

From Ridiculed Deviants towards Normal Citizens. The Representation of Homosexuals in the Finnish Media 1990 - 2010

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Origins of Pride

According to Domenico Rozzi quoting Eric Howsbawm, “a great change” took place between the 1950’s and 1960’s across the entire world. Many of these changes, such as culture, identity and gender roles, further affected the social status of homosexuals and other members of sexual minorities.¹ It was in the aftermath of these changes that the Gay Pride Festival Tradition, also known as Pride, was born.

In 1971 homosexuality was decriminalised by Finnish law and in 1981 declassified as a mental illness.² These were the first steps towards equal rights and acceptance of all Finnish citizens, which the Helsinki Pride festival came to advocate. Despite the decriminalisation changes were initially slow, and sexual minorities lacked a public space, as well as means to openly express themselves. The Finnish gay and lesbian movements had made measured progress as early as 1964 and 1967,³ with their greatest success being the founding of *Seta ry (Seksuaalinen tasavertaisuus – Sexual Equality)* organisation in 1974.⁴ The organisation emphasised the status of homosexuals as a minority discriminated against by the Finnish society⁵ and on the 27th of July 1974 *Seta* organised the first public demonstration for gay and lesbian rights in Finnish history.⁶

The ensuing “Liberation Days” (*Vapautuspäivät*) demonstrations and parades, organised officially since 1975,⁷ gradually evolved into what we today know as Helsinki Pride, becoming the first Finnish equivalent of the international Gay Pride Festival. In 1981, when homosexuality was removed from the list of mental disorders in Finland, the first large-scale demonstration was organised, this time with

¹ Rozzi 2006, 197.

² Kontula & Haavio-Mannila 1993, 246, 247.

³ Mustola 2007a, 18.

⁴ Mustola 2007a, 25.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Juvonen 2015, 36.

⁷ Kemppi, E. & Yli-Ojanperä E., “Pride: ylpeästi omanlaisensa juhla”, *YLE Elävä arkisto*, published: 01.07.2010.

permission from the authorities.⁸ The Liberation Days movement promoted itself essentially as a protest march on behalf of the sexual minorities, battling for their civil rights.⁹ Despite difficulties members of the Finnish LGBTQ¹⁰ community faced in the society at that time, the impact of both Seta's and the Liberation Days' activities would become the beginning of something revolutionary in terms of building a more tolerant atmosphere for all Finnish citizens.

Towards the end of the first decade of the 2000s, the situation of sexual minorities and their rights had improved significantly. This process had begun in the 1990s, when the first conscious yet tentative steps toward reconstructing the public representation of sexual minorities had been taken, in hopes of garnering not only attention, but actual change upon the matter. The serenity, however, was shaken by the unexpected gas attacks against the Helsinki Pride parade in summer 2010, perpetrated by a group of homophobic extremists.¹¹ The news regarding the incident was widely broadcast in Finnish media and publically condemned by several political and public figures.¹² A week after the attacks, the national newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* still chose to commend the Finnish Pride festival over its reformed nature; how it had changed from a serious, politically inclined demonstration to a joyful carnival procession¹³ – all while unknown perpetrators had broken windows and drew a swastika on the front door of Seta's office the very same week.¹⁴

These attacks created new concerns in the Finnish LGBTQ community about their endangered public safety in Finnish society.¹⁵ Simultaneously, earlier victories and hard-earned tolerance seemed threatened, and the discussion around the LGBTQ

⁸ Juvonen 2015, 39.

⁹ Mustola 2007b, 25.

¹⁰ Abbreviation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer. For further details, see subchapter 1.4.

¹¹ Juvonen 2015, 160; Åberg, M. & Huhtanen, A. M., "Hyökkäys homojen kulkueeseen", *HS* 04.07.2010.

¹² See e.g., Åberg, M. & Huhtanen, A. M., "Hyökkäys homojen kulkueeseen", *HS* 04.07.2010; Seuri, V., "Pride on muuttunut mielenosoituksesta karnevaalikulkueeksi", *HS* 10.07.2010; Kaarto, H. & Lassy, J. M., "Homoviha kuumentaa päättäjiä", *HS* 10.07.2010; Hämäläinen, M., "Halonon ja Thors tuomitsivat iskun", *HS* 06.07.2010. Passi, M. & Peltomäki, T., "En uskalla enää kävellä käsi kädessä", *HS* 03.05.2011.

¹³ Seuri, V., "Pride on muuttunut mielenosoituksesta karnevaalikulkueeksi", *HS* 10.07.2010.

¹⁴ Kaarto, H. & Lassy, J. M., "Homoviha kuumentaa päättäjiä", *HS* 10.07.2010.

¹⁵ Åberg, M. & Huhtanen, A. M., "Hyökkäys homojen kulkueeseen", *HS* 04.07.2010; Kaarto, H. & Lassy, J. M., "Homoviha kuumentaa päättäjiä", *HS* 10.07.2010; Passi, M. & Peltomäki, T., "En uskalla enää kävellä käsi kädessä", *HS* 03.05.2011.

community once again turned political.¹⁶ Given this background, it is important to question and assess whether the changes towards a more tolerant and diverse society have truly been decisive, and to what extent the Finnish media shaped this historical process.

1.2. Research Questions

The aim of this thesis is to define as to how the Finnish media's representations of homosexuals changed between 1990 and 2010, and to investigate if these changes accurately reflect the attitudes and opinions of the Finnish society and population overall during this time period. I will put special emphasis in this work on the changes in attitudes concerning Helsinki Pride, as the event has an extensive history and role within the Finnish LGBTQ community, as well as the Finnish society and festival tradition. Not only has it established a prominent role as the alleged public face of Finnish sexual minorities, as defined and represented by the group themselves (by homosexuals for homosexuals), but also as a means for the Finnish sexual minorities to express themselves politically – challenging the established attitudes in the society, and demanding public space and visibility in addition to equality.

I will also scrutinise the political spheres of the event as well as the political activity of Seta, the representative organisation and public voice of the Finnish sexual minorities. This is because Helsinki Pride is undoubtedly the biggest publically visible product of the Finnish LGBTQ community's ambitions to establish a physical representation of sexual minorities on their own terms. Special emphasis will also be put on the political nature of not only Seta's activity, but the established political environment and discussion concerning sexual minorities in the Finnish society during this timespan.

Helsinki Pride changed between 1990 and 2010 from a minority group's sedate protest march to a publicly acknowledged and celebrated carnival. Thus, the aim with my study is to put these changes into a historical context and further examine and define this phenomenon, pinpointing any decisive chronological changes. As a

¹⁶ Takala, A., "Pride-isku politisoi homokeskustelun", *HS* 03.07.2011; Juvonen 2015, 160.

secondary objective I will be addressing the topic of how the Finnish media and public have perceived the festival, and if the event itself could have contributed to changing attitudes towards sexual minorities. *Visibility* is going to be an important keyword for my thesis and research process, to which this paper will pay special attention.

The time period between 1990 and 2010 is the time frame for my work, with the majority of my research literature and primary sources under consideration dating back to this period. Many of the political discussions and conversations emphasised in the media date back to this time period as well. Upon closer examination, earlier periods such as the span between 1960s and 1980s have already been quite extensively studied from different perspectives, mainly a Queer and Gender Studies approach. In other words, my chosen time frame has not been under a large a focus, earlier decades have, either from a historical nor queer studies research perspective. Apart from this, several of the changes concerning both Helsinki Pride and Finnish sexual minorities have taken place during these two chosen decades, not least in the sense of visibility.

As the topic of sexual minorities itself is vast, I have chosen to focus mainly on homosexual men (gay men) and women (lesbian women) for my study. This is because sources pertaining to these groups are most frequently referred to and emphasised in my research material. They do not, by any means, represent the entire spectrum of the Finnish sexual minorities as such – the LGBTQ community is by no means a homogenous group, but these limitations will help keep the scope of this work within proportion.

Although the past few decades have spurred other Finnish cities into action in order to organise their own local Pride festivals, this research emphasises the role of Helsinki Pride in my research, as it was the first official Finnish festival for sexual minorities, and because most of the research material is specifically related to Helsinki Pride. Pride festivals in other cities will still be included in order to better illustrate the extent of the Finnish media's and population's views on sexual minorities and how these have affected the LGBTQ community, particularly if these events incorporate some of the phenomena and subjects this study is interested in.

Despite sexual minorities being the key focus of study in this thesis, particularly in association with Helsinki Pride, this thesis will not examine sexuality and gender any further in than within the given context of my work. Although this paper does not argue for sexuality being a construction, it will argue that Helsinki Pride used sexuality and sexual orientation as a the foundation stone for the event, with the image of Pride being consciously and carefully constructed to further certain agendas and to meet the needs of the Finnish LGBTQ community.

Seta will also have a prominent role in this work, as it has been a defining factor and founder of Helsinki Pride, and has otherwise actively been involved with matters concerning sexual minorities throughout Finnish history. Although this analysis will incorporate concepts related to queer studies for some of its theoretical framework in order to further the contextualisation of this thesis, this research will not be conducted from a queer study perspective, but a historical one. This paper will return to the topic and definition of sexual minorities and queer theory along with ensuing terminology with greater detail in subchapter 1.4.

1.3. Methodology and Sources

Methodologically, I am going to use qualitative research methods, in order to extract the maximum revealing information from my material. My primary sources for this work consists of newspaper, tabloid and magazine articles and clippings referencing notions of homosexuals and Helsinki Pride from *Helsingin Sanomat*, and others, from the period of 1990-2010. These can be found and accessed at Seta's archives, which are part of the broader infrastructure of the Labour Archives and only accessible through a permit granted by the organisation (Seta ry). Seta has collected and compiled these by using the services of media survey companies, which have thus stored away all newspaper material concerning sexual minorities – abroad and on a domestically. Because this archive exhaustively documents everything from the years in question, and includes search words and tags like “homosexual”/”lesbian”/”sexual minorities”, it provides an extensive insight into the Finnish media's representations of homosexuality.

The Finnish media, with newspapers as the dominating factor, has had a very important role in the everyday life of the Finnish citizen – most notably in the role in shaping opinions, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Newspapers, although officially impartial and unaffiliated with specific political parties or views, might still unknowingly reflect a certain stance on contemporary events and news. Although the aim of my study is not to map out the percentage of readers holding a given position on Finnish sexual minorities, it is good to keep in mind the wide readership of *Helsingin Sanomat*, if only for generalisation. *Helsingin Sanomat* maintains a vast and extensive level of influence in Finland, which further explains why its editorial positions can affect such a large proportion of the population. This influence has social consequences whether the readers of *Helsingin Sanomat* support or reject the information presented by the newspaper.

I have chosen *Helsingin Sanomat* as my primary source because as Finland's biggest daily newspaper it can offer valuable insight, especially in the early 1990's, before the rise of the Internet and the media shift toward online news advertisement. Although much of the important material has increasingly moved online within the past ten years, this study focuses on published newspaper articles. In addition to *Helsingin Sanomat*, I will use other newspapers and tabloid to further expand this thesis and complement the material on the media's representations of homosexuals. This paper endeavours to use the material in a nuanced manner in order to gain a complete picture of the entire country's and society's ideas-- not only the views created and supported in southern Finland and Helsinki, where news has most likely travelled faster and changes emerged swifter, because capital-centred material has often been considered the most prominent. Also of interest is how reforms and changes beginning in the south have travelled through the Finnish media and press to the northern parts of the country, and what the impact and effects have been locally.

Because of the arguments above, this research also includes newspapers from central and northern Finland such as *Lapin Kansa*, *Jakobstads tidning* and *Vasabladet*, in order to pinpoint the attitudes and mentalities in these areas. Even prominent newspapers from cities neighbouring Helsinki, such as *Turun Sanomat (TS)* are included in the repertoire of material for this thesis, along with tabloids such as *Ilta-Sanomat*, *Ilta-Lehti* and *SE!*. The latter will hopefully offer interesting perspectives because of their less formal nature and approaches to contemporary events and news.

The provocative and even politically incorrect positions of the tabloids, and their manners of approach may also reveal something of the attitudes and mentalities of the public and society from this time.

1.4. Key Concepts and Definitions

To begin with, “sexual minorities” is a vast umbrella term for several different, smaller groups and categories, and the definitions have been known to constantly change and evolve. In order to better comprehend the nature of this study and the problems that may emerge in the process, it is imperative to try to define the concept of sexual minorities along with other important key definitions and concepts. It is impossible not to mention *Queer Studies* and *Queer Theory* in relation to the topic of this study, despite queer theory not being the present method of analysis. Queer studies have also made an important impact not only on the sexual minorities and communities in Finland and Helsinki, but also on Helsinki Pride – not least as a visible product of Seta’s activities and ambitions.

Although this thesis will be focusing mainly on homosexual men and women – occasionally calling them ‘sexual minorities’ as a collective group, it is important to distinguish the different operators which fall under the vast umbrella term of *sexual minorities*. Usually when talking about this group within queer studies, it consists of following categories: lesbian (women), gay (men), bisexual, transgender and queer, more commonly abbreviated as LGBTQ.¹⁷ In addition, the abbreviation has recently grown into LGBTIQ, including intersex among the five earlier included groups of people.

