in the specific strands making up the entanglements they are caught in help them to re-align themselves along non-migrant lines.

Being Brought in Line as a Queer Couple in Sweden

Eliza and Viktoria’s narrative also speaks of the importance of Sweden’s recognition of queer relationships for them to feel like they belong. While they position themselves in their narrative as feeling that ‘home’ is in a particular city in the US, they have “finally accepted that, yeah, we’re in Sweden because it’s just way too difficult to try

and live in the United States as an international same-sex couple.” Viktoria describes living in Sweden as “practical” and “easier” but that “we *wanted* to live in the States,” and Eliza continues, saying, “We’ve tried over the past two years to talk ourselves into thinking, this is good, this is where we want to be, not just for practical reasons. But, oh, we just can’t let go of how it feels. It’s kind of battle between your head and your heart.”

Eliza and Viktoria’s narrative shows that they view the recognition of their relationship in Sweden as closely tied to their marriage. Viktoria says, for example, that they live in Sweden “because our marriage is recognized and therefore, we have so many rights,” while Eliza stated in one of the quotes above that she “didn’t move here because [she] want[s] to be in Sweden. [She] moved here because... [she’s] married.” They refer to their *marriage* rather than their relationship as such, and it is also their marriage (rather than their relationship) that, to them, is the foundation for Eliza’s residence permit:

Viktoria: The differences in... getting to Sweden, being married, or not being married, is so different. Because if you’re not married, you have to really prove that you are together. And it is a huge process, ehm... for example going to an interview and showing tickets that you’ve been visiting each other and... uh, and stuff like that. So the differences in being married... Of course you have to fill in applications, and you have to send in documents that prove that you’re married and stuff like that. But it was way easier, actually, for you [Eliza]...

Eliza: Yeah!

Viktoria: ...being able to come to Sweden if we were married. And since we wanted to get married and we had gotten engaged a year before without actually knowing exactly then where we wanted to be, we got married.

As I outlined when analyzing Alejandro and Fredrik's narrative in the chapter on love, married partners and non-married partners who have cohabited in another country than Sweden for two years or more are entitled to a residence permit for the migrating partner. While married and non-married partners are not separated by law, in practice they are, as cohabiting partners need to show evidence of having an established joint household, while married partners may have married the day prior to handing in the migrating partner's residence application. This means that while married partners are only subjected to a review of their relationship's seriousness if there are well-founded suspicions of their marriage being fraudulent, cohabiting partners are always subjected to a kind of review, even though the basic premise is that they are entitled to a residence permit. As Eliza and Viktoria were the only participants who were married when they submitted the migrating partner's residence permit application,⁶⁵ they were also the only ones who could reflect on the effect being married had on their application process. It is interesting to note that they perceive that applying for a residence permit without being married would have been "a huge process," while other participants, as I discussed earlier in this chapter, found little to mention about the same process.

Eliza and Viktoria also perceive that Sweden is more accepting of their relationship than the US, and rightly so, at least from a migration legislation perspective.⁶⁶ Aided by Swedish homonationalist discourses, their relationship is made to belong, for Eliza and Viktoria even more so because of the emphasis they place on their marriage. This is also where homonationalism and intimate citizenship intersect to create recognition, and so belonging, for their relationship.

65. Another seven participants were married when I interviewed them, but their marriages took place after they had received their permits, in those cases they were required to apply for a residence permit.

66. The interview with Eliza and Viktoria took place before the US extended partner migration to queer couples.

However, they also remark that “same-sex relationships are more widely accepted” in Sweden, prompting Viktoria to tell a story of when she wanted to find a way to live in the US with Eliza permanently and legally.

Viktoria: I was going to fill in the form for the Green Card Lottery... [*Eliza and Viktoria start laughing hard*]

Eliza: Desperate!

Viktoria: ...anyways, but I actually do know one person who won the lottery, so it felt kind of more real to me. [*Eliza laughs uproariously*] I was gonna fill it in and, and I had to mark that I was female and then, if I marked that I was married, then it automatically changed that the person I was married to was a man. So, I was like... screw this, I was so upset, I couldn't even take part in the lottery, like, fill in the form... and I do remember that it was fine filling in the Swedish Migration Agency forms.

Eliza: Mm-hm.

Viktoria: Uh, and also to... meet all the people at the Migration Agency, they have been completely, like, okay--

Eliza: [*interrupts:*] Yeah, it's been just like, “You're married, you're married,” I mean, it's, it's been...

Viktoria: ...not a question....

Eliza: ...not an issue at all.

Eliza and Viktoria's narrative is, on the one hand, one of longing for and feeling at home in the US, but, on the other, also about experiencing political belonging in Sweden, which, as their narrative shows, is a strong feeling. Although Eliza and Viktoria are hesitant to acknowledge this feeling, the quote above shows that it works to make them feel included and in line. Belonging is often prompted by a feeling that there are places where you do not and *cannot* belong

(Yuval-Davis, Anthias & Kofman 2005). Given the importance of their marriage to Eliza and Viktoria, for them it is not just having the legal right to live somewhere. Rather, their queer bodies cannot be in line, and so cannot belong, in the US as *married*.⁶⁷ Viktoria realizes she cannot even complete the form for the Green Card Lottery without being stopped because of her sexual identity, or, as she perceives it, her marriage. The quote above is also similar to one of the Canadian queer family class respondents in Melissa Autumn White's (2010) study, which I discussed at length in the section on residency and queer belonging earlier in this chapter. The respondent recalls crossing the border to Canada, saying, "We did it as a couple and it was all like, 'Ok, yeah.' [feigns boredom, yawns] 'Welcome to Canada,' that sort of stuff. It just felt natural and real and completely accepting" (White 2013: 46). To be in a context where one's sexual identity is "not a question" and "not an issue at all," where it does not stop and does not bring one out of line, brings with it a sense of normalcy and, in extension, belonging. Eliza says that because she is married, "I belong here in the sense that I have the right to be here. I do feel like it gives me the right to call Sweden my home... as well. So I will forever now say that my home is here in Sweden and in the States. So I get to have two places that I call home. That's due to the fact that I'm married to someone that's Swedish." The importance of Sweden accepting Eliza and Viktoria's relationship (or, more specifically, their marriage) is central in their narrative. This is something they share with a number of other participants, but in Eliza and Viktoria's narrative it also creates a very 'thick' (Crowley 1999) sense of *political* belonging. It is not necessarily a sense of belonging or of feeling 'at home,' but it is a strong feeling of being recognized, acknowledged, and seen.

67. At the time of the interview, gender-neutral marriage was not available in the American state Eliza and Viktoria feel at home in.

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In this final empirical chapter, I have examined the emotion of belonging and what it does in a queer partner migration context. I have aimed to show the complexity of belonging, and that this can assume very different shapes and forms. In the case of migration, belonging is dependent on the dominant social and political discourses in the place one is trying to create a sense of belonging to: to belong in Sweden – both *feeling* a sense of belonging (Antonsich 2010; Fenster 2005; hooks 2009) and being included and ‘awarded’ belonging as parts of the politics of belonging (Anthias 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2010; Antonsich 2010; Brubaker 2010; Yuval-Davis 2006, 2007, 2011) – it helps to be white, cisgendered, from a Western country, and have a Swedish partner. However, as we could see in Luke’s and Eliza and Viktoria’s narratives, it is more complex than this.

Luke’s narrative is one of feeling that he does not belong when growing up in England. However, moving to Sweden, he is suddenly orientated and in line as a young migrant: he is made to belong. In his narrative, Luke positions himself as feeling unsafe and vulnerable before the migration, but that he, after a while in Sweden, realizes that “this can actually be a really good thing. [...] It felt like this would be like a platform to [...] put myself back together or... kind of heal.” He starts to feel at home because he feels safe and like he has the kind of support he has previously lacked, that is, he feels his inclusion in the politics of belonging. In addition to this, Marco Antonsich’s (2010) five factors of belonging – auto-biographical; relational; cultural; economic; and legal – all work to make Luke feel a sense of belonging in Sweden.

Unlike the majority of the interview participants in this study, Luke does not understand his migration through romantic love. This is likely because he is no longer in the relationship that the migration occurred in, and he is thus able to create his own narrative, rather than a joint narrative that takes the relationship as its starting point. Compared to Eliza, who, as she sees it, belongs to Sweden through her marriage (and so migrated for love), Luke speaks of safety as the foundational emotion behind his migration. He says he “fell in love

with the idea of Sweden,” indicating the importance that *Sweden*, rather than the love and his relationship, held in his decision to stay.