The history of queer studies and queer theory is relatively novel – the first notions of the concepts and ideas that would coalesce into Queer Studies surfaced in connection to 1960s radicalism, as ‘Gay and Lesbian Studies’, alongside the gay and lesbian liberation movements and emerging feminist theories and women’s right

¹⁷ Cook & Evans 2014, 1.

movements.¹⁸ In the 1970s, the progress within feminist theory reshaped the field of gay and lesbian studies, and demands to separate the two fields were vocalised. The main focus of gay and lesbian studies was to make the experiences and history of homosexual men and women visible.¹⁹ The term ‘queer’, originally a derogatory label, was reclaimed by sexual minorities as a positive definition and term in the 1990s,²⁰ and preceded to become an academically legitimate definition.²¹ ‘Queer theory’ also appeared on the research field in the 1990s, and the contributions made in the name of queer studies from this time are notable, with Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick as pioneers.²² The 1990s and 2000s were also productive times for queer researchers in Finland – the beginning of the 1990s marked an important period for Gender Studies in Finland, as the Gender Studies department and the Cristina Institute for Women’s Studies²³ were founded at Helsinki University in 1991.²⁴

Sex, gender, and sexuality also play an important role in queer theory and the comprehension of sexual categorisation. As of recently, the key concepts above have been defined in the following fashion: sex personifies most often the biological sex, whereas gender is defined as the social and cultural gender a person identifies with.²⁵ Within women’s studies *sexuality* is defined by both corporeal desire and sexual fantasies, as well as the power structures that define them. It is fairly normal within this concept of sexuality to emphasise the sex of both the object of desire as well as the recipient; through sexual orientation among other means. Despite this notion, it is not impossible to unravel the connection between sexuality and sex/gender, since sexuality does not necessarily have to be linked to a human recipient.²⁶ Researcher and queer theorist Leena-Maija Rossi also emphasises that sex, gender and sexuality should not only be analysed as qualities or definitions related to humans, but also as

¹⁸ Hekanaho 2010, 146.

¹⁹ Hekanaho 2010, 147.

²⁰ Aldrich 2006, 12.

²¹ Haggerty & McGarry 2007, 1.

²² Hekanaho 2010, 146; Juvonen 2002, 27; Kekki 1999, 205.

²³ In the beginning of 2010 the Christina Institute changed its name to *Gender studies* from *Women’s studies* as a result of a merging with the Department of Philosophy, History, Culture and Art Studies.

²⁴ Helsinki University Gender Studies web page, <http://www.helsinki.fi/genderstudies/about/index.html>, last seen 11.04.2016

²⁵ Juvonen & Rossi & Saresma 2010, 12.

²⁶ Juvonen & Rossi & Saresma 2010, 13.

power relations, hierarchies or systems. However, sex/gender and sexuality are prone to historical changes and redefinitions, whenever the definitions for these change.²⁷

The concept of power is also important to queer studies, and it personifies itself in the different aspects of the Pride festival tradition, where the focus is also on gaining power and reinstating it. French philosopher Michel Foucault's (1926-1984) work and theories on sexuality and power, mainly derived from his work *The History of Sexuality*²⁸, has affected queer studies and theories extensively.²⁹ Foucault's influence on queer studies has also influenced the study of sexuality within this field of study, as researchers have started analysing sexuality and the accommodating and deterring qualities it has in different forms and guises of power.³⁰

Although queer theory cannot directly define or explain homosexuality, according to researcher Tuula Juvonen, it can characterise notions upon which homosexuality is constructed.³¹ Queer theory has also been the object of much criticism, with accusations decrying its perspectives as predominantly white, middle-class and academic within the queer research field.³²

Heteronormativity is also an important term, referring to a concept where the main assumption is that all individuals and their actions and purposes are viewed as heterosexual, and that the heterosexual hegemony is regarded as the ideal and norm.³³ Society is largely built upon these notions and reinforces its hegemony of heteronormativity through everyday means, such as advertisement (with most advertising activities depicting heterosexual citizens and catering to them).³⁴ Based on the descriptions above, this thesis argues that Finnish society is largely built upon this concept, which makes the existence and need for an event such as Helsinki Pride even more imperative for the sexual minorities. Researcher Yolanda Dreyer boldly remarks that: "heteronormativity enhances homophobia",³⁵ a claim whose validity can be critically discussed and assessed in relation to the Pride Festival and Helsinki

²⁷ Rossi 2010, 22-23.

²⁸ *L'Histoire de la sexualité*, Foucault 1978.

²⁹ Juvonen 2002, 27.

³⁰ Rossi 2010, 22-23.

³¹ Juvonen 2002, 29.

³² Hekanaho 2010, 147-148.

³³ Hekanaho 2010, 149; Barker 2007, 97.

³⁴ Rossi 2006, 20.

³⁵ Dreyer 2007, 2.

Pride. The Pride festival tradition has indeed surfaced to defy the idea of a heterosexual hegemony and heteronormative society, wherein homosexuals have been discriminated against and thus need the representation and visibility for which the festival stands. For this study, the concept of heteronormativity is examined in order to better illustrate and define the scenery, both urban and theoretical, from which Helsinki Pride has emerged and evolved.

1.5. Previous Research

A big focus in this study will be placed on Helsinki Pride's role in the Finnish media and vice versa – how both parties have influenced each other. I am going to observe the attitudes and opinions on Helsinki Pride in newspaper articles from *Helsingin Sanomat* within the given time frame of this work; 1990-2010. This paper will consider how Helsinki Pride is depicted and described by this newspaper and what kind of news related to the event surfaces most often.

The topic of homosexuality in the Finnish society has been widely studied from different aspects and perspectives, which is why this approach and topic were selected based on the recommendation of academic researcher, Docent and University Lecturer Tuula Juvonen from Tampere University. Most of the studies and research conducted on homosexuality and sexual minorities in Finland have mainly been related to Gender and Queer studies. This perspective differs quite significantly from the current approach, as this paper intends to conduct its analysis on historical grounds with both the Finnish media's and the LGBTQ population's perspectives and agendas in mind. Master theses and doctoral dissertations with different perspectives on Finnish Queer studies and the everyday lives of sexual minorities have been popular, among them Annika Malkavaara's *Nuori kapinallinen: suomalaisen queer-tutkimuksen varhaisvuodet*³⁶, Jukka Lehtonen's *Seksuaalisuus ja sukupuoli koulussa : Näkökulmana heteronormatiivisuus ja ei-heteroseksuaalisten nuorten kertomukset*³⁷,

³⁶ Malkavaara 2009.

³⁷ Lehtonen 2003.

Maija Lähteenmäki's *Samaa sukupuolta olevien avioliiton queer-kritiikki*³⁸ and Anna Moring's *Oudot perheet : Normeja ja ihanteita 2000-luvun Suomessa*.³⁹ Three of these aforementioned works have in common the experiences of LGBTQ members in the Finnish society, and the impact sexual orientation has in the everyday life of these minorities. Although these do not directly analyse the media's interpretations and representations of sexual minorities, they endeavour to highlight the Finnish media's and society's impact on established norms and approved ideals against which the very existence of said minority groups are judged.

Research on the representation of sexual minorities in the Finnish media has been somewhat limited, despite the vast array of potential material and sources. This is both problematic because of sparse existing groundwork, and beneficial because it allows flexibility in the scope of the present work. Nina Ylinen has chosen to focus on the representations on transgender individuals in Finnish newspapers in her master's thesis in journalism, *Poikatyöt, itkevät transut ja onnellisen virkanaiset. Sukupuolivähemmistöjen representaatiot suomalaisissa sanomalehdissä*.⁴⁰ As this thesis focuses on homosexual men and women, the existence of work such as Ylinen's is of utmost importance in terms of mapping out the representation of sexual minorities in the Finnish media, and the status of neglected or oppressed social groups in Finnish society.

Much of this research above has been conducted within the past two decades, and also focuses on the very same period of study as this work does, which also has helped to narrow the direction and themes in terms of this study. These aforementioned works above have focused on Finnish sexual minorities from different perspectives, and with a focus on particular phenomena and cases prevalent in the Finnish LGBTQ history. The present work aims to create a more general and comprehensive interpretation of not only the Finnish media's representation of sexual minorities and how these have historically affected contemporary attitudes, but also the extent to which the Finnish LGBTQ community's activities and efforts have acquired recognition and acceptance.

An especially important piece of research literature for this work is Kati Mustola's and Johanna Pakkanen's *Sateenkaari-Suomi. Seksuaali- ja sukupuolivähemmistöjen*

³⁸ Lähteenmäki 2013.

³⁹ Moring 2013.

⁴⁰ Ylinen 2015.

historiaa,⁴¹ where the authors map the extensive history of Finnish sexual minorities from the 17th century to the 21st Century. Tuula Juvonen's doctoral dissertation *Varjoelämää ja julkisia salaisuuksia*⁴² also offers good approaches to attitudes displayed towards homosexuals in relation to both public and clandestine life, lifestyles and the construction of homosexuality in Finland after the Second World War up until the 2000s. The presence of political power and influences in relation to the Finnish queer community are an essential part of this thesis, and so Juvonen's other work, *Kaapista kaapin päälle*,⁴³ as an important source and approach on the topic. It thoroughly covers homosexuality in a political context and sphere in the Finnish society from late 1960s to 2010s. Additionally, it contributes to many crucial aspects and themes not only directly related to this of study, but in terms of the development of the political atmosphere in the Finnish society during these decades in general.

The political aspects are very much integrated into the gay and queer culture ever since the 1960s and the rise of gay activism. Gay theorist David M. Halperin has acknowledged and demonstrated different political and social aspects and the history of gay culture with its rise and alleged fall in his work *How to be Gay*⁴⁴ and *Gay Shame*.⁴⁵ These helped to position and chart the extent of gay culture and the political means homosexual individuals have exploited into in order to create a social genealogy and hegemony of their own. Communities, whether imagined or officially legitimate, along with the notion of traditions play an important part in the construction and sustenance of gay culture, and on these topics Eric Hobsbawm's *The Invention of Tradition*⁴⁶ and Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*⁴⁷ offered important insight and contextualisation.

Studies and surveys focusing on different Queer Pride festivals have been conducted extensively in both Australia and New Zealand, including works such as Lynda T.

⁴¹ Mustola & Pakkanen (eds.) 2007.

⁴² Juvonen 2002.

⁴³ Juvonen 2015.

⁴⁴ Halperin 2012.

⁴⁵ Halperin & Traub (eds.) 2009.

⁴⁶ Hobsbawm & Ranger (eds.) 2004

⁴⁷ Anderson 2006.

Johnston's, *Queering Tourism: Paradoxical Performances of Gay Pride Parades*⁴⁸, Kewin Markwell's and Gordon Waitt's Festival's, *Space and Sexuality: Gay Pride in Australia*⁴⁹, Jodie Taylor's *Festivalizing Sexuality: Discourses of 'Pride', Counter-discourse of Shame*⁵⁰ and Steven M. Kates' and Russel W. Belk's *The Meanings of Lesbian and Gay Pride Day. Resistance through Consumption and Resistance to Consumption*⁵¹. These have offered great insight on the concept of carnivalisation and commercialism as political tools for Pride events. Despite the main focus of these works being the Pride events in Australia and New Zealand, they still present a good approach of the topic in general. Although tourism and advertisement are not directly among the main topics of research within this work, they still represent an important part of the Helsinki Pride, especially with the escalating focal point of carnivalism the event has taken.

⁴⁸ Johnston 2005.

⁴⁹ Markwell & Waitt 2009.

⁵⁰ Taylor 2014.

⁵¹ Kates & Belk 2001.

2. VISIBILITY, PRIDE AND PREJUDICES

2.1. Legitimation through Visibility

”When homosexuality has ceased to be a problem, it does not need to be discussed publicly anymore”

This particular statement in the *SETA* magazine from 1975⁵² succinctly summarises the grounds from which the Finnish LGBTQ community’s ambitions to alter the prevalent representations of sexual minorities rose. It also illustrates the society at the time, where homosexuality was considered a complicated subject in the public discourse and a problematic topic altogether. Nevertheless, being included in the public discussion provided homosexuals and other members of the sexual minorities firm grounds for public visibility and thus, *existence*, in the Finnish society.

Although attitudes towards sexual minorities had changed significantly towards more progressive ones in comparison to earlier decades, the late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s still marked a period of transition concerning the public attitudes and representations of sexual minorities.⁵³ Both international changes and news concerning depictions of homosexuals also affected the social environment and the Finnish society’s existing representations, as most of the news from abroad quickly travelled to Finland and was discussed in the media.

The global crisis centring on HIV and the fear of AIDS advanced to Finland in the early 1980s; in summer 1983 the first HIV case was discovered in Helsinki, which unleashed a countrywide surge of panic and anxiety.⁵⁴ The impact of the events and its subsequent reactions effectively stigmatised homosexuals alongside drug abusers,⁵⁵ labelling them dangerous in the eyes of the public.⁵⁶ This proceeded to

⁵² Leader, *SETA* 2/1975, 3. Org. statement: "Kun homoseksuaalisuus on lakannut olemasta ongelma, siitä ei enää tarvitse puhua julkisuudessa".

⁵³ Åberg, L. K., "Seta on soluttautunut oikeusministeriöön", *Ylioppilaslehti* 7/1990; Juvonen 2015, 40-44.