Eliza and Viktoria, on the other hand, tell a very different story of belonging. They would prefer to live in the US, where Eliza is from, rather than Sweden, but as the US does not recognize their relationship for migration purposes, they are, as they see it, forced to live in Sweden instead. To Eliza, her *marriage* is what makes her belong in Sweden: she is married to a Swedish person, and she feels that this “gives [her] the right to call Sweden home.” As I argue in this chapter, Eliza is partially made to belong through Viktoria’s emotional labour, and partially because of intimate citizenship discourses that make gender-neutral marriages a possibility in Sweden. In terms of emotional labour, Viktoria tries to, as Eliza pinpoints in their narrative, “raise” Eliza “to be Swedish.” By taking on the responsibility to help Eliza feel at home in Sweden, Viktoria simultaneously makes Eliza ‘less of a migrant,’ and ‘more Swedish.’ Their narrative also shows how this quite hidden emotional labour, which is present but less obvious in many other interview participant narratives, actually occurs, helping to make visible the non-migrating partner’s role in the migration process. While Eliza emphasizes that she is “not Swedish,” Viktoria’s emotional labour to make her feel like she belongs means Eliza is aligned along Swedish lines and is *made* (almost) Swedish. Viktoria aligns Eliza-the-migrant with Swedish discourses of integration and the ‘good’ migrant by showing and introducing Eliza to a ‘Swedish life.’ At the same time, the entanglement Eliza is caught in is of great importance to how Viktoria is able to orientate her. If Eliza’s entanglement were to be cut in order to be examined at the moment when Eliza and Viktoria are telling their narrative, the cut would bring into focus how, in particular, the strands of whiteness, Sweden’s relationship to the US, middle-classness, education, cisgenderedness, and Western nationality become entangled to help create the ‘here’ that Eliza and, by extension, Viktoria, can orientate themselves from.

Eliza is also made to belong by Sweden’s recognition of her and Viktoria’s marriage. I argue that they are brought in line *because* of their queer relationship, as Sweden, through homonationalist discourses, welcomes it. This relates to my examination in this chapter

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of residency and queer belonging, where I maintain that by belonging to a queer relationship, the migrating partner already belongs to Sweden because of who and how they 'choose' to love. Through the entanglement of intimate citizenship and homonationalist discourses, the queer partner migrant is constructed as 'already belonging.'

From this final empirical chapter, I now move on to the dissertation's concluding chapter where I bring together and discuss the main points of the study.

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Conclusion

Mona and Karin were shocked when Mona's move from Denmark to Sweden turned out to be more difficult than they had imagined, and this emotional 'derailing' causes them to ask how love could make them feel like *this*.

Timo and Ida actively chose a life in Sweden over a life in the African country that Timo has roots in, but this means grappling with Timo being brought out of line because of hir gender identity and feeling like hir gender, and by extension, Timo himself, 'disappear' in Sweden.

Felipe and Krister position themselves in their narrative about Felipe's migration from Nicaragua to Sweden as morally upstanding, 'normal' people who 'happen' to be queer, and they do so by using their marriage and their love in ways that help construct them like 'everyone else.'

The migration process is absent from Lisa and Bea's narrative, because the migration is barely noticeable in Lisa's move to Sweden from a Western European country, while feelings associated with passing or not passing as Swedish become important instead.

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Nelly experiences that her love to her migrating partner is unequal and her relationship is therefore out of line, and she works hard to bring her, her partner, and their relationship in line with Swedish discourses of 'good' love.

Alejandro and Fredrik are also concerned with 'good' love, but in their narrative of Alejandro's migration from Chile, they are able to position themselves and their love, by using, in particular, their cisgenderedness and middle-classness, in ways that make their love intelligible to others.

Jasmin's migration from the US brings confusion and anger to Jasmin and Emma's narrative as Jasmin and their relationship become aligned along migrant lines, and they feel they lose their place in the world as they become orientated in ways that make them unrecognizable to themselves.

Max knew before leaving the African country he has roots in that the migration to Sweden would cause him to lose his independence and be challenging, but his narrative also shows that the migration has caused him to lose the closeness of the relationships he used to have, while race, nationality, and gender identity make it difficult for him to establish new bonds in Sweden.

Luke came to Sweden from England, and after having felt out of line in different ways while growing up, found a sense of home and started to feel that he belongs because of how he is positioned as a young migrant in Sweden.

Viktoria engages in emotional labour to make Eliza belong in Sweden after Eliza's move from the US, taking on the responsibility to ensure the wellbeing and smooth running of both their relationship and Eliza's life by aiming to align their relationship along lines that Viktoria recognizes and feels comfortable with.

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These short recaps of the narratives that are part of this study all focus on emotions and feelings, and what they ‘do’ (Ahmed 2004a) in queer partner migration processes. In this dissertation I have asked how emotions and feelings structure queer partner migration processes to Sweden in different ways, and how queer partner migrants and their non-migrating partners narrate their lives and position themselves, in relation to the migration processes they go through and in relation to the emotions and feelings associated with these processes. I have also asked what emotions and feelings ‘do,’ and how they are understood by queer partner migrants and non-migrating partners when a migration is narrated as voluntary and a choice, and there are few legal obstacles to queer partner migration.

The aim of the study has been to explore the concept of queer partner migration from the perspective of both the migrating and the non-migrating partner and examine the *relationship*, rather than the individuals, and the dissertation is a contribution to empirical research on affect, emotions, and feelings. There is a difference in how I understand and use emotions, on the one hand, and feelings, on the other, in the study, where emotions are structural, social, and cultural, while feelings are viewed as individual, subjective experiences. Using emotions and feelings as analytical categories I have wanted to show the complexity of migration in general, and queer partner migration in particular. However, it has also allowed me to examine the intersection between privileged and not-privileged migration, as this intersection is a prominent part of the queer partner migration narratives I have gathered. In the narrative this particular dissertation has crafted over the past seven chapters, a focus on love, loss, and belonging in these particular migration processes reveals these processes to be complex and nuanced, as queer couples and individuals cannot easily be situated within a singular understanding of migration.

Through in-depth interviews with twenty-three interview participants who have experience of queer partner migration processes as either migrating or non-migrating partners, I have explored my research questions using, in particular, the work of Sara Ahmed (2004a, 2006, 2007) on the cultural politics of emotion and queer phenomenology, as well as feminist theories of affect. I have also drawn on theories explaining the three emotions and feelings of concern here, namely love, loss, and belonging, as well as on a number of theoretical concepts stemming from feminist theory, queer theory, and critical race and whiteness theory, which I go on to detail below. As this is a study based on ethnographic interviews, my approach has built on narrative analysis to examine the interview participants' narratives, but I am also inspired by Laurel Richardson's (2000) and Richardson and Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre's (2005) concept of writing as a method of inquiry, which means I have 'written my way' to the analysis, using writing as a tool to find the 'what' of the narratives. As queer partner migration is not fully encompassed by any single academic field, the dissertation brings together queer migration scholarship with intimate migration and privileged migration scholarships in order to create a back-drop against which to understand this particular type of migration. These are also the three bodies of scholarship the dissertation aims to contribute to in different ways.

In particular, the dissertation contributes to the subfield within the intimate migration literature called 'marriage migration.' An explicit aim has been to start a conversation between the overwhelmingly straight 'marriage migration' field and the 'same-sex migration' field, which is a subfield in queer migration scholarship. The fields show many similarities, but are generally discussed separately (an exception is Salcedo 2015). However, this study establishes that in particular love and the understanding of the 'genuine' relationship, which are important aspects of the 'marriage migration' literature, are also prominent and highly relevant in queer partner migration research. That said, the straight bias of the 'marriage migration' field, and the insistence on the use of the word 'marriage,' also in those cases when other, more including terms that start to take into account the

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multiple ways people choose to organize their intimate lives could be used (e.g. Constable 2014; Wray 2011), have meant I have also included other scholarships as well in order to examine the narratives I have gathered. I introduce the term ‘partner migration’ in this study to show how language can be changed to both include and represent different types of relationships and different types of partners, to make it easier to discuss across the scholarly divides.

Throughout the dissertation I have aimed to show how analyzing experiences of queer partner migration processes through emotions and feelings as they come up in the interview participants’ narratives help us understand queer migration, intimate migration, and privileged migration in new ways. By focusing on what emotions and feelings ‘do,’ I am able to show the complexity of migration processes, and illustrate how a migration rarely *feels* simple, even in those cases it might seem to others that it ‘should’ be ‘easy.’

Narratives and storytelling are central to this study, because they are important aspects of the ‘feeling of migration.’ As a feminist qualitative researcher, I also take my cue from Donna Haraway who contends that “stories are always more generous, more capacious than ideologies [...] I want to know how to inhabit histories and stories rather than deny them. [...] I want to know how to help build ongoing stories rather than histories that end” (2004: 1). I am inspired by this approach as I also find stories “generous” in the sense that they give us ‘more’ and teach us ‘more’ about the micro situations that create individual lives and contribute to the ‘larger’ social story. Highlighting stories and building on them mean pointing out the specific, rather than the general, and one of my aims with the dissertation has been to create affective and affecting narratives, that is, narratives that the reader can feel. As we are touched by stories, we understand multifaceted processes in new ways (Phoenix, Smith & Sparkes 2010). While we might find that we do not like the narrator of the story or do not agree with the narrative as told, a story often nevertheless has the power to touch us. Narratives have the capacity to paint a more nuanced picture and help us understand why individuals make the choices they make or act the way they do. In the introductory chapter I quoted Caroline Knowles, who collects “arrival

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and departure stories” (2002: 140) because, as she maintains, the forms of human associations and connections between biographies and places bring “texture” (2002: 141) to the analysis of migration and migration processes. This texture, Knowles argues, is otherwise often missing from the larger story of migration and globalization. Just like Knowles, I also believe that individual narratives and voices are important in order to view migration processes from angles we may not have considered previously.

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The concepts of Swedish homonationalism, intimate citizenship, and entanglement come together to create the theoretical framework through which the migration narratives of the dissertation are analyzed. They also clearly frame this particular migration, place it in a context, and thus help us capture what emotions and feelings ‘do’ to those who participate in it.

Homonationalism concerns how liberal Western (political) discourse incorporates certain queer subjects into the nation-state, by producing perversely sexualized and racialized Others (Puar 2007). It relates to an understanding of gender and sexuality as fundamental parts of Western countries’ modernity narrative, through which Western nations are constructed as ‘gay friendly’ and ‘gender equal,’ this way simultaneously creating non-Western countries as the opposite, that is, as not respecting women’s rights and being homophobic. Differently put, it is a form of nationalism that highlights certain ideas of gender and sexuality as key features of national pride. In the case of Sweden, homonationalism blends together with ideas of the Swedish national Self as modern, advanced, and progressive, in particular in relation to issues pertaining to gender equality, sexual identity, and sexual practices. Through homonationalism, modernity becomes defined as sexual freedom, where “the particular sexual freedom of gay people is understood to exemplify a culturally advanced position” (Butler 2008: 3). Swedish homonationalism is closely tied to Swedish ideas of Sweden being one

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of, if not *the*, most gender equal country in the world (Towns 2002). However, not all queer subjects are included in homonationalist ideologies. Rather, Puar argues that it is a “brand of homosexuality [that] operates on a regulatory script not only of normative gayness, queerness, or homosexuality, but also of the racial and the national norms that reinforce these sexual subjects” (2007: 2). As such, homonationalism is about *normative homosexuality* rather than what is queer, deviating, and out of line. Through this dissertation I empirically show how homonationalism is made and used in the particular context that is Sweden.

The second theoretical framework, intimate citizenship, spans all aspects of intimacy as it relates to sexuality and gender (Plummer 1995, 2003). In my study, this particularly means queer love, queer relationships, and queer sexual identities. The concept of intimate citizenship consists of modern-life private intimacies and practices as well as discourses of and dialogues about these practices. The main point of employing the concept of intimate citizenship in the dissertation is to show how these intimate practices are regulated and how laws and policies are enacted by states, as well as how they come into play in social relations between individuals and groups (Plummer 1995, 2003; Roseneil et al. 2012).

Entanglements, finally, are the knots of connected social structures, objects, relationships, processes, knowledge practices, and histories that each individual’s story is part of, as well as the meanings we lend to those social structures, objects, relationships, processes, knowledge practices, and histories. They are ‘the everything’ of a life tangled in a knot (Barad 2003, 2007). One strand of the entanglement cannot exist independently of the rest, as all the strands in an entanglement intra-act (Barad 2003) to create that moment which is now, and from which an individual must orientate themselves. The entanglement spans all-that-is and is larger than the individual, contributing to shaping the individual’s experiences as well as their reactions to those experiences. Processes of power are constitutive of entanglements, meaning an individual is always ‘caught’ in the knot that the strands of their entanglement produce: they cannot step outside it, they exist in it, and it influences from what position they view the world and

what lines are available to them to orientate themselves along. Because the strands of the entanglement are knotted up in each other as they intra-act, they cannot be teased apart. To study a particular part of the entanglement means making what Barad (2007) calls an ‘agential cut.’ This temporarily defocuses everything except the cut, making it possible to examine what shows up in the cut.

Using the concept of entanglement allows me to analyze not only how an individual is orientated by social processes of power as constituted through, for example, gender identity and race, and understandings of identity, but also how, as I write above, social structures, objects, relationships, processes, knowledge practices, and histories as well as dreams, emotions, and feelings help create the ‘here’ that the interview participants orientate themselves from. Rather than taking a number of predetermined aspects into consideration in the analysis, the notion of entanglement acknowledges the full and complex story that is the life of an individual, or, at least, as ‘full’ as is possible. This is what makes the concept suitable for a study examining individual narratives and what emotions and feelings do.

In addition, Sara Ahmed’s (2006) concept of being aligned and being brought in and out of line has been particularly helpful in my analysis to describe those places where interview participants feel like something ‘is not right,’ or conversably, to point to those places where all the pieces fall into place, where ‘everything’ feels good to the point that it cannot be felt at all. It is a metaphor used to describe what emotions and feelings *do* in different situations, and I use it in the dissertation to demonstrate how the workings of homonationalism, intimate citizenship, and entanglement produce such (un)alignments. Ahmed argues that depending on who we are and our histories (that is, depending on the entanglements we are caught in, to use the terminology of this dissertation), our bodies can orientate themselves from certain starting points but not from others. Along the lines we follow from the ‘here’ to get to ‘there,’ certain things become available to us while other objects and occasions remain unobtainable, as not everything can be accessible along every line. Ahmed’s concept and her development of queer phenomenology more broadly also tie together the analysis of the narratives I have gathered.

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The lines we follow are not, according to Ahmed – and as we have seen in this dissertation – a casual matter. Rather, there is a collective direction in any given community. We can follow the lines and be in line, but we can also be brought out of line by others or choose to step off the line we are on and re-orientate ourselves. As I show throughout this study, to be part of a migration process, whether as a migrating or non-migrating partner, often causes bodies to be brought out of line, and the interview participants of this study are all trying to re-orientate themselves to become aligned in ways that make them feel comfortable and intelligible to themselves.

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I use ‘queer’ in this dissertation as a kind of umbrella term to describe the interview participants as not-straight and/or gender non-normative individuals. I do not use the term ‘same-sex’ because a number of interview participants do not identify as being in a ‘same-sex’ relationship, and the term does not lend itself to a discussion of gender identity. Also, I want to point to the fact that the interview participants ‘queer’ the migration processes they go through, that is, bring it out of line in different ways. Contrary to what people might think, while the narratives I analyze in the study are narratives of queer migration, sexual identity plays a relatively marginal role in the stories interview participants told about their migration processes. One way to understand why this is thus how it is in line with discourses of Swedish homonationalism and intimate citizenship, meaning a discursive space opens up where homosexuality, same-sex relationships, and non-heterosexual sexual practices are legally and also, as a general rule, socially accepted. I specifically use the term ‘same-sex’ and ‘homosexuality’ here to emphasize that it is *not* those who queer their migration process, or live queer lives, who are included in these discursive spaces.

By including same-sex relationships in family-tie legislation, the Swedish nation-state demonstrates to individuals in what can be interpreted as same-sex relationships that their sexual identity

is not considered a ‘problem.’ This allows sexual identity to take a backseat in the queer partner migration narratives I have gathered. In this context it is possible to have a same-sex relationship and still be aligned along the lines of the recognizable, intelligible, and accepted relationship. The narratives show that the unintelligible and questioned relationship, that is, the actual *queer* relationship, thus is not the one that contains homosexuality, but that which is out of line because of matters of race, nationality, gender identity, and age, and the power relations these factors are embedded in. Examining partner migration in the light of homonationalist discourses tells us something about the state of ‘queer’ life in Sweden, making visible *which* queers who can become part of the nation, and which are still out of line.