⁵⁴ Paulavaara, P., "Vaarilla on hiv", *HS* 18.1.2014; Piironen H., Järvi. A & Nikkanen, H., "Kesä 1983", *HS* 30.06.2013; Juvonen 2015, 40-42; Sykkö, S., "Ei meidän tautimme", *HS* 30.11.2003.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Piironen H., Järvi. A & Nikkanen, H., "Kesä 1983", *HS* 30.06.2013; Malkavaara, L., "Retki aidsin sivuraiteille", *Kuukausiliite* 20/1990.

further complicate the present negative public image sexual minorities endured. Members of Seta feared that AIDS, named “the gay disease” (*homotauti*) and “gay plague” (*homorutto*) by the public and press,⁵⁷ would negatively affect the progress Finnish sexual minorities had managed to secure so far – that despite the recent establishment of a more tolerant atmosphere, the persecution of homosexuals would begin anew. Homosexuality had not been widely addressed in public until that moment and the headlines of newspapers quickly associated the lethal disease with homosexuality, as a result of the news of the first AIDS patient leaking out to the press, leaving Seta to deal with the aftermath of the chaotic situation.⁵⁸ The heated discussion on AIDS continued in the press and in the Finnish media far into the 1990s, where it was covered by the several newspapers and periodicals with varying attitudes towards homosexuals in relation to the subject.⁵⁹ Many of these articles about HIV/AIDS aimed to civilise and educate their readers on the matter without deliberately stigmatising homosexuals, by offering methods in order to avoid infection and suggesting best practises of care for those having contracted the disease.⁶⁰

The decriminalisation of homosexuality and the removal of homosexuality from the official register of mental illnesses did not end the discrimination towards members of sexual minorities, which continued far into the 1990s. The Finnish student newspaper, *Ylioppilaslehti*, emphasised the problematic situation in Finnish society in a few extensive articles in an issue from 1990, speaking out in favour of sexual minorities.⁶¹ In 1971 the so-called “Encouragement Act” (*kehotuskielto*) had been added to the clause on the law on indecent behaviour, which banned public encouragement of same-sex acts and homosexual behaviour, thus effectively criminalising them.⁶²

⁵⁷ Juvonen 2015, 40; Jämsä, J., ”HI-virus yhä vain homotauti?”, *HS* 19.06.1995; Sykkö, S., ”Ei meidän tautimme”, *HS* 30.11.2003.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ See: eg. Hentilä, J., ”Välinpitämättömyys pahasta”, *Kansan Uutiset* 20.10.1990; Malkavaara, L., ”Retki aidsin sivuraiteille”, *Kuukausiliite* 20/1990; Tuomi, O., ”Valistusta tv-ohjelmien kautta. Aids ei ole homosairaus”, *Katso* 16.09.1990; Kauppi, J., ”Asiallinen valistus tartuntamäärää tärkeämpi”, *Etelä-Suomen Sanomat* 18.07.1990; Koski, A. ”Brittiprofessori Peter Aggleton: Aids on myös politiikkaa”, *Kansan Uutiset* 14.06.1990.

⁶⁰ See e.g. Sandström, T., ”Ge aids ett ansikte”, *Västra Nyland* 05.01.1990; STT, ”Odottavilta äideiltä löytyi viisi hiv-tartuntaa”, *HS* 21.02.1994; Höysti, M., ”Aidsin vaara koskee monia”, *HS* 14.02.1995; Lehtonen, J., ”Hiv-valistus kouluopetukseen”, *HS* 01.12.1998.

⁶¹ Åberg, L. K., ”Seta on soluttautunut oikeusministeriöön”; Grundström, E., ”Kastroidut”; Naskali, E., ”Castroidut”, *Ylioppilaslehti* 7/1990.

⁶² Rydström & Mustola 2007, 35.

Additionally, the age of consent was set higher for homosexual, same-sex acts (18 years) in comparison to heterosexual acts (16 years).⁶³ Both of these penal codes were effective until 1999, when they were abolished – with Finland as the last Scandinavian country to fully dissolve all of laws of discrimination towards homosexuals.⁶⁴ This severely deterred the representation of homosexuality in general, least not publically, and especially hampered the introduction of members of sexual minorities in a more positive context. Radio and television programmes containing material intended to portray homosexuality were banned and cancelled on the juridical grounds in reference to the Encouragement Act. It effectively dismissed everything and anything, which could be considered presenting homosexuality in a positive notion.⁶⁵

The author of the article “Seta on soluttautunut oikeusministeriöön”,⁶⁶ Leena-Kaisa Åberg, emphasises that “homosexuality is a tender topic for the political parties” and that the Nordic Council as well as the European Council had been pressuring Finland into abolishing the discriminatory laws, as well as to standardise its statutes to the level of other Nordic countries. In the same article, Åberg also highlights the current regulation at the time, which enabled discrimination towards homosexuals – especially in the working life and professional environments. Discrimination in professional context was an ever-present threat for a member of the sexual minorities: a homosexual man or woman could easily be fired on the grounds of their sexual orientation. Homosexuality as a “career-destroying secret” and the fear of being found out had been constant threats and sources of stress for homosexuals, even in countries like the United States. Although 1990s the American society was further ahead in matters related to gay rights in comparison to Finland, or at least consciously advertised a more positive public representation of homosexual individuals, the situation was different behind the façade.⁶⁷

The role of religion in the public discussion about sexual minorities was still quite strong in the 1990s, especially in terms of homosexuality. Despite most of the

⁶³ Rydström & Mustola 2007, 35, 39; Mustola 2007a, 241.

⁶⁴ Rydström & Mustola 2007, 35; Mustola 2007a, 237-238, 242.

⁶⁵ Åberg, L. K., “Seta on soluttautunut oikeusministeriöön”, *Ylioppilaslehti* 7/1990; Mustola 2007a, 238.

⁶⁶ *Ylioppilaslehti* 7/1990.

⁶⁷ Stewart, T. A., “Gay in Corporate America”, *Fortune* 16.12.1991, 30.

newspapers having taken a rather neutral, progressive and even at times positive approach to the topic, the negative comments and attitudes stemmed primarily from members of the Finnish church. These negative and disapproving attitudes were not only tangible in articles on and interviews with members of the church,⁶⁸ but were also notable in many of the letters to the editor on the Opinion Pages of several newspapers, e.g. *Helsingin Sanomat*.⁶⁹ Something akin to a war of words recurred at regular intervals – especially during the 1990s,⁷⁰ concerning homosexuality, the church, and the connection between these two components.

The church has always had a deep impact on the Finnish societal progress and on discussion concerning homosexuals and other sexual minorities, not least historically.⁷¹ The Finnish church still favoured generally conservative views on sexuality in the 1990s, and even at the beginning of the 2000s,⁷² which also further complicated any potential change in attitudes. Despite this, this work has purposefully chosen not to focus too intently on this topic, since several theses and other work have been written with a focus on the religious aspects of this topic.⁷³ In most cases of negative attitudes towards homosexuals in the Finnish press and media, the opinions stemmed from persons with a profoundly religious inclination, as well as from individuals who often lived further away from the more-progressive capital.⁷⁴

Despite reforms to the Finnish criminal in 1995, with an Employment Contracts Act included in 2001 to ban all discrimination against an employee based of his/her sexual

⁶⁸ See: e.g., Tukkimäki, P., "Piispat eivät halua muuttu seksiopetuksen peruslinjoja", *HS* 16.09.1993; Patana, A., L., "Kirkon perinne ja Raamattu eri linjoilla seksiasioissa", *TS* 26.09.1993; Mäkisalo, M., "Valheellisuus synty, ei homous?", *HS* 28.07.1997;

⁶⁹ See: e.g., Huotari, P., "MIKSI? Pitäisikö homojen erota kirkosta?", *HS* 26.11.1990; Hentilä, J., "On oikeus elää laatunsa mukaan", *HS* 08.01.1993; Molari, J., "Sairas ympäristö tarvitsee moraalia", *HS* 19.01.1993; Lehtikuusi, H., "Homo- ja heterorakkaus ovat yhtä arvokkaita", *HS* 03.03.1996; Kankaanniemi, T., "Jorma Hentilä harhailee", *HS* 29.03.1996.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Miettinen, J., "Yhdestoista käsky: Älä makaa miehenpuolen kanssa", *HS* 01.08.1993; Ripatti, M., "Asiaa Raamatun homokuvasta", *HS* 07.05.1994.

⁷² Partanen, A., "Vaikein niistä on rakkaus", *HS* 03.03.2002.

⁷³ See: e.g., Pitkälä 2013, *Uskonnon ja homoseksuaalisuuden jaakobinpaini valtamediassa. Ajankohtaisen kakkosen Homoilta julkisen keskustelun areenana evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon homoliittokiistassa*; Järviö 2012, *PERVO KIRKKO? Queer-teologia Suomen ja Ruotsin evankelis-luterilaisten kirkkojen homoseksuaalisuutta käsittelevissä lausunnoissa vuosina 1951–2010*; Lumikallio 2007, *Kristillis-psykoanalyttinen eheytysideologia: Analyysi ei-uskonnollisista argumenteista*.

⁷⁴ See e.g., Kangosjärvi, J., "Arkkipiispa kehottaa kirkkoa muuttamaan asennetta homoihin", *HS* 07.05.1993; Jalovaara 2014, V., *Paasikiven diktaattista homoiltaan – Suomen luterilainen kirkko ja seksuaalietiikan murrosvuodet*, 44, 46-47, 51.

orientation,⁷⁵ the aspect of homosexuality as an unsuitable trait in a working environment was still very much a problem in the 2000s. The Finnish working world flared up fully over the case of Johanna Korhonen, the newly appointed editor-in-chief of newspaper Lapin Kansa who was fired before even stepping into her new position in the autumn of 2008.⁷⁶ Although the official statement did not admit to it, Korhonen believed that she was fired on the grounds of her homosexuality and sued the Alma Media and its CEO for discrimination, and eventually won the case. Korhonen believed that her being openly lesbian, living in a civil union with another, politically active woman, led to her discharge.⁷⁷ It is indeed possible to believe that attitudes towards sexual minorities in northern Finland were slow to change, and that the notion of a renowned, openly lesbian individual in a powerful or otherwise visible position, as a representative of the society, was still uncommon and perceived as abnormal. Such an argument is supported by the statement of Heikki Tuomi-Nikula, the editor-in-chief of Lapin Kansa at the time of the incident with Korhonen. Tuomi-Nikula stated that it would have been exceedingly difficult for an openly homosexual person to work in a chief position such as the chief-in-editor for Lapin Kansa and in northern Finland in general.⁷⁸

Prior to the Helsinki Pride festival in 2009, a lesbian woman declared how sexual minorities were still discriminated in the working environment, as she had been told that she “does not fit into the image of company” she worked for and was fired as a result.⁷⁹ The article also explored the discrimination against sexual minorities in the working world as a wider phenomenon, which had not been given a more prominent

⁷⁵ Mustola 2007a, 243.

⁷⁶ Lindfors, J., “Johanna Korhoselle potkut Lapin Kansasta”, *YLE Elävä Arkisto*, published: 01.10.2008, <http://yle.fi/aihe/artikkeli/2008/10/02/johanna-korhoselle-potkut-lapin-kansasta>, last seen 11.04.2016.

⁷⁷ Vihavainen, S., “Alma Median toimitusjohtaja tuomittiin työsyrjinnästä”, *HS* 28.01.2013; Ämmälä, A., “Korkein oikeus kohotti sakkoja Johanna Korhosen työsyrjinnässä – “Olen valtavan tyytyväinen”, *HS* 10.06.2015.

⁷⁸ “Poliisi ei tutki Tuomi-Nikulan lausuntoa”, *YLE*, published: 07.10.2008, http://yle.fi/uutiset/poliisi_ei_tutki_tuomi-nikulan_lausuntoa/6114121, last seen 11.04.2016; “Tuomi-Nikulan puheista tutkintapyyntö – toimitus vaatii päätoimittajan eroa”, *YLE Uutiset*, published: 03.10.2008, http://yle.fi/uutiset/tuomi-nikulan_puheista_tutkintapyynto_-_toimitus_vaatii_paatoimittajan_eroa/6113590, last seen 11.04.2016.

⁷⁹ Lappalainen, E., “Lesbo ei kelvannut työntajalle”, *HS* 19.06.2009.

public face or acknowledgement until the case with Johanna Korhonen a year prior. Although cases like these are in no sense unique, the dearth of similar cases in the media proves that many homosexuals – like the lesbian woman in the article, rather remain silent about their treatment for fear of losing any future work opportunities.⁸⁰ Researcher Jukka Lehtonen has written an extensive report on the reception of and attitudes toward sexual minorities in their professional lives and in different working environments. Lehtonen concludes that members of sexual minorities are met with discrimination in the job application process as well as in the working environment, and that many employers are blind to or ignorant of the occurring discrimination.⁸¹ All of this illustrates that attitudes towards homosexuals in the working world were slow to change and respond to reforms, and that the ideas about gays and lesbians held by many employers and companies were decidedly negative; homosexuals were labelled as inappropriate representatives of the company or the enterprise.

In terms of wider representations and visibility, Elina Grundström states unapologetically in the article “Kastroidut” from the same issue of the student paper aforementioned,⁸² that “homosexuality is still castrated. It lacks “a history and an identity”, which still defined the notion of homosexuality in 1990. Despite having achieved greater freedom and rights than before, as a Finnish citizen, the public visibility of the Finnish sexual minorities was still notably minimal at this time. Nevertheless, topics related to homosexuality and sexual minorities were present in the Finnish press constantly from the beginning of the 1990s, even in regard to foreign news; progress concerning homosexuals abroad was widely discussed in newspapers.⁸³ Even tabloids and magazines frequently featured headlines related to homosexuality and sexual minorities, particularly popular tabloids such as *Iltalehti* and *Ilta-Sanomat*.⁸⁴

Normality and its status among the homosexual population is a topic that Grundström illustrates in the aforementioned article through the interaction with researcher Olli

⁸⁰ Lappalainen, E., “Lesbo ei kelvannut työntajalle”, *HS* 19.06.2009.