The narratives I have discussed in the dissertation show that when the strands of non-whiteness, non-Western-ness, non-cisgenderedness, and too large an age difference show up when cutting an entanglement and analyzing how the strands intra-act in the cut, a relationship is more likely to be brought out of line than if it ‘only’ consists of two people who are read as ‘same-sex.’ Narratives such as that of Alejandro and Fredrik in the chapter on love show that it is possible to orientate a same-sex relationship and align its love with Swedish homonationalist discourses if the partners are mostly aligned along Swedish lines otherwise, as well as aligned along the lines of a ‘correct’ and equal relationship. Rather than being threatening, Alejandro and Fredrik’s love and their relationship are interpreted as ‘cute’ by a government official they meet as part of their migration process. In the same chapter, however, Nelly’s narrative shows that Sweden is much less accepting of other transgressions of relationship norms. Nelly’s love is more contested and less in line. Her relationship is questioned and becomes suspicious particularly in those cases it is read as straight, because when her partner is read as a man, he is read as a boy, and the perceived age difference brings the relationship out of line. In addition, race, or specifically her partner’s non-whiteness, also affects how others interpret and view Nelly’s relationship.

Age, race, class, and nationality all play a role in how relationships are aligned with the Swedish ideal of equality or not. While non-heterosexuality is not just accepted, but actively included in ideas of

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the Swedish Self, what is interpreted as a teenage boy with an older woman or an interracial couple is less so. Similarly, non-cisgendered bodies are regularly stopped and brought out of line. Examining love in relation to queer partner migration shows how Swedish homonationalism is made and how discourses of intimate citizenship come into play, as love can stick to homosexual subjects in line like Alejandro and Fredrik. They are modern, autonomous subjects making their own choices, who have the class resources to 'do' love 'right' (Nordin 2007). Their race, class, and gender identities entangle in ways that make them fit a Swedish homonationalist discourse. Nelly's relationship fits less well because it is more difficult for love to stick to it; she is not perceived to 'love right.' At the same time, discourses of intimate citizenship extend to include her as well in the sense that her relationship is made possible in Sweden: she can practice her love in Sweden because queer relationships are accepted, even though she lives with the feeling of constantly being brought out of line. By attending to these differences, the dissertation is able to show that queer couples can, through being in line or out of line with Swedish homonationalism, become symbols of the success of this particular form of gender and sexual exceptionalism *as well as* illuminations of its very limitation. To put it differently, these differently situated migration narratives help us understand the possibilities and limitations of Swedish homonationalism, and point to the need for continued and nuanced analysis of the diversity of queer lives in contemporary Sweden.

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By focusing on emotions and feelings in the migration process, I have also demonstrated that it is possible to show that not only migrants feel the migration process; non-migrating partners do as well. That is, the non-migrating partner *also* changes through this process. Non-migrating partners are required to be part of the migrating partners' residence application process, and while this seems logical to the participants I have interviewed, they generally do not recognize the

ways the non-migrating partner continues to feel, and be part of, the migration process once the residence permit has been secured. Yet the narratives show that the non-migrating partners are also often brought out of line through the migration process, and are forced to orientate themselves along different lines than the ones they are used to, as they are brought closer to migrant lines and positioned a bit more like migrants. This can be an uncomfortable feeling that makes the non-migrating partner question their assumptions about Sweden, as they feel how the 'here' they orientate themselves from (Ahmed 2006) starts to change. The narratives in this dissertation show that this uncomfortable feeling is often a result of the non-migrating partner feeling their privileges, but also feeling that what they are used to and take as facts shift as they are brought out of line.

Non-migrating partners also tend to lose the independent and equal relationship that is viewed as the 'good' relationship in dominant Swedish relationship discourse, and that many of them take for granted or expect to have. Through Swedish discourses of homonationalism and intimate citizenship, the queer relationship finds a 'home' in Sweden. The migrating partner, however, is still a migrant in a new place and will for a long time, perhaps always, be less well versed in all things Swedish than the non-migrating partner. This means that the partners of the relationship experience power differentials and inequality incompatible with Swedish equality discourses. That said, a migrating partner can be brought more in line depending on the strands making up the entanglement they are caught in and how these strands intra-act to create knots. As I have showed in this dissertation, it is easier to 'make' some migrating partners Swedish, that is, align them along Swedish lines, than others. Race, nationality, gender identity, and class matter for how easy or difficult it is for migrating partners to be aligned along Swedish lines. At the same time, as Eliza and Viktoria's narrative in the chapter on belonging shows, even a migrating partner who can be aligned relatively easily still causes the non-migrating partner to carry out significant amounts of emotional labour on behalf of the relationship and the migrating partner. This is a responsibility that cannot be shared with the migrating partner and means that the non-migrating partner loses the 'good,' equal

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relationship; as Viktoria says, “we’re actually two grown-ups but it felt like I had to do a lot of things on my own.”

The emotional labour the non-migrating partner carries out is both an effort to ‘make’ the migrating partner (more) Swedish as well as an attempt to bring the relationship and, by extension, the non-migrating partner, in line as Swedish. While this emotional labour affects the non-migrating partner and places a great deal of responsibility for both the relationship and the wellbeing of the migrating partner on the shoulders of the non-migrating partner, this is generally not acknowledged in the narratives. While both partners assume that a migration affects the migrating partner, few have reflected on how it makes the non-migrating partner feel. This means the dissertation contributes to explaining migration processes as something that is not just the concern of the migrant, but that affects others as well, painting a more nuanced picture of how migration can be experienced.

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Having interviewed both couples and individuals for the dissertation, one methodological contribution I aim to make with the study concerns how these two types of interviewing differ, and thus, by extension, how they offer different narratives of what may seem like similar stories or processes. More importantly, I want to stress how when couples are interviewed, they produce a joint narrative. Interviewing participants individually meant a more intimate interview situation where participants focused on themselves in a different way than participants in couple interviews did. While couples ‘checked in’ with each other to see whether certain stories were worth telling or whether their partner was comfortable with a particular story being told, participants in individual interviews did not have to take their partner’s feelings, or how they interpreted what the participant told me, into consideration. This meant individual interviews were somewhat freer, as the emotional labour inherent in a couple interview situation was removed.

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Individual interviews also meant that the participant and I were able to participate in the conversation on more equal terms, even if I as a researcher obviously have the power to make sense of and analyze the gathered narratives, as I have done here. Couples had a tendency to come across as a 'unit' instead, at least in the beginning of the interview. My interpretation was that couples did not 'need' me as an included and equal conversation partner, as they were already a part of a social unit. However, couple interviews had the advantage that partners often started interviewing each other if they found their partner's response to a question lacking or felt that what their partner had said was something they had not heard them express previously. They also thought out loud more compared to the participants who were interviewed individually, probably because their partner could fill in the blanks for them.

Apart from receiving more information when couples started interviewing each other and filled in the blanks for one another, more importantly for the focus of this dissertation, I was able to observe how the couples created and negotiated joint migration narratives. Emotions and feelings are part of the creation of a narrative as they 'do' 'things' to the narrative as well as the relationship. Lisa and Bea, whose narrative I started the methodology chapter with, point to this when they jokingly say that I will get in touch with them after the interview to ask if they are still together and that they will report there were major fights as a result of the interview, or when Bea questions Lisa's affinity with other 'immigrants' as part of their narrative. In the process of producing a joint narrative, feelings are also produced when, for example, one partner realizes the other understands situations and processes differently, causing the joint narrative of love and affinity to become less 'joint.' By interviewing couples and examining the interviews using a theoretical framework of emotions and feelings, this negotiation over the creation of the joint narrative became available for me to observe and analyze.

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CONCLUSION

The importance of being orientated along Swedish lines, or at least not-migrant lines, runs through the narratives I gathered. As I touch on above, this is made possible through a combination of the non-migrating partner's emotional labour and the entanglement the migrating partner is caught in. Strands of race, nationality, and perceived Western-ness, as well as class, gender identity, language, understandings of the Other, and borders between 'us' and 'them' become entangled in ways that create a knot where the strands intra-act to produce meanings through which this orientation along Swedish and/or not-migrant lines is understood. Nelly, in the chapter on love, *tries* to align her partner by aligning their relationship, but her relationship is too far out of line for her work to be effective for more than short moments of time. As I noted above, Alejandro and Fredrik in the same chapter are more successful in orientating their relationship along Swedish lines, and along the lines of 'good' love. For Nelly, however, the strands of non-whiteness, non-cisgenderedness, perceived (non-) Western-ness, age differences in relationships, class, colonial histories, and racist and transphobic discourses entangle in ways that make almost everything in her relationship except Nelly herself – as white, cisgendered, university educated, and Swedish – contribute to bringing the relationship out of line. In comparison, Alejandro and Fredrik are only brought out of line because of race and nationality. Yet, even these social processes of power have less of an effect on them than they do on Nelly's relationship, given that Alejandro is both 'more' white and 'more' Western (and thus seemingly in closer proximity to the white Swedish ideal) than Nelly's partner. Alejandro and Fredrik can also actively use other strands of their entanglements, such as class, gender identity, their similar age, and the relatively positive migration narrative that Chileans in Sweden are written into, to counter the effects of non-whiteness and a non-Western nationality. Other interview participants, however, are brought in line as Swedish and not-migrants even more easily. Being white, of Western nationality, and cisgendered means the alignment work that has to be carried out to align a migrating partner as Swedish and not-migrant is made less strenuous; as Eliza from the US says in the chapter on belonging, "I can just move around as a Swedish person until I open my mouth."

Bringing the migrating partner in line with an imagined Swedishness is also made possible by Swedish homonationalist discourses that work to align same-sex relationships and non-heterosexual sexual identities along Swedish lines by virtue of the individuals in the relationship being understood as ‘homosexual.’ Sweden not only accepts homosexuality, but views this acceptance as integral to the country’s modern, progressive identity. A same-sex relationship otherwise fairly well in line is aided by homonationalism and intimate citizenship discourses to make the relationship – and, by extension, the migrating partner – welcome and brought in line in this particular national context. However, the more a relationship and an individual are in line with normative Swedish ideas of equality, in particular, with ideas of equality and race, nationality, gender identity, and class, the more the space around the individuals extend their bodies (Ahmed 2006), and the less the migration is felt.

As a postcolonial scholar with a particular interest in race and racism, Sara Ahmed insightfully uses whiteness to exemplify how this alignment along Swedish lines occurs, but I argue that Ahmed’s concept of space extending bodies can be applied to demonstrate how other strands of the entanglements individuals are also caught in work to bring partner migrants in line, in particular cisgenderedness and a Western nationality. According to Ahmed, spaces are orientated *around* whiteness, rather than towards it. This is because whiteness is always assumed to be given; it is always in line, which means that whiteness goes unnoticed. White bodies can move more easily; the white body is not an obstacle, and it does not have to get ‘stressed’ in encounters with objects and others. This is how the white body *expands*: “objects, tools, instruments and even ‘others’ allow [the white] body to inhabit space by extending that body and what it can reach” (Ahmed 2006: 132).

However, as I have shown throughout this dissertation, one’s body being extended does not always mean that the migration is not *felt*; in many cases it actually means the migration is acutely felt. Many interview participants were used to the room extending their (white, Western, cisgendered) bodies, and when they previously sunk into the metaphorical comfortable chair that Ahmed discusses and that

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I have come back to several times throughout the dissertation, they were then not able to “distinguish where [their] body ends and the world begins” (Ahmed 2004a: 148). These interview participants, both migrating and non-migrating partners, feel their migration processes because their bodies experience discomfort and are, through the migration process, no longer as “at home in the world” (Ahmed 2007: 158). Their bodies are no longer extended to the same extent, and they are no longer orientated correctly. Differently put, a key finding of the ethnographic work I conducted for the dissertation is that the processes by which one is made to feel at home or made to feel foreign, as in strange, can be more subtle than simply a question of race as it is commonly understood. Also, a crucial part of Ahmed’s queer phenomenology is how heterosexuality brings bodies in line, while queer bodies are out of line. What my study shows is that it is not the ‘gay’ or ‘homosexual’ body, or the bodies in the ‘same-sex,’ gender normative relationship that are out of line. *Some* queer bodies get to be part of the homonationalist community, but those bodies must be in close proximity of the Swedish white, middle-class, cisgendered, Western ideal. However, they do not necessarily need to be heterosexual.

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Because I consider queer partner migration to Sweden a type of privileged migration, I thus view this dissertation as a contribution to privileged migration scholarship. The fact that many of the participants I interviewed assumed an easy migration, in which neither migrating nor non-migrating partner would be brought out of line, supports this. This is also connected to how Swedish homonationalism operates as an ideology that helps to create an easy administrative migration process for queer migration couples. There is a feeling of safety in this process that differs from how queer partner migration couples describe their experiences in previous research (White 2010), but also from how other family ties migrants portray their migration process, adding to the understanding of this migration as privileged.

The concept of migration is often discursively produced as problematic. If there is 'problematic migration,' there should logically also exist some form of 'unproblematic migration' to measure the 'problematic migration' against. As I have shown, not being part of the 'problematic migrant' discourse means one is positioned, and positions oneself, sometimes as 'not-migrant' and at other times as 'less-migrant.' Queer partner migrants belong to a privileged migration category because queer partner migration relationships bestow privileges on the migrating partner in ways that other types of migrations are excluded from, by virtue of their (queer) partner migrant status, but also, in the case of this study, because all the non-migrating partners were Swedish citizens from birth. By virtue of being in (what is perceived as by others as) a same-sex relationship, the queer partner migrant is considered a modern, free, independent subject, and, as a result, is offered a 'home' in Sweden, a nation which understands itself as progressive, tolerant, and modern. The queer partner migrant reaches modernity-through-affect (Myrdahl 2010) through their non-heterosexuality, making them already-Swedish.

Being orientated along Swedish lines and belonging to Sweden as a result of modernity-through-affect means that many of the queer partner migrants become positioned, and position themselves in their narratives, as not-migrants or less-migrants. This is particularly so in those narratives where participants have been used to, for example, their race, nationality, class, and gender identity bestowing privileges rather than bringing them out of line. These participants generally assume they are left out of the usual 'problematic' migration narratives and instead included in discourses portraying the world as 'open' and 'available' to them to move around in (Grandin 2007; Tesfahuney & Schough 2010). They also understand themselves to be part of a group whose members count and matter. All these strands of the entanglements they are caught in intra-act to allow them, before the migration, to sink into the comfortable chair without feeling where their body ends and the chair begins. Differently put, they are used to being in line. This means they can position themselves, at least partially, against and away from the label of 'problematic migrant' and align themselves

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along Swedish lines. This is the process through which they become a not-migrant or, at least, less-migrant than other migrants. This process is important because being orientated as a migrant means the negative emotions that stick to the sign of 'migrant' (Ahmed 2004a) also stick to the migrating partner and the relationship. To actively find not-migrant lines to orientate the migrating partner and the relationship along thus becomes crucial.

One also *feels* oneself to be one kind of migrant or another, that is, one expects to be placed in one category or another. If the entanglement one is caught in has previously helped to orientate oneself along lines where one has had access to a range of privileges, this generally means actively positioning oneself in one's narrative to be able to orientate oneself from a similarly privileged point again. However, some entanglements are knotted in such a way that bodies never sat comfortably in Ahmed's comfortable chair or were allowed to feel "at home in the world" (Ahmed 2007: 158). Max from an African country in the chapter on loss has always been out of line because of his non-cisgenderedness, but he is also black in a world that rewards whiteness, and comes from Africa, a continent associated with 'problems.' He does not try to position himself as a not-migrant or less-migrant in the way many other participants do; rather, he shows an awareness in his narrative that a migration would bring him even more out of line than he was before the move. While the racism and transphobia he encounters make him angry and frustrated, he is simultaneously resigned as far as his *migration* concerns. He did not expect his migration process to make his body more comfortably aligned, but assumed that he would be brought even more out of line, and in this sense, he has realistic expectations on his migration.

However, those positioning themselves as less-migrants still often *feel* like they are out of line, even though their narratives show that others might not experience them as such. They feel a dissonance as the migration shifts their privileges and orientates them differently. This is something they generally did not expect to happen when migrating from one Western country to another. I argue that they generally feel even the smallest micro shift in their alignment along the 'correct' lines, simply because they are so unused to the discomfort

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of being out of line. Small lumps in the metaphorical chair will be much more obvious to this group of migrants as they feel themselves become slightly less privileged.