⁸¹ See Lehtonen 2002.

⁸² *Ylioppilaslehti* 7/1990.

⁸³ See: eg. “Bråk om stödet för aidscentral”, *Hbl* 15.03.1991; “Turun Seta tutki homomyönteisyyden”, *TS* 14.03.1991; Hentilä, J. : Homoja ei hemmotella vaalilupauksilla, *HS* 24.2.1991.

⁸⁴ See: eg. “Seksuaalivähemmistö löytäny rohkeutensa. Lesboäiti pyrkii kansanedustajaksi,” *Iltalehti* 16.03.1991; “Hentilä arvosteli Ilaskiven suhdetta vähemmistöihin”, *IS* 14.03.1991.

Stålström – the latter admitting, that much of the research conducted on the biological essence of homosexuality has primarily focused on normalisation and equalisation through comparison with the heterosexual main population. Stålström reassures that research has taken a direction towards the definition of homosexuality, focusing rather on what it *is* instead of pinpointing what it is *not*. This is possibly a radical thought, as the history of the Finnish sexual minorities has predominately focused on equalising the homosexual population with the heterosexual.⁸⁵

This impression of assimilation is, however, something that keeps surfacing in the conversations revolving around the topic of homosexuality. It can be seen as a dividing factor, splitting the LGBTQ community into two separate groups: those wanting to assimilate with the heterosexual majority – in order to be recognised as ‘normal’ citizens and thus undeniably receive equal rights with these, and those opposing assimilation with the (heterosexual) majority and their prevalent concept of normal – yet hoping to lead a life equal to the majority’s.⁸⁶ During the Helsinki Pride festivals 2007 and 2008 open criticism against this kind of assimilation and equalisation with the heterosexual population surfaced more visibly than before with the actions and presence of the Pink Black Block, a politically radical, sexual anarchist group at the Pride Parade.⁸⁷ Although the group’s methods and approach received criticism from other Pride parade participants and from the organisers of the parade,⁸⁸ the incidents prove that open criticism against the gay community’s ideologies and approaches was still, if not more than ever, an open topic of discussion.

In terms of normality, the Finnish media’s approach started leaning considerably towards firm categorisation and labelling during the beginning of the 1990s. Although the importance of remaining current with international news and the newest contemporary phenomena was imperative to the Finnish media, categorisation and prejudices still affected the broadcast topics, especially those of a more unusual

⁸⁵ Aronen, E.K., “Homo!”, *Kuukausiliite* 6/1990, HS, 16.06.1990, 18, 20-22.

⁸⁶ Ibid; Lähteenmäki 2013, 14-15; Saarinen 1991, 41-42; Nurmi, J., “Homot ja lesbot ovat kyllästyneet mielistelemään heteromaailmaa”, *HS* 23.10.1991.

⁸⁷ Lähteenmäki 2013, 1; Svartström, A., “Prideparad kan bli våldsam”, *Hbl* 29.06.2008.

⁸⁸ Hannula, T., “Sateenkaariväki marssi kohti yhdenvertaisuutta”, *HS* 01.07.2007; Pajari, K., “Helsinki Priden järjestäjät huolestuivat polttopullouhkauksista”, *HS* 28.06.2008; Huhtanen, J., “Mustat anarkistit värittivät sateenkaarimarssia”, *HS* 29.06.2008; Svartström, A., “Prideparad kan bli våldsam”, *Hbl* 29.06.2008.

nature. Concisely, everything new which deviated from the mass population's interests and the publicly accepted perspectives was instantly labelled as peculiar, often with a certain sensational value and novelty, such as sadomasochism. Although topics such as these seem more related to sexual habits and/or preferences than to sexual orientation according to the current mentality, such topics were heavily related to unusual sexual traits and practises back in the 1990s. Homosexuals and transgender individuals, amongst others, belonged entirely to this category. In most of the newspaper articles from the 1990s mentioning sadomasochism and bondage, homosexuality is always present and mentioned in the same context.⁸⁹ In her Master's thesis, *Samaa sukupuolta olevien avioliiton queer-kritiikki*,⁹⁰ Maija Lähteenmäki defines the concepts of *normal* and *normality* as culturally bound notions and products of people's definitions, with abnormal as the absolute counterpart.⁹¹ This interpretation is but a small segment of the much larger difficulty presented by the concepts of normal/abnormal and their effect on the surrounding culture and population. Like the writer of an opinion piece in *Helsingin Sanomat* concludes, "culture cannot prevail without influences and the minorities who produce these".⁹² With such a mentality in mind, it is possible to see how the society separated homosexuals, along with other minorities, as differing from the established norm of normal into the counterpart of abnormal and different.

Public attempts to develop towards a more positive and unprejudiced representation of homosexuals occurred to some extent in the 1990s. On 18th of August 1990, Seta organised the Liberation Days event outside of Helsinki for the first time, in the neighbouring city of Turku,⁹³ where four gay activists campaigned publicly against the Encouragement Act and the ensuing penal code effective. The stunt itself included public encouragement to acts of homosexuality through verbal slogans and written signs, hoping to raise awareness and attention to the cause.⁹⁴ After the stunt, the four activists reported themselves to the police in hope of facing legal proceedings and a

⁸⁹ Nykänen, A. S., "Sadomasokismi on vallatonta valtapeliä", *HS* 30.03.1990.

⁹⁰ Lähteenmäki 2013.

⁹¹ Ibid; 13-14.

⁹² Toikka, T., "Jo muinaiset helleenit...", *HS* 07.08.1992.

⁹³ "Setan vapautuspäivät Turussa alkoivat", *Etelä-Suomen Sanomat* 17.08.1990.

⁹⁴ Luther, M., "Homosexuella inför rätta – frivilligt!", *Hbl* 08.01.1990; "Itse ilmiantajina. Turkulaisnuoret syytteessä homoseksiiin kehottamisesta", *Turun Päivälehti* 08.01.1990.

trial, which would hopefully manage to raise international attention.⁹⁵ Several newspaper articles featuring interviews with these four individuals express their disappointment in the juridical system, as the trial only led to hefty fines instead of a prison sentence, and thus further public visibility for their cause.⁹⁶ The point of the stunt was to prove that the Encouragement act was not only old-fashioned, but also invalid in the current social situation.⁹⁷ The activists emphasised that homosexual rights were a human rights issue, and that the Finnish judicial system and the penal codes were ancient, and in a need of immediate modernisation. This, when even Iceland, which was regarded as considerably conservative, had taken more meaningful steps to legalise homosexuality.⁹⁸ This incident illustrates the pervading atmosphere of the Finnish society at the time, and the difficulties the representatives of sexual minorities had to endure in order to fortify their public visibility.

In regard to visibility, the acknowledgement of Finnish artist Touko Laaksonen, better known by his pseudonym Tom of Finland, and his erotic gay illustrations and work, can be considered a small progress in the field. Tom of Finland was rewarded with the prestigious *Puupää* prize, an annual award granted by the Finnish Comic Association on 16th of October 1990,⁹⁹ and some even went as far as to call this occasion “a glasnost in the sexually negative Finnish atmosphere”.¹⁰⁰ Despite this, an article in the monthly periodical *Kuukausiliite* (distributed by *Helsingin Sanomat*) characterised life for an openly homosexual citizen as still difficult and complicated, especially because of Encouragement Act, which further complicated the distribution of proper information regarding sexual minorities.¹⁰¹ In this particular article critic Kaj Kalin even argues that homosexuals are familiar with racism in the same manner as people of colour in South-Africa are, and could even be considered the “white people of

⁹⁵ “Itse ilmiantajina.Turkulaisnuoret syytteessä homoseksiiin kehottamisesta”, 08.01.1990 *Turun Päivälehti*.

⁹⁶ Backman, N., E., “Oikeus ei rankaissut turkulaisia homouteen kehottajia. Syytetyt olivat pettyneitä tuomioon”, HS 09.01.1990; Luther, M., “Homosexuella inför rätta – frivilligt!”, *Hbl* 08.01.1990.

⁹⁷ Lindqvist, N., “Homosexmålet: Processen utvisar om lagen är död”, *ÅU* 8.1.1991; “Yllyttäminen niin vähäpätöinen rikos... Homo-oikeudessa ei tuomioita”, *Turun Päivälehti* 09.01.1991.

⁹⁸ Lindqvist, N., “Homosexmålet: Processen utvisar om lagen är död”, *ÅU* 08.01.1991.

⁹⁹ “Homoerootikko Tom of Finlandille sarjakuvahattu”, *HS* 16.10.1990.

¹⁰⁰ Marttila, H., “Huutoja ja kuiskauksia”, *HS*. 21.10.1990

¹⁰¹ Aronen, E.K., “Homo!”, *Kuukausiliite* 6/1990, HS, 16.06.90, 14.

colour” (fin. *valkoihoisia mustia*), as they belong to a human race that is not initially acknowledged as a race.

Despite the hype about Tom of Finland in the Finnish media at the beginning of the 1990s, a heated debate arose around his art, concerning the way he represented male homosexuals in his art. The reception of Laaksonen’s work was contradictory – some voices in Finnish media questioned whether the illustrator’s art could be considered art at all or whether it was merely pornography veiled as art.¹⁰² The reactions to Tom of Finland’s sudden recognition was not only divided within the gay community, but in the Finnish fields of art and culture as well.¹⁰³ Some adored Tom’s art, whereas others simply wanted to distance themselves from it.¹⁰⁴ While the debate on what kind of gay representations were preferable and acceptable flourished, the prospect of men as homoerotic objects in the advertising world materialised. The idea of men selling other men products demonstrated the impression of men as both homoerotic objects and consumers,¹⁰⁵ challenging altogether the existing norms of the Finnish man and the heterosexual man’s role in the world of advertisement. This initial setting also destabilised the existing power structure built upon the heterosexual population as the representative hegemony, making the consumers and viewers accept that other representations were also available and legitimate.

Visibility and representation are by no means synonymous, but these notions appear rather tightly intertwined as concepts when it comes to homosexuality. The 1990s marked a slow transition away from the stigmas and ostracism the homosexual population had endured in the 1980s with the emergence of the AIDS crisis, and towards a more tolerant atmosphere. Despite the public images and representations being limited and regulated by the Encouragement act, which was effective until 1999, the penal code still remarkably permeable in the borders between approved and forbidden. Material and news about homosexuals circulated in the media regularly throughout the 1990s, which in turn encouraged more or less open discussions on the human rights of sexual minorities. Maybe the taboo notions of homosexuality, along

¹⁰² Savola, H., “Maailman tunnetuin suomalaistaiteilija?”, 29.01.1992; Lappalainen, M.L., “Ovatko Tom of Finlandin piirrookset taidetta?”, *IS* 07.02.1992.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Hämäläinen, V.P., “Miesten katseessa on merkitystä”, *Kansan Uutiset* 28.01.1992; Hooven, V. (Finnish translation by Jaakkola, E.L.)”Tom of Finland. Matka likaisten piirrosten tekijästä juhlituksi taiteilijaksi”, *City* 1/1992, 28.

¹⁰⁵ Kangasjärvi, J., “Myyvät ja myydyt miehet”, *HS* 09.08.1991.

with its societal status as ‘deviant’ and ‘different’ also helped promote its case – being used as breadcrumbs for sensational news and attention from the press. Despite the abolition of the discriminatory laws at the end of the 1990s, the homosexual Finnish population still suffered much from the same predicaments in 2000s as they had a decade prior, especially in terms of positive public renditions and acceptance in the professional sphere. From this I can draw the conclusions that, despite not all the portrayals of homosexuals from the 1990s and 2000s having been respectful or even remotely related to the representations the group itself wanted to promote, homosexuals were still surprisingly well represented in the Finnish media and the press. This granted them a semblance of visibility, which legitimised their existence as Finnish citizens and further empowered their attempts to break the existing stereotypes and misconceptions, which were so prevalent.

2.2. The Pride Festival Tradition and Culture

The Pride festival tradition has its own essential role and place in the gay community and amongst sexual minorities, but is also a certain kind of harbinger of the visual side of gay culture and representation of homosexuals – as fashioned *by* sexual minorities *for* sexual minorities. Although the Pride Festival tradition is relatively new, its roots originate in the 1960s activism and radicalism – having emerged as a product of that era.¹⁰⁶ During that time the entire concept of citizenship was questioned and the definitions related to it started changing,¹⁰⁷ which also affected the sexual minorities. Distinct cultural values and a Pride culture itself have emerged around the festival, and in this subchapter I am going to chronologically account for the emergence of the Pride festival and the culture as well as the traditions surrounding it.

The initial episode in the chain of events that created gay activism was without doubt the police raid on the Stonewall Inn, a famous gay bar, in New York in June 1969 the

¹⁰⁶ Rozzi 2006; Bronski 2011, 208-209.