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However, the fact that queer partner migration couples *feel* their migration is not only linked to the shifting of privileges and being brought out of line as an effect of the migration. As queer partner migration unsettles the borders between privileged and non-privileged migration, it also disturbs the borders between voluntary and involuntary migration. On the one hand, all migrating partners participating in this study moved voluntarily: they chose to live in Sweden with their Swedish partners. On the other hand, many participants, both migrating and non-migrating partners, explicitly stated that if they had had the choice, that is, if the country of the migrating partner had accepted their queer relationship as grounds for migration, they would have chosen differently. This is a discussion of intimate citizenship, as the extension of migration rights to queer relationships is ‘intimate trouble’ connected to discourses about sexual practices and values. While the participants may be privileged in the migration process because of Swedish homonationalism, because of the emotional labour the non-migrating partner undertakes, and because many strands of the entanglements they are caught in often work to bring them in line in Sweden in different ways, they cannot choose where to live. Their queer relationships stop them in ways (straight) privileged subjects in the privileged migration literature are rarely stopped, in this way unsettling the borders between privileged and non-privileged, voluntary and non-voluntary migration.

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If thinking about queer partner migration to Sweden as a voluntary as well as a *positive* migration in the sense that love is generally perceived as a positive emotion, the main conclusion of this study is that a fully voluntary migration carried out for positive reasons does create many feelings, because *migration* creates feelings. It also shows that *what* feelings the individuals in the migration process feel, and what those feelings do to and in the migration process, and to and in the relationship, are closely related to whether the partners are used to being in line or not.

We feel our way through the world using our bodies (Öhman, Jönsson & Svensson 2011): the migration is felt in the body to a great extent because of the way the body is stopped and brought out of line, or made comfortable and brought in line. Small micro changes occur when we move from one cultural context to another, and every micro change create feelings. Others in the new place see you – your body and who you are – and may, depending on what they think they see, deny you something you used to have or something that is extended to others around you. Whiteness, cisgenderedness, a Western nationality, and being middleclass create (more) comfortable migrant bodies that put more things within reach: friendships, jobs, a feeling of ‘normalcy,’ of not being exposed. In terms of whiteness, Ahmed writes that it is “worldly”; that “whiteness describes the very ‘what’ that coheres as a world” (2007: 150). White bodies are orientated differently than non-white bodies, and some emotions stick more easily to them than others. According to Ahmed, the white body becomes orientated in a way that puts certain things in reach, “styles, capacities, aspirations, techniques, habits,” making race “a question of what is within reach, what is available to perceive and to do ‘things’ with” (2007: 154). While I certainly agree that whiteness is “worldly,” and demonstrate some of the ways in which this works in the interview participants’ narratives, as I mentioned earlier, I also argue that the narratives in this dissertation show that cisgenderedness and Western nationality, in particular, can similarly be described “as the very ‘what’ that coheres as a world.” Like whiteness, they go unnoticed by other white, cisgendered, or Western individuals, and spaces are orientated around and towards them. This means certain

“styles, capacities, aspirations, techniques, habits” are within reach for *certain* migrants: they can imagine doing ‘things’ – and actually do ‘things’ – a person of colour, a non-cisgendered individual, a non-Western person cannot.

Problematizing ‘who is a migrant’ means examining what use privileges are to the non-problematic migrant. In the migration process, the structural is linked to the existential in the individual. Even those queer partner migrants who ‘check all the boxes’ on a structural level, that is, have access to whiteness, cisgenderedness, class, and Western nationality privileges, can still find their migration process emotionally trying – as can their non-migrating partners. This study bridges privileged and non-privileged, unproblematic and problematic migration by making the borders between them more permeable. It shows that to the individual migrant who does ‘check all the boxes,’ one’s privileges can *feel* to be of relatively limited use. It is only in comparison with other migrants who are (even) more out of line that privileges become visible, but it does not change the feelings felt as a reaction to the migration process.

Queer partner migration can also be a lonely migration as there are often few cultural contexts and relations to tap into for the migrating partner, as their queerness can stop them from being accepted and included, and their extended family is rarely present in the country of migration. One’s relationship and the love that should be present there is thus very important as it means the non-migrating partner can become the migrating partner’s ‘everything,’ both socially and emotionally. The narratives I have gathered show that this loneliness is a heavy feeling to carry for both migrating and non-migrating partners, and that access to privileges does not necessarily make the loneliness feel less acute or affect the relationship less. This loneliness works on two levels, in the sense that one can be alone, with no friends and networks of one’s own, but one can also be socially active, that is, have friends and networks, but still feel lonely, maybe because one feels ‘too different,’ or because one feels others do not share one’s experiences. However, as in most instances, the narratives show that being more in line also means it is easier to overcome the loneliness and isolation of this first type of loneliness. If one is *almost* in line,

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it is easier to be brought in line completely; sometimes it only takes a nudge. On the other hand, if the entanglement one is caught in forces one out of line in most instances, a mere nudge will not allow that individual to orientate themselves ‘correctly’ and be brought in line, consequently making it more difficult to leave either of the two types of loneliness behind.

Parts of the privileged migration literature has a tendency to treat privileged migrants as ‘cosmopolitan subjects’ flitting around the world with few feelings, connections, communities, or people left behind taken into consideration. This study shows that *every* departure can be a loss, also for the privileged migrant, and that privileged migration, too, is complex and difficult. However, the narratives show that those migrants who are written into cosmopolitan discourses have a more difficult time understanding why the migration ‘feels so much’ and why it ‘isn’t working out’ as they have no frameworks to help structure their ‘migration feelings’ by and through. As such, one result of the study is that the concept of ‘privilege’ itself is a complex notion, and that the notions of ‘migration’ and ‘the migrant’ are so racialized and connected to certain nationalities that is often not possible for white, Western individuals to imagine they are now written into a narrative of migration, and that this is the reason they experience themselves to be out of line. Anne-Meike Fechter and Katie Walsh argue that migration studies literatures produce “somewhat skewed notions of ‘who migrants are,’ leading to rather particular and limited notions of migration processes as a whole” (2010: 198). By showing what emotions and feelings do in migration processes, and that more privileged migration processes also are places where feeling ‘do’ things, I want to contribute to the discussion on ‘who migrants are,’ how we become and are *made* migrants, and why some migrants can think of themselves, and be thought of by others, as not-migrants or less-migrants.

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Migration, however, does not only create negative feelings, as my discussion so far may have suggested. Starting in the feeling of love, the love participants feel for their partners, and which has brought about the migration, is narrated as an intensely felt positive feeling in the majority of interview participant narratives. But a migration can also, for example, bring about feelings of belonging in a new context, such as in the case of Luke in the chapter on belonging. While many narratives dealt with feelings of loss, homesickness, and exclusion, Luke positioned himself as thoroughly enjoying his migration and life in Sweden. When he arrived in Sweden from England, he discovered a life that allowed him to belong in a much stronger sense than he had felt he had belonged before. Class is a major aspect of Luke's narrative, and his relationship with his then-boyfriend and the middle-class starting points that are made available to him to orientate himself from as a result of this relationship and his migration, work to create feelings of belonging and of feeling 'at home' in his narrative.

Another example is that of Jasmin and Emma in the chapter on loss. Theirs is one of the joint narratives gathered for the study that is most tinged by loss, as well as by frustration and anger, but it also exhibits many positive feelings. While Jasmin initially felt out of line and forced to orientate herself along the lines of a migrant in Sweden, causing her to lose her place in the world, as she puts it, the final part of her and Emma's narrative is happy, full of confidence in what the future has to offer, and forward-looking. The birth of Jasmin and Emma's baby allows them, through discourses of Swedish homonationalism and intimate citizenship, coupled with how the strands of whiteness, cisgenderedness, being an American in Sweden, class, and education intra-act, to be brought in line with Swedish discourses of the 'good' family, and so become like 'everyone else' again. The migration to Sweden also included advantages such as parental leave and a social infrastructure geared at families, in particular families consisting of two working parents with children, allowing Jasmin to combine both her longing for a child and the professional life she craves. In this way the migration process eventually brought feelings of happiness.

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I want to end this concluding chapter by bringing our attention back to the narratives that make up the empirical material of the study. As I have showed throughout the dissertation, stories are retroactively created: the narratives I gathered are stories about something *becoming* love in order for them to *be* stories about love. But I have also similarly produced a narrative by writing the dissertation, which is not only about the interview participants featured in it, but also about what a dissertation *is*. As such, I have inevitably created a new narrative of the narratives I have gathered. Narratives are filled with complexity, and this complexity is often missed when migration is studied and discussed. While the narrative that is the dissertation can never fully do justice to all the emotions and feelings of migration woven into the stories the interview participants shared with me, it is my hope that *this* narrative can make a contribution to unsettling some of the generalizations made in the grand narratives of migration offered within contemporary academic debate.