¹⁰⁷ Bronski 2011, 152.

ensuing riots.¹⁰⁸ A few weeks after the incident Gay Liberation Front (GLF) was founded – an organisation which embodied both the homosexual lifestyle as well as the new politically radical leftist culture.¹⁰⁹ GLF also abandoned the pre-war political and social order in favour of venturing out on the streets to demonstrate.¹¹⁰ The protests following the raid also garnered attention abroad, and as a result similar organisations were founded in Europe; in the United Kingdom, as well as France (Paris) and Italy among others.¹¹¹

Organisations such as these were united by their loud public demands on political changes, and their agendas of making sexual minorities visible as a community. With these intensions in mind, the first Gay Pride march took place in New York on 28th of June 1970.¹¹² The original idea was to draw attention to the Stonewall uprising a year prior, and to protest against the discriminating legislation, which the protestors did by physically marching from Greenwich Village to the Central Park. The riots following the raid on Stonewall were cornerstones of importance in the history of sexual minorities, as they displayed homosexual men, lesbians and transgendered people openly protesting and resisting police harassment.¹¹³

After the Gay Pride marches began occurring regularly in the 1970s, media such as newspapers and television started paying more attention to homosexuals and matters related to sexual minorities.¹¹⁴ Notions such as *pride*, *defiance* and *visibility* also became the key concepts concerning the new gay and lesbian political landscapes, which rose in the wake of the riots.¹¹⁵ On a symbolical level, the marches and the Pride procession had a deeper meaning and impact; it was not merely a matter of human rights, but about highlighting concept of *pride* – a key word and crucial element of the Pride concept.¹¹⁶ The essential idea was to openly celebrate the notions of being gay and different as matters of pride, and not shameful or unnatural, like the

¹⁰⁸ Rozzi 2006, 212.

¹⁰⁹ Bronski 2011, 210-211.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Rozzi 2006, 213; Hekma 2006, 333.

¹¹² Rozzi 2006, 214.

¹¹³ Kates & Belk, 2001, 394; Rozzi 2006, 212.

¹¹⁴ Hekma 2006, 350.

¹¹⁵ See Johnston 2005, 1, 4.

¹¹⁶ Kates & Belk 2001, 410, 417-420.

society had claimed for so many years.¹¹⁷ Originally derived from the 1960s African American slogan and cultural movement called ‘Black is beautiful’, the altered slogan ‘Gay is Good’ was coined by gay activist Franklin Kameny in 1968, and it was furthermore adopted by the North American Conference of Homophile Organizations, becoming one of the memorable elements related to the Gay rights movement.¹¹⁸

The visual assembly and representation of the Pride tradition has taken a whole new guise with the passing years; whereas it began with a few thousands marchers, carrying their signs and banners to draw the attention of the crowds with the agenda they promoted, the Pride parades now flaunt “floats, music and boys in briefs”.¹¹⁹ Although banners and signs still possess a strong and symbolic role in the Pride parade and in the Pride marches, the marches themselves have become entertainment where the visual element is distinctly present. Nevertheless, researcher Lynda Johnston emphasises that “the entertainment, glitz and glamour is only part of the narrative”, whereas the other part includes the history of homosexual oppression and state intervention.¹²⁰ Despite of this, many a Pride parade and event identifies itself, at least visually, as a “carnavalesque celebration of excess”, as described by researchers Steven M. Kates and Russell W. Belk.¹²¹

The Pride parades have also received criticism on this festivalisation, both from within and outside of the LGBTQ community, concerning the rapidly changing representation of gay culture. Where the original parades used to reinforce the agenda of publicly and politically enforcing the notion of pride, the focus now seems to have shifted more towards the opulence of the visual and commercial aspects rather than the political.¹²² One reason for such a change in the nature of the festival is that equal human rights for sexual minorities have been acquired at a tolerable level in many countries celebrating Pride, which has also lead to the decline of many of the LGBTQ rights organisations’ activities in these countries.¹²³ Nevertheless, Kates and Belk

¹¹⁷ Kates & Belk 2001, 405, 407-408, 410-411.

¹¹⁸ Kameny 1997, 374.

¹¹⁹ Fred Sergeant, *1970: A First-Person Account of the First Gay Pride March*, The Village Voice, 22.06.2010, <http://www.villagevoice.com/news/1970-a-first-person-account-of-the-first-gay-pride-march-6429338>, last seen 11.04.2015.

¹²⁰ Johnston 2005, 1.

¹²¹ Kates & Belk 2001, 393, 417.

¹²² Kates & Belk 2001, 407, 413-415, 417-418.

¹²³ Hekma 2006, 357.

emphasise the importance of excess as a part of the Pride tradition; celebrating sexual pleasures with excess and abandon works as a necessary act of resistance towards the status quo, thus offering an escape of the societal constraints related to pleasure and sexual deviance.¹²⁴

The Pride celebration can also be seen as legitimate means for sexual minorities to “take back the city” as fully accepted and acknowledged citizens, challenging the set boundaries of citizenship in relation to the public spaces of the city.¹²⁵ Organising something as opulent, colourful and loud as the Pride parade knowingly challenges the society to allow the sexual minorities and everything they stand for to claim some of the space, which has earlier been reserved only for the state approved, dominant culture through regulated activities and displays.¹²⁶ According to Kates and Belk, such various displays of resistance may also manifest themselves as both personally and socially empowering actions, with empowerment being an important part of the Pride agenda.¹²⁷

Until the 2000s, the Finnish Liberation Days and Pride Festival tradition and festivities were far more toned down and humble in comparison to its American counterparts. The Finnish Pride festival was influenced by the American precursor, but the actual push into action came from a domestic, local level: the ongoing, strained political situation and discussion concerning homosexuals in 1974 culminated with the case of a member of the local parish being fired because of his homosexuality.¹²⁸ Seta sprung into action and organised the first public demonstration as a reaction to the incident,¹²⁹ which would in many ways become the precursor for the politically-influenced marches of the future and the Liberation Days tradition. Although the first actual Liberation Days march was not organised until 1981,¹³⁰ the initial ambitions for Seta’s and the LGBTQ community’s public protests and claims for rights and acknowledgement had become visible.

¹²⁴ Kates & Belk 2001, 422.

¹²⁵ Johnston 2005, 1.; Kates & Belk 2001, 404, 419; Kornak 2015,26.

¹²⁶ Kates & Belk 2001, 402-403,

¹²⁷ Kates & Belk 2001, 402.

¹²⁸ Juvonen 2015, 36; Hentilä 2007, 155.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Juvonen 2015, 39.

Although the news about topics concerning sexual minorities and homosexuals were frequently and widely discussed in the Finnish media and press, as explored in the prior subchapter, news on the Liberation Days marches and parades were rather scarce.¹³¹ One potential reason may be that the events in question were still organised by a smaller group of people with a stronger political approach, and that the target public of the Liberation Days was a lot smaller in comparison to the Pride festivals in the early 2000s.¹³² When the focus was on the protest and politics aspects, rather than the later, more colourful flamboyance, this group of protestors did not differ much from other protestors in the eye of a heterosexual public. The political nature of these events were apparent and a part of the agenda itself, with the Finnish gay movement taking literal inspiration and production ideas from similar movements abroad, most notably from the United States.¹³³

According to Terhi Saarinen, the Liberation Days became an essential part of making homosexual men and women visible within society,¹³⁴ which was very much a political act at the time, when the Encouragement act was still in effect. “Personal is political”, the slogan coined in the late 1960s and early 1970s by the Feminist Movement and popularised by feminist writer Carol Hanisch in her essay from 1970,¹³⁵ applies, in my opinion to Seta’s political activity also well. In this particular context it can be seen as the driving force behind the emergence of the Liberation Days tradition and movement. This, as *personal* for homosexual Finnish citizens was largely restricted and regulated by the effective penal code, as well as a society and system that deliberately shunned and neglected these individuals and groups. For the same reasons, it also applied to the notion of *political*, as it was literally the politics and the judicial system that constrained Finnish homosexuals. Thus, it is not surprising that Seta emphasised the political aspects of their activities and further embodied them in the concept of the Liberation Days. The event in question also challenged the laws effective at the time, and the entire judicial system, as well as the

¹³¹ Uurinmäki, T., ”Seksuaaliset vähemmistöt ovat yhä silmätikkuja. Nikkarin lukion viimeisenä päivänä keskusteltiin homoista ja lesboista”, *Viikkouutiset* 08.06.2005.

¹³² Juvonen 2015, 57.

¹³³ Saarinen 1991, 22-23.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹³⁵ Hanisch 1970.

residing norms of society, with statement-making stunts such as publicly performing marriage ceremonies for same-sex couples in 1994.¹³⁶

In the 2000s, it was acknowledged that the notion of Helsinki Pride had become more carnivalesque than its originally politically-infused precursor,¹³⁷ as the festival had started gaining more popularity and visibility. The newfound attention and status as a publically acknowledged summer festival in the urban landscape of Helsinki City brought the event itself prestige, as well as undoubtedly more pressure to attract a bigger crowd. It was labelled “Finland’s biggest festival for sexual minorities”,¹³⁸ in reference to the Pride festival’s counterparts in neighbouring cities and cities further away as well. The Finnish festival tradition started flourishing in the 1990s and with Helsinki being named the European City of Culture in 2000,¹³⁹ opportunities for more influence, visibility and an elevated reputation for the sexual minorities emerged as well in the guise of a revamped Pride festival. According to academic Tuula Juvonen, the nature of the Liberation Days/Helsinki Pride changed significantly with the arrival of the millennium; whereas the event had defined itself more as a protest march in the 1990s and earlier, the Helsinki Pride event of 2000 was a decisive “face lift” for the image of the event. With influences from other Pride festivals from abroad, the crowd adopted a more positive and carnivalesque approach, highlighting the pride and confidence associated with being homosexual, and the name of the festival was furthermore changed to *Pride*.¹⁴⁰

In terms of the culture surrounding the Pride festival and the *Pride Culture* having emerged as a result of the physical events and festivities, one has to take in account the concept of culture and what it entitles in this context. Does the Pride culture, despite being constructed by sexual minorities for sexual minorities, differ from the established gay culture itself? And if the Pride culture does to some extent represent gay culture, *what* kind of gay culture does it portray? The original gay culture, from which the Pride festival tradition emerged in the 1970s,¹⁴¹ embodied among other

¹³⁶ Juvonen 2015, 46; Saanila, S., “Pusskalas på Espen”, *Hbl* 14.07.1994.

¹³⁷ Seuri, V., “Pride on muuttunut mielenosoituksesta karnevaalikulkueeksi”, *HS* 10.07.2010.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Silvanto 2007.

¹⁴⁰ Juvonen 2015, 57.

¹⁴¹ *New York Times*, Halperin, D. M., “Normal as Folk”, 21.06.2012, The Opinion Pages.

things *camp*,¹⁴² defined as a style or sensibility built upon exaggeration, artificiality and extravagance.¹⁴³ The American writer and political activist Susan Sontag identifies camp as “a certain mode of aestheticism”,¹⁴⁴ and it is this aestheticism and conscious exaggeration of certain cultural notions which the American gay community, especially the homosexual men, adopted as their own cultural habitus. The visual notions of camp came to define the outer appearances of the Pride parades, featuring showy music, self-ironic antics and exaggerated acts.¹⁴⁵ Sontag reasons that despite not *all* homosexuals having camp tastes, a vast majority within the group itself “constitute -- the most articulate audience -- of Camp” and are identified as a creative minority within the “contemporary urban culture”.¹⁴⁶ Despite camp including even propagandistic notions, Sontag clarifies that it also includes concepts of self-legitimation¹⁴⁷ – something that has played an important role for the gay community both in the United States and Finland for the past 40 years.

Lähteenmäki emphasises in her own work, that the theatrics, carnivalisation and irony often found in queer activism stem from the anger and rage resulting from the oppression the sexual minorities have endured historically.¹⁴⁸ These circumstances can be seen as foundation for the emergence of the camp aspects within the gay community and Pride culture. Many of the young homosexuals of the new generation have, however, wanted to distance themselves from these campy notions and labels. In terms of modern, 21st century gay culture, professor and theorist David. M. Halperin argues that it has changed significantly since the 1970s and 1980s, when camp played a very important role and was a defining factor within the gay culture – personified in the representations of gay culture at the Pride parades.¹⁴⁹ Many of the young homosexuals have abandoned the theatrics in favour of a more mainstream approach and cultural assimilation with the heterosexual majority.¹⁵⁰ Halperin points out the necessity of a gay culture separate from the mainstream heterosexual majority,

¹⁴² Lähteenmäki 2013, 12.

¹⁴³ Sontag 1966, 275, 282.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*; 276.

¹⁴⁵ *New York Times*, Halperin, D. M., “Normal as Folk”, 21.06.2012, The Opinion Pages.

¹⁴⁶ Sontag 1966, 291.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*.

¹⁴⁸ Lähteenmäki 2013, 11-12.

¹⁴⁹ *New York Times*, Halperin, D. M., “Normal as Folk”, 21.06.2012, The Opinion Pages.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*; Halperin 2012, 110-12, 117-119, 412-412.

yet also questions its necessity in the current cultural and political situation.¹⁵¹ One cannot, however, totally dismiss the importance and impact of the camp aspects in terms of the gay Pride culture and festivals, least not from a historical perspective.

To summarise, the Pride culture represents a distinct culture within a culture, a subculture of its own. The concept of the Pride culture is also not unproblematic, as it has many layers and several possible interpretations, occasionally provoking questions such as what kind of representation the Pride culture stands for. Within the Finnish gay community, how many stand behind the concept of the Pride festival and identify themselves with its agenda and alleged representation of sexual minorities and how many disagree with it? The 2000s have also introduced more critical approaches to the Pride festival notion, especially from within the Finnish LGBTQ community. The political aspects that had been deemphasised because of the reasons presented earlier vigorously resurfaced with the emergence of the lesbian anarchist group Pink Black Block and their political agenda.¹⁵² Similar aspects had materialised in the American counterparts earlier in the 1990s, with the notions of gay shame and/or queer shame challenging the concept of gay pride.¹⁵³

Gay shame presumably has a much lengthier history, and was associated with pre-gay Pride eras, decriminalisation and early the 1970s, when the shame embodied what researcher Aaron W. Gurllly defines as “the legal and social exclusion of gay men from the American mainstream”.¹⁵⁴ According to researcher Jodie Taylor, the gay shame agenda embodies the thought that festivals and celebrations like Pride obscure the “*less wholesome* sexual minority communities from public life”.¹⁵⁵ This is in favour of a more official image of the gay community and sexual minorities as an institution, which further adds to the discrimination towards those communities which are excluded. Thus gay shame epitomises a certain kind of ‘homonormativity’ – a reverse heteronormativity of a kind that privileges homosexuality,¹⁵⁶ and discrimination within the gay community itself. Lähteenmäki emphasises that the

¹⁵¹ *New York Times*, Halperin, D. M., “Normal as Folk”, 21.06.2012, The Opinion Pages.; Halperin 2012, 110-12, 117-119, 412-412.

¹⁵² Lähteenmäki 2013, 1-2.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ Gurllly 2014, 5.

¹⁵⁵ Taylor 2014, 28.

¹⁵⁶ Orzechowicz 2010, 241.

rhetoric of *pride* is often built upon the terms and conditions of the dominating culture,¹⁵⁷ where the terms of the entire society and social structure is the heterosexual one, and within the LGBTQ community, mainly the homosexual culture. The concept of gay shame is something I will return to in further detail in Chapter 3.

2.3. Invented Traditions and Imagined Communities

One cannot explore the Pride festival tradition without also taking into account the idea of Pride as an invented tradition. Although the Pride festival has been created with a certain agenda in mind, as I have presented above, it has the same quality as many other invented traditions: having surfaced around the time of a pivotal societal change and thus demanded attention for its cause.¹⁵⁸ Eric Hobsbawm illustrates the idea of invented traditions in his work *The Invention of Tradition*¹⁵⁹, where he emphasises the impact an invented tradition has on the society. Certain norms and behaviour, when repeated, establishes certain continuity with the past, which thus legitimises the new tradition.¹⁶⁰

Invented traditions surface often at historically pivotal times, during big and decisive changes, such as during some kind of revolution, when there is a demand or need for such. According to Hobsbawm, the past 200 years have been full of significant changes, which have in kind produced new traditions specific to this era. In order to invent a tradition, the process requires not only ritualisation with past, historical references, but also repetition, which is how the tradition itself is established. Hobsbawm also emphasises the difference between *custom* and *tradition*. Whereas a tradition remains unchangeable throughout time, regardless of changes and altered conditions, a custom is dependent on change, as it adapts to social conditions in order to ensue its continuity. This because a custom is not an object established through

¹⁵⁷ Lähteenmäki 2013, 20.

¹⁵⁸ Hobsbawm 2004, 2.

¹⁵⁹ Hobsbawm & Ranger (eds.) 2004.

¹⁶⁰ Hobsbawm 2004, 1.

frequent repetition – the repetition of a *tradition* is what gives it validity and legitimacy. Hobsbawm also emphasises the importance of distinctions made between traditions, as we know them, and conventions as well as routines, as the latter ones can be identified as “technical rather than ideological”. Thus, they do not possess the same ritualistic or symbolic functions as other invented traditions do, despite any potential conventional or perfunctory elements any invented traditions may harbour.¹⁶¹

Accordingly, the Pride festival can be considered a bit of both; an invented tradition with its specific customs. It harnesses, whether knowingly or not, the use of an invented tradition created at a historically decisive moment, during the radicalism of the 1960’s and the civil rights movements which precipitated the birth of a new kind of radicalism. As Hobsbawm puts it, parts of invented traditions are channelled by “using old models for new purposes”,¹⁶² where older institutions may have to adapt with the new time and its practises. Society had to accept the demands of the human rights and civil rights activists of the 1960’s, which later lead to political and social improvements for both sexual and other minorities. As earlier established, homosexuality was removed from the American Psychiatric Association’s list of mental illnesses in the United States in 1974,¹⁶³ and other countries followed suit, with Finland in 1981. These were only a few of the many changes and improvements affecting sexual minorities to take place in the following decades.

Although the Pride festival may therefore be considered an invented tradition, this fact does not make it any less socially or politically significant. Rather, it illustrates society’s requirement for such constructed traditions, and also pinpoints the importance of big social and political changes abroad and how they also affect Finland. Historian Benedict Anderson describes nations as “imagined political communities”, because despite many citizens never meeting each other, these people share an image of said community. In my opinion, there is a connection between the notion of Anderson’s *imagined communities* and the Pride Festival tradition and concept: according to Anderson all communities are somehow imagined,¹⁶⁴ as is the

¹⁶¹ Hobsbawm 2004, 2-5.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁶³ Sievers & Stålström 1985, 9.

¹⁶⁴ Anderson 2006, 6.

gay community and its culture and traits. It emerged alongside the existing heterosexual cultural majority as a separate entity. The gay culture, inherent and born within the gay community, is the foundation from which the Pride festival and culture has risen in history. Furthermore, this culture is limited in comparison and relation to other communities and nations, as well as dependent upon other, bordering communities, in order to exist. According to Anderson, it is also the limits and the limitedness of a nation that defines it, as “even the largest of them, - - has infinite, - - boundaries, beyond which lie other nations.” Thus a nation is always defined and determined by other nations and validated through its boundaries and connection to these. In the case of the gay culture and community, it is defined through its coexistence with the heterosexual culture.

“No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind”,¹⁶⁵ Anderson reasons, which also applies to the imagined gay community; the boundaries of meaning and time are different to the gay community – rather than becoming assimilated into the dominating heterosexual majority and culture or vice versa, the gay culture and community rather prefers to stay a separate culture from the heterosexual mainstream, existing alongside it.¹⁶⁶ “--Straight and gay publics are coextensive with Americans at large”, as queer theorists and researchers Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman indicate,¹⁶⁷ in agreement with Anderson on the idea of coexisting nations and imagined communities, which are also applicable to other cultures and nations beyond the American one. The gay community does not dream of all citizens joining their community and absorbing their culture, because the strength of gay culture lies in its conceptualisation as a culture vastly different from the surrounding mainstream culture.¹⁶⁸ Anderson muses that certain visual aspects and characteristics represent each imagined community,¹⁶⁹ which also pertinently portrays the conditions of the gay culture within the LGBTQ community. There is no one correct interpretation of what gay culture or its visual counterparts exactly entail, but several scholars and

¹⁶⁵ Anderson 2006, 7.

¹⁶⁶ Halperin 2012, 77-78; Seidman 1993, 111, 115.

¹⁶⁷ Berlant & Freeman 1993, 215.

¹⁶⁸ Halperin 2012, 73-74; Korhonen, N., "Homo – piileksijä, konservatiivi, bailaaja", *HS* 04.08.1996.

¹⁶⁹ Anderson 2006, 22.

theorists have strived to dissect the entity that it represents in order to offer a useful analysis, with Robert Aldrich, Michael Bronski and Richard Dyer among others.¹⁷⁰

The gay culture has always existed, to a certain extent; in separate spaces and times, but I argue for *the* gay culture, which emerged alongside and in the aftermath of the late 1960s and early 1970s civil rights activism, deliberately crafted and structured. Social theorist Steven Seidman argues for the homosexual individual and homosexuality not being a “universal human type” or universal notion, but a “historical product”—a thought brought to light in the 1970s amidst the emergence of gay liberation theory.¹⁷¹ Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman identify gay and queer culture as its own separate nation, a *queer nation*,¹⁷² and emphasises the notion of *Queer Nationality*.¹⁷³ The gay culture is thus reinterpreted not only as a culture of its own – separate from the established, heterosexual one, but also as its own nation and homosexuality as its own type of nationality. Anderson accounts for nations lacking in a viable and accountable birth and that the death, end, of a nation is “never natural”. He surmises that nations do possess some kind of genealogy,¹⁷⁴ but if so, what is the genealogy of the gay community and culture as an imagined community? It may be as much represented by the early civil rights and homophile movements as the first conscious homosexual individual, depending on how one defines the emergence and existence of gay culture and gay identity.

Whereas the gay community can be considered an imagined community, Berlant and Freeman discuss the possibility of *imaginable communities*, a term coined in the American lesbian theory to illustrate the societal and visual exclusion lesbians have faced, “historically and aesthetically”, in the American society. This notion, along with the idea of a *Lesbian Nation*,¹⁷⁵ also implants the idea of the queer and gay community as a heterogeneous community, with several separate communities and subcultures within its vast boundaries.

The visual lexicon of this culture is substantial, including the visual habitus of a homosexual individual or group

¹⁷⁰ Aldrich (ed.) 2006; Bronski 2011; Dyer 2002.

¹⁷¹ Seidman 1993, 112-113.

¹⁷² Not to be mistaken with *Queer Nation*, the American LGBTQ activist group.

¹⁷³ Berlant & Freeman 1993, 198-199, 201,

¹⁷⁴ Anderson 2006, 204-205.

¹⁷⁵ Berlant & Freeman 1993, 219.

The visual lexicon of this culture is substantial, including the visual habitus of a homosexual individual or group¹⁷⁶, the images and visual rhetoric used by the community to describe itself and its members,¹⁷⁷ and of course the visual actualisation of a Pride festival and its attendant queer nationality.¹⁷⁸ Anderson also emphasises the importance of literary feats, such as the novel and newspaper, and their impact on the emergence of an imagined community.¹⁷⁹ For the gay community to exist alongside the heterosexual majority as groups parallel to each other, with respective political influence, the younger and newer of these two groups needs to be “substantial in size and permanently settled, as well as firmly subordinated to the older”, as Anderson concludes it.¹⁸⁰

Even if the gay community is divided internally, ideologically, and geographically, it is still significantly sizable as an entity in comparison to the main population in order to fulfil Anderson’s requirements above. The LGBTQ community has been permanently settled, as scattered as it may have been across the United States and Europe, yet established, nonetheless, as a supplementary cultural subordinate of the existing heterosexual community and cultural hegemony. It is dependent on the original culture from which it emerged, yet it has identified itself as a separate, autonomous culture.¹⁸¹ Despite several attempts to advance towards assimilation to the heterosexual culture from both outside of the gay culture,¹⁸² and within it,¹⁸³ the gay culture and gay community continues to exist and persist. Despite popular claims such as the one of gay culture being furthermore *dead*,¹⁸⁴ it has evolved alongside the cultural majority in order to replenish its population and further divide into new subcultures. “In a certain sense, homosexuality is culture. Which is why society needs us” David M. Halperin declares, effectively describing the importance of homosexual and queer culture and communities to the heterosexual mainstream, not only as the

¹⁷⁶ Sender 2004, 14-15.

¹⁷⁷ Dyer 2002, 4, 172-173.

¹⁷⁸ Berlant & Freeman 1993, 195, 201, 209-210.

¹⁷⁹ Anderson 2006, 25.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹⁸¹ See e.g. Berlant & Freeman 1993; Seidman 1993; Dyer 2002; Halperin 2012.

¹⁸² Halperin 2012, 410-411.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 117-119, 441-443.

¹⁸⁴ Halperin 2012, 116-117.

opposite of heterosexuality.¹⁸⁵ The gay culture and community are not the opposites of the heterosexual one, but exists in relation to it, like a nation alongside another one. In David M. Halperin's words, "We will be queer forever."¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Halperin 2012, 455.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 457.

3. HELSINKI PRIDE AS A REPRESENTATION

3.1. Helsinki Pride as the Public Image of Finnish Sexual Minorities?

When Seta organised their first official public demonstration in Helsinki in the spring of 1981,¹⁸⁷ the organisation could scarcely have known about the future influence and visibility the demonstration, and later festival, would acquire in the Finnish media and society. The original purpose of the Liberation Days was to act as a demonstration; in order to alert the public and the government to the prevailing hostile attitudes towards sexual minorities, and to make these visible in the eye of the public.¹⁸⁸ Thus Seta took part in the process of constructing a certain public image of sexual minorities, with the Liberation Days and later Helsinki Pride as direct products of the organisation's ambitions and activities.

As previously established, gay culture has proven itself versatile and apt to different interpretations and perspectives. This is why it is important to inquire what *kind* of gay culture, or rather – what kind of representation *of* gay culture, Seta has wanted to establish with its public activity. The Liberation Days and the Pride festival has for many a heterosexual Finnish citizen been the first public, close-up visual contact with sexual minorities and the representations thereof. These events were created by the minorities themselves for other members of the Finnish queer community, which is why one cannot disregard the pivotal importance Seta has played in this situation. The questions remain: what kind of representation of gay culture and sexual minorities has Helsinki Pride festival been aspiring to embody and demonstrate? And could this be considered to represent some kind of the public image of Finnish sexual minorities?

What has been apparent in my research so far, is that both the Finnish media's opinions on homosexuals and their representations of them have changed during the period of 1990-2010, just as the nature of the Liberation Days and Helsinki Pride have clearly undergone significant development and alteration. The Finnish LGBTQ community, usually publicly represented by Seta, wanted to reinforce a certain public portrayal of the homosexual; as a competent and collected, politically engaged

¹⁸⁷ Juvonen 2015, 39.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 38-39.

individual.¹⁸⁹ The early years of Seta in the 1970s had also been marked by the absence of lesbians as public representatives of the organisation, the reason for which researcher Tuula Juvonen suspects may be the origin and appearance of these women. Many of them had moved from the countryside and possessed a working class background. Therefore they did not represent the preferred kind of public image of the lesbian woman the organisation favoured and publicised.¹⁹⁰ This demonstrates the presence of certain kind of “certified” public image of the homosexual man and woman, which the organisation wanted to embed into the public sphere of the Finnish society. With Seta being the only public, officially acknowledged, and collective organisation for Finnish sexual minorities, they also possessed the authority in terms of producing and shaping the public image of the Finnish sexual minorities into one of their liking.