Epilogue

As I start to near the end of the dissertation, I contact the interview participants whose narratives I have included in the dissertation again. It has been almost four years since I met them, and I want to know what has happened since then. Do they still live in Sweden? Are they still together? What has been going on in their lives? I'm curious myself, of course, but even more I want the readers, who have gotten to know the participants quite intimately, to know 'what happened next' – how did their narratives continue and evolve? I also want to show how lives – and narratives – are never static. What was the 'truth' four years ago may no longer be a hard fact, as our lives move, shift, and change. Had I interviewed the participants about their migration process today instead, some parts of their narratives would have been completely different – while other parts would have been more or less the same. We create our narratives from the point we orientate ourselves from at this very moment.

TIMO & IDA

Since I met with them, Timo and Ida have gotten married, and they have also had what Ida calls “our very much awaited and anticipated baby.” Timo now identifies as a man and has gone through gender reaffirming treatment. After announcing these quite major changes to their lives, Ida adds, “But apart from all this, most things are pretty much the same anyway. :-)” They still live in the city they lived in when I interviewed them, where Ida works the same job she worked

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four years ago and Timo has finished a vocational training program. Their plan is to stay in Sweden for the same reasons they initially chose Sweden over the African country Timo has roots in, due to the difficulty Ida would have in obtaining a work permit and for both of them to be able to find jobs there. However, they visit the African country Timo has roots in a couple of months every year, and are, when I get in touch with them, in the process of applying for dual citizenship for their child.

FELIPE & KRISTER

Felipe and Krister are still together and live in the same city and the same apartment they lived in when I met them. When I ask what has happened in their lives since the interview, Felipe says he has supplemented his degree from Nicaragua through university studies in Sweden, and is now certified to work in his profession. He doesn't yet have a permanent job, but has had short contracts in his field with different employers.

Felipe has also become a Swedish citizen, and now has dual citizenship. Marriage is still important to him, and he says, "I hope that now that the US has legalized gender-neutral marriages, it will be easier for the government in Nicaragua to say yes to gender-neutral marriages there." However, the plan is to stay in Sweden indefinitely, because, as Felipe says: "I like it here in Sweden!"

LISA & BEA

When I speak to Bea, she initially says, "Nothing has happened since you interviewed us. We're not married, we don't have children. We live in the same apartment. Things are just chugging along." However, having said this, she adds, "But we're planning children, and the idea is that Lisa will be the birth mother." That Lisa will carry the baby is connected to the fact that Lisa and Bea are, as far as their plans go right now, planning on staying in Sweden, and by Lisa carrying the baby, the baby will have a direct connection to the Western European country she is from.

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Lisa doesn't long for the Western European country, and Bea says they are both happy in Sweden. They think it will be easier to combine work and a family life with children in Sweden compared to the Western European country, and Bea says, "Sweden is less macho and more equal, and there's more racism and homophobia in the Western European country." However, she adds, "But you never know! Maybe Lisa will feel she wants to be closer to her roots and her family once we have children."

Lisa has also become a Swedish citizen in the years since the interview. Bea says this "wasn't an issue. Both Sweden and the Western European country allow dual citizenship, and it might be good to have. And you want to be able to vote in the country you live in."

NELLY

Nelly is still together with her partner. They got married and became parents about two years after I interviewed her. Becoming and being a parent is Nelly's main focus when I speak to her, and she says, "It brings about such a big change in your relationship. You don't have time for each other in the same way, you need to focus on this other individual, and you just have to adjust your life and your relationship accordingly." Having a baby has also made Nelly reflect on her own childhood in relation to both her child and her partner. "I try to find strategies to make changes, but I'm not always successful!" she says. "Having a child teaches you so much, you develop so much."

Her partner's financial dependency on her was one of the main themes running through Nelly's narrative. She is still working, and in the years since the interview her partner has completed a vocational training program and now has a permanent position, working in his field of training.

She still lives with her partner in the same city, but they have moved to a new apartment. "We'll stay in Sweden for the foreseeable future," Nelly says. "We don't see a future in the African country right now, it's just not on the table. Having a child, it's easier to live in Sweden, and I have to consider how the baby would be affected

by a move.” Her partner also became a Swedish citizen as soon as he had the possibility, and Nelly says, “It feels safer being a Swedish citizen. It gives you rights and makes things easier.”

JASMIN & EMMA

I catch up with Jasmin on the phone, and she laughs and says, “Emma says hi, and that since I can talk for two, I can talk for her as well.” Jasmin and Emma still live together in Sweden, and while they are planning to move to a bigger home, they don’t know what the future looks like in terms of which country they will live in eventually: Sweden or the US. “We’ll see what happens in five years,” Jasmin says. At the same time, she admits to having mixed feelings about the US. “I dream about living in the house next door to my mom, my sister, my cousin,” she says. “But the US scares me now that I’m not there, when I’m outside it. There is so much violence and so many weapons there. I can’t see my child growing up there.” For Jasmin, moving to the US would need to be preceded by some kind of crisis, “like my mom falling sick, for example.” She explains that her and Emma’s life in Sweden feels safe, and moving to the US wouldn’t be about “escaping,” it would no longer be about getting away from Sweden.

Jasmin also became a Swedish citizen as soon as she had the possibility to apply for citizenship. She says: “I have worked in war situations. If there were a terrorist attack, my family could be torn apart if we had different citizenships. There is safety in belonging to the same country.”

When I met Jasmin and Emma, Jasmin was very unhappy with her job. Having a job in her field that challenged her and corresponded to her qualifications was something she came back to several times in the interview. Now, she says, “I have my dream job! It’s been three years, and it’s exciting, and I like the actual job. But I need a kind of team spirit, and I feel there’s a colleague who doesn’t really want me there. So I might look elsewhere, but this time I would look for a job with confidence. I feel like I have found my identity again.”

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Jasmin has also written a book about her migration process, and she is looking into having it published, but doesn't know yet whether it will be in Sweden or in the US. "Emma did a test translation of one page into Swedish," she says. "And it turns out she's an amazing translator!" Emma has been Jasmin's main sounding board throughout the writing process, which has been what Jasmin calls a "big journey," as it has been heavy and challenging to think back on her and Emma's migration process this way.

MAX

Max writes me two long emails to fill me in on what has been going on in his life since we met. He still lives in the same city, has completed his transition, and he says, "I don't think you would recognize me if you saw me in the street! :-)" He has also gotten married, and he and his partner have had a baby in the time since the interview. "There have been different changes with me transitioning, that changed stuff in our relationship, and having kids, that changed the relationship too," Max says. "So it's been up and down to get along with the changes." He now has a job, working as a tradesperson, and will receive his certification in a few months' time. He might study further in his field, but right now he just wants to work and save up money.

In regards to his transition, Max says that he and his partner are seen as a straight couple by people who don't know them. This means "we have lost some of our queer identity. It's not such a big deal for me, but for my partner, she has lost her identity and being seen as queer. So it's a bit complicated. For me, I also lost my past. It feels sometimes like I'm only known or seen as Max who is straight and passes as any other guy, without people knowing that I have a history too." Max thinks it's better that people he meets don't know his history, because those who do find out "become strange and that's not cool. You end up losing a lot of people that mean a lot to you." The transition has also changed him as a person, and, as an example, he says he feels more confident now.

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Racism is still part of Max's life though, and he says, "Living in Sweden is no picnic in the park. Being black and living here is very tough because of the racism here. I don't feel safe at all. I'm scared all the time when I'm out walking in town or waiting for the train. Some people might say it's not like that, but for us who are living it daily, we know it." At the same time Max also emphasizes that he likes Sweden because of "access to health care, access to hormone therapy and surgery and psychologists, and the rights you have as an lgbtqi person, you know."

Max has become a Swedish citizen, and the main reason for this was to be able to apply for a Swedish passport. Travelling with his old passport from the African country he is a citizen of, which identified him as a woman, was both uncomfortable and risky. Travelling is easier now, with a passport that identifies him as a man.

Max ends his email by saying, "But it's good, life is always full of surprises, *eller hur* [right]? :-)"

LUKE

Luke is about to turn thirty, and has moved to another city since the interview. When we talk, he is in his last semester of a bachelor's degree, and is planning what to do and where to go upon graduation.

Luke has been single for the past six months after breaking up from a relationship of four and a half years, a relationship that was relatively new when I interviewed him. He says that he "woke up in the morning of the day I turned twenty-nine and just felt I wasn't where I wanted to be in life and that I wasn't in the relationship I wanted to be in. It took a few months to work up the courage, but then I broke up with my boyfriend. I had basically been in relationships from that I was nineteen [which was the relationship he moved to Sweden for] until I was twenty-nine, I had never been single, and I needed to be alone."