American historian John D’Emilio speculates that white gay men have traditionally been more visible than their lesbian counterparts, because of the division between the male and female public domains; for the men “streets, parks, and bars, especially at night, were male space.”¹⁹¹ Meanwhile lesbian women of the Stonewall era were secluded to different kinds of professional associations and clubs. Women were also still extensively economically dependant on men, whereas “men could more easily construct a personal life independent of attachments to the opposite sex”.¹⁹² This, and the simple fact that homosexual men were more visible and better represented than lesbian women; including Seta, which was founded as an organisation by thirteen men and one woman in 1974 and predominantly represented by gay men.¹⁹³

The aim of this unified, clean-cut portrayal was without doubt to present the homosexual as ordinary Finnish citizens, and thereby to hasten the acceptance of LGBTQ individuals in the Finnish society. Those unable to meet these terms and norms were left outside of it, remaining unrepresented in the eyes of the public. Therefore the early Seta can be seen as a representative for only a certain kind of designed public image of the Finnish sexual minorities, and representing the entire LGBTQ community proved problematic on several grounds. Seta and their activity

¹⁸⁹ Juvonen 2015, 38, 46.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁹¹ D’Emilio 1993, 471.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ Juvonen 2015, 36.

also met resistance from members of the internationally affiliated gay organisation, Hofa (*Homosexuella familjer rf*)¹⁹⁴, who favoured conservative gay culture and only accepted committed couples as their members.¹⁹⁵ In an interview with Hofa founder Gunnar Njålsson in 1996, Njålsson paints a picture of the gay community as an inhuman and selfish world reigned by superficial aspects such as beauty and youth.¹⁹⁶ According to Njålsson, Seta represented this decadent side of the LGBTQ culture; the gay liberalism, which focused mostly on representing a specific image of sexual minorities and running gay nightclubs. Therefore Seta's Liberation Days did not accede with the values and ideals Njålsson and Hofa represented, and strove to endorse. Nevertheless, Seta considered Hofa:s opinions and values as fascist representations, accusing the association of being sycophants of the heterosexual world and its values. In the same year Seta also founded the Sateenkaariperheet ry¹⁹⁷ organisation, a rivalling association supporting same-sex families and parenting.¹⁹⁸

In an interview from 1994, Seta's former social secretary and gay activist Ari Saukkonen¹⁹⁹ describes Seta having being very defensive in its early years, at times anticipating discrimination where it would not be found and lapsing into a mentality of juxtaposing "good homosexuals" with "bad heterosexuals". The article was written in relation to the 20th Liberation Days celebration, with the theme for that particular year being the "maturation of the minority culture". It also emphasised altogether humanity and sexual behaviour as a part of human behaviour and life.²⁰⁰ The year 1994 was not only important in terms of the visibility garnered by the event itself, but for the political agenda it advocated, which consisted of homosexuals demanding juridical rights to same-sex marriage. The festival thus represented the ambitions and claims of the LGBTQ community through the demands on the right to matrimony, which – if finalised, would make them equal with the heterosexual majority of the

¹⁹⁴ *Registered association of Homosexual families*. Translation my own.

¹⁹⁵ Juvonen 2015, 47.

¹⁹⁶ Korhonen, N., "Homo – piileksijä, konservatiivi, bailaaja", *HS* 04.08.1996.

¹⁹⁷ *Registered association of Rainbow families*. Translation my own.

¹⁹⁸ Juvonen 2015, 47.

¹⁹⁹ Saukkonen was often featured in the Finnish press and media throughout the 1990s, giving lectures on homosexuality and representing Seta, see e.g., Aronen, E.K., "Homo!", *Kuukausiliite* 6/1990, *HS*, 16.06.90, 18, 20-22; Saukkonen, A., "Homoja ja lesboja uhataan", *HS* 07.11.1990; Saukkonen Kangosjärvi, J., "Homo nähty Helsinkiläisessä koulussa", *HS* 05.11.1991; A., "Homojen syrjiminen kiellettävä", *HS* 08.05.1994; Hämäläinen, U., "Homo ja lesbo ehdolle vaaleihin", *HS* 10.11.1994.

²⁰⁰ Nenonen, S., "Seta osaa nauraa", *HS* 05.08.1994.

Finnish citizens. Juvonen emphasises that in spite of Seta wanting to avoid a negative public image of sexual minorities and exaggerated provocation, the matrimony performance at the Liberation Days event in 1994 was staged and approved by the organisation.²⁰¹ This act proves that Seta still held the authoritative reins of the festival repertoire and a certain political agenda in focus during the beginning of the 1990s.

Some of the long-awaited changes and legislations demonstrated and fought for in the 1990s passed during the 2000s,²⁰² facilitating the life of homosexual Finnish citizens. This also automatically changed the criteria, approach and aim of the Pride festival. Homosexuals started to become better represented in the Finnish media from the beginning of the 2000s onwards, which also affected the public's and the Finnish media's attitudes towards sexual minorities. According to voluntary educator and instructor at Seta, Linda Eklöf, Seta had to all but implore the Finnish newspapers to feature even a few lines about sexual minorities in the newspapers back in 1994.²⁰³ In 1996 notions of *gay chick*, the concept of homosexuality as fashionable, entertaining and commercially worthwhile, were featured in the Finnish press, albeit still with a certain reservation.²⁰⁴ The idea of homosexuality as a popular and even trendy topic in the media was slowly established around these times, with influences from gay-centred movies and television shows making international appearances. Nevertheless, changes were still tentative and slow in the Finnish media and press, and the LGBTQ public had to wait until the 2000s for more decisive and open representations of homosexuals on the screen.

American TV-shows such as *Queer as Folk* and *The L-Word* emerged on Finnish television in the early 2000s,²⁰⁵ and were decisively different in comparison to

²⁰¹ Juvonen 2015, 46.

²⁰² Legislation regarding the age of consent for same sex couples: 1999, see Mustola 2007, 241; legal recognition for registered partnership: 2002, see Siren, J., "Rekisteröity parisuhde", *HS* 29.09.2001; law on artificial insemination for female same-sex couples and single mothers: 2006, adoption by one partner of a same-sex couple of the other's biological child (step-child adoption): 2009, see *Tausta*, "Lainsäädännössä vielä puutteita", *HS* 08.06.2013 and Mielonen, M., "Homoliitot laillisia tusinassa maassa", *HS* 06.08.2010.

²⁰³ Uurinmäki, T., "Seksuaaliset vähemmistöt ovat yhä silmätikkuja. Nikkarin lukion viimeisenä päivänä keskusteltiin homoista ja lesboista", *Viikkouutiset* 08.06.2005.

²⁰⁴ Salminen, K., "Gay Chic valloittaa viihteen", *Suomen Kuvalehti* 19.07.1996.

²⁰⁵ Juvonen 2015, 59; Tuomikumpu, K., "100 vuotta ulos kaapista", *City*, published: 18.10.2002, <http://www.city.fi/suhteet/100+vuotta+ulos+kaapista/632>, last seen 11.04.2016; Nina, E., "Lesbojen sisäpiirissä", *HS* 24.01.2005; Silfverberg, A., "Naisten paluu", *HS* 23.01.2008;

the Finnish television's earlier portrayals of sexual minorities. These kinds of television shows presented the lives of homosexuals and lesbians in a wider perspective, contributing to the slowly changing attitudes. Despite heavily leaning on and recycling certain stereotypes,²⁰⁶ the shows in question also introduced the idea of an environment and society, where sexual minorities lived alongside heterosexual majority.²⁰⁷ With Finnish versions of renowned international television shows, such as *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*,²⁰⁸ homosexuals (specifically gay men) were given more screen time and recognition in Finnish television than ever before. Arguments and evidence in favour of a new kind of character born in the television shows of the new millennium rose: the "gay and/or lesbian heroes".²⁰⁹

The earlier mentioned trendy *gay chic* became a concept of reality in the Finnish media; a means of commercialism and consumption, not only targeting the LGBTQ public but the heterosexual mainstream as well, with the popularity of gay and lesbian aspects amplifying.²¹⁰ Some of these television shows clearly leaned towards stereotypes; benefiting from and exploiting them with an ironic or sarcastic approach and attitude.²¹¹ Regardless of the mounting visibility and improving attitudes, many LGBTQ individuals encountered these portrayals of the homosexuals in the Finnish television and media as distorted and down-right offensive, inflicting damage by reaffirming gay and lesbian stereotypes²¹² – a subject I will examine more thoroughly in subchapter 3.3.

According to Seta's chairwoman in year 2000, Minnaliisa Pakkanen, one reason behind the change of the name of the event from the *Liberation Days* to *Helsinki Pride* was the notion of the Finnish LGBTQ community no longer needing to liberate itself from anything. Instead it had practically become part of the acknowledged

²⁰⁶ Nina, E., "Lesbojen sisäpiirissä", *HS* 24.01.2005.

²⁰⁷ Juvonen 2015, 59, Silfverberg, A., "Pellestä päärooliin", *Nyt* 2/2002.

²⁰⁸ Rantanen, M., "Johan on homoilla markkinat", *HS* 17.04.2005; Juvonen 2015, 60.

²⁰⁹ Nousiainen, R., "Tyttöjen välisestä ystävyydestä", *Ilta-Sanomat Plussa* 14.05.2003.

²¹⁰ See, e.g., Nousiainen, R., "Tyttöjen välisestä ystävyydestä", *Ilta-Sanomat Plussa* 14.05.2003.

²¹¹ Huikkonen, M., "Heterot heteroina ja homot homoina", *Journalisti/Journalisten* 12/2005.

²¹² See, e.g., Järvi, A., "Kapea kaistale todellisuutta", *Hämeen Sanomat* 10.07.2005; Leppänen, R., "Homot pääsivät parrasvaloihin, transuja ei oikein ymmärretä", *Aamulehti* 08.07.2005; Rauhamäki, M., "Pride 2005-tapahtuma syventyy stereotyyppioihin. Kaikki homot eivät ole rikkaita", *Kansan Uutiset* 05.07.2005; Takala, S., "Kiintiöhomossa tulevat esiin pelkät stereotypiat", *Karjalainen* 28.06.2009.

society.²¹³ The changes concerning the nature of Pride celebration were welcomed, but they also spurred some doubts and differing opinions among the LGBTQ community, as well as amongst the members of Seta. Some were concerned about the sustenance and prevalence of the Finnish gay culture, whereas others rejoiced the escalated support from heterosexual Helsinki Pride participants as a sign of approving attitudes. Various surveys proved a growing positivity and acceptance towards sexual minorities in the Finnish society; whereas only 24% of the population had accepted the idea of a registered partnership in 1992, the percentage had risen to 67% in 1996 in terms of the same topic.²¹⁴

Opinions were changing, albeit slowly. The majority of the positive reactions and reformed opinions concerning homosexuals stemmed from southern Finland. Helsinki and its neighbouring cities were more positively inclined, whereas attitudes were still more conservative in northern Finland in the 2000s, until the end of the first decade of the new millennium.²¹⁵ The loudest and most clamorous of the negative and conservative attitudes and notions were presented mainly on the Opinion pages of different northern Finnish newspapers, whereas the newspapers themselves seemed to choose a more distant approach to the topic.²¹⁶ The Finnish Church was also another advocate in the debate on the subject of homosexuals and their improving rights, who still reluctantly accepted these new changes in the early 2000s.²¹⁷

Berlant and Freeman theorise that the Pride festival tradition has lost its role as a consolidator of gay identity, and “as a result, the gay pride parade no longer produces the ominous gust of an enormous closet door opening”, while the Pride parade unites both homosexual and heterosexual participants under the same political agenda.²¹⁸ Although Berlant and Freeman also lament the festival tradition not having secured a bigger mainstream culture status akin to St. Patrick’s Day in the American society,

²¹³ Silfverberg, A., “Helsinki täyttyy homoista”, *Nyt* 25/2000.

²¹⁴ “Sexuella minoriteter firar Pride 2000 i Helsingfors”, *ÅU* 27.06.2000.

²¹⁵ See e.g., “Ahdasmielisyyttä, miksi?”, *Lapin Kansa* 27.06.2000; “Annetaan kaikkien kukkien kukkia”, *Lapin Kansa* 25.06.2000; Alapiha, S., “Televisiosta tullut lähinnä pervertikkojen mainosareena”, *Keskisuomalainen* 26.05.2005; Halonen, N., “Luonnossa homoseksuaaleja ei syrjitä”, *Kaleva* 21.04.2009; Herten von., A. “Homoseksuaalisuuden tabut hiljalleen murtumassa”, *Kymen Sanomat* 28.06.2000; Fagerholm, D., “För barnens bästa?”, *Hbl* 14.04.2000.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ Korhonen, O., “Pohjanmaako ahdasmielistä seutua? Sateenkaarimessu ensi kertaa Pride-festivaaleilla”, *Kansan Uutiset, Viikkoliite* 18.07.2003.