His degree is in a field that allows him to work pretty much anywhere in the world, and Luke says that the plan is to apply for jobs in Sweden, Denmark, and England to start with, but that he

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also imagines himself living and working elsewhere, eventually. “I’ve moved to another country once now,” he says, “it doesn’t feel like such a big deal to go somewhere else. I need some work experience, then I’ll choose more actively where I want to be. But you meet people everywhere you live, maybe I’ll stay put somewhere because I meet people I like.”

England was fairly distant in Luke’s interview narrative and painted as a place he wanted to get away from, meaning that applying for jobs there indicates that something has changed. Before, he used to visit England once every two years or so, but in the last year he has visited four times. Friends and family members are getting married, having babies, including new people in their lives, and he is starting to feel like he is missing out on things, missing out on people. This is one of the reasons he is looking into working there: “I want to be close to the people I have known for a long time. For a while at least!” Luke laughs, and continues in a more serious voice: “I want to be part of the big things.”

However, Luke’s relationship with his mother has not changed. She visited him in Sweden once, and while Luke says things were fine for the first few days, they got progressively worse, and Luke made her leave early. They have not had much contact since. Less than a year ago, Luke spoke with his aunt for a long time about his mother and her behaviour towards him. He says of this: “I have carried around this guilt for my relationship with my mum. But my aunt said, ‘Focus on yourself! You can’t help her! No one can help her.’ And that made me feel much more safe. More like an adult person. And I was able to let it go, and I feel good now.”

When I ask Luke if he has become a Swedish citizen or thought about becoming one, he says, “Well, yes, I have thought of that! And I will. It would feel silly not to. It’s not for residence, for being able to live here, I just want to have it. And I don’t know what will happen if England leaves the EU, how that would affect my ability to live and work in Europe, and England and Sweden allow dual citizenship, so I would get my Swedish citizenship for that reason. But it’s mainly because it would feel nice to wrap things up that way before I leave.”

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Before we hang up I ask Luke if he wants to add anything, and he says: “Yeah, that I feel really good. I’ve experienced a lot of anxiety over the past few years, but now I’m where I want to be at. I feel good.”

ELIZA & VIKTORIA

Eliza responds to me with a long email, writing that she and Viktoria have just moved back to Sweden after living in the US for two and a half years. While in the US, they lived in the city Eliza is originally from, which is also the city that they expressed a sense of belonging to in their narrative. “This was a dream move for us,” Eliza says. “A chance to live in the city that we love almost more than anywhere.”

Viktoria went the US as a student, but when she was offered a job in Sweden close to the completion of her studies, they decided to move back. Eliza emphasizes how much they love the city they lived in as well as the US, but, she says, living in the US “is a difficult and tricky system in which to find security and stability. There are many practical reasons that Sweden is a better fit for us.” Eliza mentions the fact that she has her Swedish permanent residency, while staying in the US would have meant “many different cumbersome processes ahead” in order to make sure Viktoria could stay once her student visa expired. And, Eliza adds, “health care is a big issue as well. We feel it’s ridiculous to stay in a country where it costs so much to receive any kind of help, regardless of what job one has, when we can live in a country that is not perfect, but has a much better system of health care.”

Eliza and Viktoria moved to a different Swedish city than the one they lived when I interviewed them. “It’s a much more stable, secure life that actually gives us much more freedom to be who we are and create the life that we want to live,” Eliza says. They both work fulltime in professions that require the use of their university degrees, and have just bought a condo. While Eliza says that they miss the US and the city they lived in there, they now have both the time and the means to visit in a way that would not have been possible if the situation were reversed, that is, if they had to travel from the US to visit Sweden instead.

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In terms of citizenship, Eliza has applied for her Swedish citizenship, but is still waiting for an answer. She intends to keep her American citizenship as well, but says, “We believe it’s important, as a family unit, to both be citizens in the same country.”

Eliza concludes by saying, “So, life is good. We have been married for seven years, and our marriage is stronger than ever. We don’t know if or when life may involve having children, but it’s still something that we discuss every now and then. Currently, though, we’re simply enjoying the process of settling into our own life. In some ways, after much change and many moves, for the very first time.”

*

Fredrik texts back right away when I contact him and Alejandro. He says he is happy to answer some follow-up questions, and adds, “yep, we’re still sticking together: 6 years in May. :-)”. I email him my questions and say I can call him if he would prefer to talk instead. However, I don’t hear from either him or Alejandro again.

I also don’t hear back from Mona and Karin.

List of Interview Participants

Twenty-three queer migrating and non-migrating partners were interviewed as part of this study. Not all narratives made their way into the finished text, but all interviews and narratives were part of the analysis, and all have influenced the text in different ways. This means all participants, including those not discussed directly in the dissertation, are included in this list.

ALEJANDRO & FREDRIK

Alejandro, who is from Chile, is thirty-two, and Fredrik is thirty-four. Alejandro moved to Sweden two and a half years before the interview. They are both cisgendered, middle class, university educated, and perceive themselves to be white, although Alejandro has noticed that he is racialized in a Swedish context.

Alejandro and Fredrik's narrative is discussed in *Chapter 5: Love*.

BOB & GERTRUDE

Bob, who is from the US and England, is fifty-five, and Gertrude, who grew up in Germany with a Swedish mother, is thirty-seven. They were married and had a child at the time of the interview. Bob moved to Sweden six years before the interview. They both have fluid gender identities and are white. Gertrude is university educated.

ELIZA & VIKTORIA

Eliza, who is from the US, is thirty-eight, and Viktoria is twenty-eight. Eliza moved to Sweden two years before the interview. They were married at the time of the interview. They are both white, cisgendered, middle class, university educated, and identify as practicing Christians.

Eliza and Viktoria's narrative is discussed in *Chapter 7: Belonging*.

FELIPE & KRISTER

Felipe, who is from Nicaragua, is forty, and Krister is fifty-nine. Felipe moved to Sweden five years before the interview. They were married at the time of the interview. They are both cisgendered, middle class, and have further education.

Fredrik and Krister's narrative introduces *Chapter 3: Theoretical Frameworks*.

JASMIN & EMMA

Jasmin, who is from the US, is forty, and Emma is forty-four. Jasmin moved to Sweden four years before the interview. They were married and had a child at the time of the interview. They are both white, cisgendered, middle class, and have further education.

Jasmin and Emma's narrative is discussed in *Chapter 6: Loss*.

JOAN & ELLEN

Joan, who is from the US, is twenty-nine, and Ellen is twenty-six. Joan moved to Sweden four years before the interview. They are both white, cisgendered, middle class, university educated, and identify as Jewish.

JULIA

Julia, who is from Denmark, is thirty-seven. She moved to Sweden nine years before the interview. She is white, cisgendered, middle class, and university educated.

LISA & BEA

Lisa, who is from a Western European country, is thirty-one, and Bea is thirty-two. Lisa moved to Sweden two years before the interview. They are both white, cisgendered, middle class, and university educated.

Lisa and Bea's narrative introduces *Chapter 4: Creating Knowledge about Queer Partner Migration*.

LUKE

Luke, who is from England, is twenty-six. He moved to Sweden seven years before the interview. He is mixed race, cisgendered, working class, and university educated.

Luke's narrative is discussed in *Chapter 7: Belonging*.

MAX

Max, who is from an African country, is thirty-one. He moved to Sweden two years before the interview. At the time of the interview he was going through a gender reaffirming treatment from female to male. He is black, working class, and has vocational training.

Max's narrative is discussed in *Chapter 6: Loss*.

MONA & KARIN

Mona, who is from Denmark and Iran, is twenty-seven, and Karin is twenty-eight. Mona moved to Sweden two and a half years before the interview. Mona is working class, has a fluid gender identity,

and is racialized in a Swedish context while Karin is middle class, cisgendered, and white. They are both university educated.

Mona and Karin's narrative introduces *Chapter 1: Introduction*.

NELLY

Nelly, whose partner is from a non-Western country, is thirty-one. Her partner moved to Sweden three years before the interview. She is white, cisgendered, working class, and university educated.

Nelly's narrative is discussed in *Chapter 5: Love*.

TIM

Tim, who is from Canada, is forty-four. He moved to Sweden twenty-one years before the interview. He is white, cisgendered, middle class, and university educated.

TIMO & IDA

Timo, who is from an African country, is thirty-eight, and Ida is thirty. Timo moved to Sweden a year and a half before the interview. Timo is black, identifies as gender neutral, and has vocational training while Ida is white, cisgendered, and university educated.

Timo and Ida's narrative introduces *Chapter 2: Academic Backgrounds*.

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