²¹⁸ Berlant & Freeman 1993, 210.

they emphasise the role the Pride celebration has held in changing and “updating” the “strategy of the parade”.²¹⁹ In terms of the Finnish counterpart, a similar change had taken place; after the Finnish Pride festival started gaining official festival status towards the first decade of the 2000s, and thus more visibility, the visual and physical nature of the event changed as well. This not least in comparison to the earlier, 1980’s and 1990s visual concept of the Liberation Days, as it now opted for a more colourful and carnivalistic nature. Critical voices have, however, risen from within the community to criticise this opulence and carnivalism, preferring instead the more political aspects and origins of the event.²²⁰ In Finland the visibility and carnivalistic nature of the Pride festival has garnered more attention in the Finnish press and media than its predecessor, and thus further secured said festival as small position in the mainstream culture. Yet, discerning festival traditions within Finnish culture have a prestigious status is difficult, since most of the cultural festivals and activities are relatively young and possess a rather short history upon which to build any kind of cultural hegemony.

One does also have to take into account the influence and importance of the location of the event: the city of Helsinki, were the tradition of said event and later festival was born in the late 1980s. In 1998 distinctive traits concerning travel and tourism in Finnish cities were mentioned and accounted for in the weekly supplement of *Helsingin Sanomat, Nyt*, with Helsinki being depicted as the city with most gay bars and the gay-friendliest atmosphere.²²¹ Until 2006, the Liberation Days/Pride Festival was organised biennially, in neighbouring cities apart from the capital of Helsinki as well,²²² and from 2006 onward the festival was organised annually.²²³ The venue and location in question have without doubt been important to deliver the political message and to presents the festival’s political dimension. The urban landscape thus played an important role in the fortification of the public image of the sexual minorities and their culture, which the gay and lesbian bars and other establishments

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Teir, P., “Glöm inte politiken”, *Hbl* 16.07.2003; Knutar, S., “Kulturen betonas på Pridefestivalen”, *Jakobstads Tidning* 11.07.2003; Dahl, V., “Så glad att vi inte längre är osynliga”, *Vasabladet* 11.07.2003.

²²¹ Sykkö, S., “Homojen Helsinki”, *Nyt* 25/1998.

²²² Vehkoo, J., “Sateenkaarikansa toi kaikki värinsä Jyväskylän sateiseen keskustaan”, *HS* 22.07.2001; Alanen, K., “Sateenkaarikansan juhla”, *HS* 08.07.2005. The Pride festival was organised, among others, in Turku in 1990, in Vaasa in 2003 and in Tampere in 2005.

²²³ Hannula, T., “Helsinki Pride lisää avoimuutta koko viikon”, *HS* 22.06.2007.

had determined ever since the beginning of the 1980s.²²⁴ These businesses became an integrated part of the Finnish gay culture, offering secluded havens for the homosexual population of Helsinki to further connect amongst each other.²²⁵ In the same manner, the Liberation Day demonstrations and later Helsinki Pride festival played a decisive part in integrating said cultural elements.

As the capital, Helsinki not only provided large spaces and masses of spectators for an event such as Helsinki Pride, but also the political value and status appropriate to a significant and socially acknowledged event.²²⁶ Helsinki houses politically pivotal and important buildings, and it is scarcely a coincidence that the most visible and renowned segment of the Pride celebration, the Helsinki Pride Parade, starts from the prestigious Senate Square. This place in question has established a long and prestigious history as the stage of several politically important and decisive events in Finnish history.²²⁷ As visibility became the core concept for Helsinki Pride, the importance of the location for the event amplified, and a proper stage for the parade was required. Researcher Laura Kolbe calls the Senate Square “the academic square of demonstration”²²⁸, which also further instils the prestige and importance of said location, not to mention visibility, which the Pride festival covets and requires. Thus it is unsurprising that many of the Helsinki Pride parades have begun from the Senate Square – along with other public events,²²⁹ and trailed along other historically, culturally and politically important and decisive streets and areas, such as Aleksanterinkatu.²³⁰

Part of the Finnish Queer Pride agenda was also to bring the Pride concept and festival to other Finnish cities besides the capital, and this had already taken place in the early 1990s with Turku Pride, as mentioned earlier. This sequence helped disseminate more positive representations of the Finnish sexual minorities and their condition in the Finnish society. These festivals were specifically important in more rural areas in central and northern Finland with smaller populations and heavily

²²⁴ Sorainen 2014, 219.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Kolbe 2012a, 80; Kervanto Nevanlinna 2012a, 20-21; Kervanto Nevanlinna 2012b, 173-174, 176.

²²⁷ See Kervanto Nevanlinna & Kolbe 2012.

²²⁸ Kolbe 2012a, 89.

²²⁹ Kolbe 2012b, 96.

²³⁰ Ibid., 98.

religious communities, distant to the more tolerant attitudes and values of Helsinki.²³¹ In cities such as Vaasa, where the Pride festival was organised in 2003, the importance of said festival was imperative not only in order to rebuild the public image of sexual minorities, but also for offering them an opportunity for public visibility and appearance.²³² This, especially in consideration of Vaasa being part of the Ostrobothnia region, renowned for its strictly religious Finnish *Bible belt* area stretching across a rather extensive territory, along with its conservative values.²³³ In spite of this, members of the local clergy professed the importance and necessity of an event such as Pride, as “many Finnish citizen have yet to accept difference and diversity”.²³⁴

If Helsinki Pride embodied and displayed a certain visual representation of the Finnish sexual minorities and gay community, what kind of representation did it stand for? So far the critique from within the community has been apparent, from many different groups and units. The stunts of the earlier mentioned lesbian anarchist group, Pink Black Block, illustrate the versatility and complexity of the LGBTQ community. It also emphasises the group’s critique towards the representations Seta and Helsinki Pride wanted to emphasise and confirm. According to the members of Pink Black Block, the values and ambitions the event itself represented were only relevant to a fraction of the gay community, and deemed by the group as too focused on the gay community’s assimilation and integration into the heterosexual mainstream. This led to ignoring the real conflicts members of the gay community faced daily.²³⁵ The group’s unhappiness and disappointment with the Pride festival’s political approach and attitude culminated in an aggressive visual and verbal rhetoric from the group,

²³¹ Korhonen, O., “Pohjanmaako ahdasmielistä seutua? Sateenkaarimessu ensi kertaa Pride-festivaaleilla”, *Kansan Uutiset, Viikkoliite* 18.07.2003; Korhonen, O., “Setan puheenjohtaja Tiia Aarnipuu: Paljon työtä vielä tehtävänä”, *Kansan Uutiset, Viikkoliite* 18.07.2003; Their, P., “Homosexualitet inte orsak till att flytta”, *Hbl* 13.07.2003.

²³² Their, P., “Homosexualitet inte orsak till att flytta”, *Hbl* 13.07.2003; Hietanen, R., “Kalkkunapihviä ja suvaitsevuutta”, *Pohjalainen* 13.07.2003; Dahl, V., “Homoparad med mycket skratt”, *Vasabladet* 13.07.2003.

²³³ Their, P., “Homosexualitet inte orsak till att flytta”, *Hbl* 13.07.2003; Hietanen, R., “Kalkkunapihviä ja suvaitsevuutta”, *Pohjalainen* 13.07.2003; Knutar, S., “Ut ur skåpet och lev öppet som homosexuell”, *Jakobstads Tidning* 12.07.2003.

²³⁴ Korhonen, O., “Pohjanmaako ahdasmielistä seutua? Sateenkaarimessu ensi kertaa Pride-festivaaleilla”, *Kansan Uutiset, Viikkoliite* 18.07.2003.

²³⁵ Lähteenmäki 2013, 55; Hannula, T., “Sateenkaarivärki marssi kohti yhdenvertaisuutta”, *HS* 01.07.2007.

present at the Pride parades in the summers of 2007 and 2008.²³⁶ Despite the visibility the group's opinions and stunts garnered in the Finnish media and press,²³⁷ very few other members of the Finnish gay community or gay activists chose to openly criticise the queer activism and residing attitudes which Helsinki Pride embodied.²³⁸ A few other members of the LGBTQ community, who participated in Helsinki Pride in 2007, emphasised that the purpose of the event was to be fun and uplifting, not any kind of a "call to arms" or representation of the sombre, 'old days'.²³⁹ According to these individuals, fanaticism had no place in an event such as Helsinki pride.²⁴⁰

Despite my initial expectations and Seta's emphasis of the importance of Helsinki Pride, the event itself was not widely featured and represented in either media or newspapers in the 1990s, as my material above has confirmed. It is not until after the year 2000 that headlines started featuring and more widely advertising the event in the Finnish media, along with the emergence of homosexual characters and individuals on Finnish television. This, along with other facts brought into light in this subchapter, does challenge the concept and allusion that Helsinki Pride would have been the public face or image of Finnish sexual minorities, at least not in terms of public representation. The Liberation Days/Helsinki Pride has without doubt been the biggest outlet for physical representation of members of the Finnish LGBTQ community in Finland in the 1990s, before the breakthrough of online media. In spite of this, homosexuality has been remarkably well-depicted in the Finnish press outside of the Pride concept, as the research material has proven so far.

Observing and surveying the rise of Helsinki Pride in the Finnish media and press from the early 2000s onwards offers several explanations and reasons behind the change. In fact, one cannot emphasise enough that the rise of the Pride festival and its media presence has not been sudden and unexpected, but a slow and escalating process throughout the years. I believe that the colourful aspects of carnivalism,

²³⁶ Lähteenmäki 2013, 1-2, 21, 55.

²³⁷ See: e.g., Hannula, T., "Tämä ei ole enää taistelumeininkiä. Sateenkaarivärki marssi kohti yhdenvertaisuutta", *HS* 01.07.2007;

Pajari, K., "Helsinki Priden järjestäjät huolestuivat polttopullouhkauksista", *HS* 28.06.2008;

Huhtanen, J., "Mustat anarkistit värjivät sateenkaarimarssia", *HS* 28.06.2008;

²³⁸ Lähteenmäki 2013, 1, 21, 61-62; Huhtanen, J., "Mustat anarkistit värjivät sateenkaarimarssia", *HS* 29.06.2008.

²³⁹ Hannula, T., "Tämä ei ole enää taistelumeininkiä. Sateenkaarivärki marssi kohti yhdenvertaisuutta", *HS* 01.07.2007.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

relying much on visibility, physical presence, and the occupation of public space with more boisterous and unapologetic means, have contributed to the media's awakened interest in the festival itself.

Until the end of the 1990s, the authorisation and endorsement of the public image of Finnish sexual minorities and specifically homosexuals, was mostly maintained by Seta and a certain kind of representation was recognised and affirmed. This was intended to minimalise the still prevailing prejudices and discrimination towards members of the Finnish LGBTQ community. The community proved itself, however, far more versatile; complex and divided on political and representative aspects. Some individuals felt like they were cast aside or excluded because they did not fit into the ideal and portrayal approved by Seta, and sought other means of representation or forgoing public portrayal altogether. For this group, the representations Seta strove to reinforce through the Liberation Days demonstrations and parades were unidentifiable.

The 2000s marked the rise of the Finnish gay culture in the public sphere and an intensified public visibility. Thus the demand for Seta and Helsinki Pride was not as apparent and decisive in certain areas of representation and activity, as it had been before. This situation offered, however, a perfect opportunity for a facelift and renewal of the gay pride concept and tradition, exchanging protests with celebration. These changes also immediately affected the Finnish gay culture, as Seta and their public portrayals were no longer the only options for publicly visible renditions of LGBTQ individuals. Seta's involvement in the process of heralding and shaping the public image of Finnish sexual minorities is evident and pivotal: the Liberation Days and Helsinki Pride can be seen as adequate and legitimate attempts at crafting and distributing a certain kind of unified public image of the Finnish sexual minorities. Although it became quickly apparent that this would only extend to the mainstream of the Finnish LGBTQ community, leaving certain groups and individuals behind, whom further strove to establish their own representations and public images.

3.2. Carnivalism and Consumption as (Political) Resistance

I have previously emphasised in my research, how Helsinki Pride is generally advertised and marketed as an event without any political ties or agendas. In this subchapter, however, I aim to challenge this claim and approach it from another perspective. This in order to highlight the political dimensions of Helsinki Pride. Although not identifying itself directly as a politically involves event, Helsinki Pride is still quite a political event with a political agenda of its own. Unlike its predecessor, the Liberation Days, Helsinki Pride's political aspects and notions are more subtle and focused particularly on the capitalist and consumerist elements the event started to inculcate ever since the beginning of the 2000s. Helsinki Pride thus resumes its predecessor's political activism, albeit in other spheres and contexts, introducing notions of consumerism as a form of gay activism in these particular circumstances. In this subchapter, I therefore intend to explore how carnivalism and consumption have worked as political strategies of resistance for the LGBTQ community, both abroad and in Finland, and how these have been employed by Helsinki Pride and have been harnessed to boost the event itself as well as LGBTQ visibility.

David M. Halperin argues for homosexuality being a social as well as political condition.²⁴¹ This further reinforces the LGBTQ community's status as "political minority",²⁴² and this perspective, the political influence has always been present. Earlier, the briefly mentioned historian John D'Emilio theorises that capitalism and the capitalist system of free labour changed and revolutionised the lives of homosexual individuals by the mid 19th century.²⁴³ This affected the divided LGBTQ community not only by bringing its members together in city life and social contexts, but also by initiating a series of changes and achievements,²⁴⁴ which would become the foundation of the modern gay culture. Yet this capitalism brewed and renewed homophobic and heterosexist practises, which D'Emilio reasons was the result of the "contradictory relationship of capitalism to the family"; whereas the members of

²⁴¹ Halperin 2012, 70.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ D'Emilio 1993, 470

²⁴⁴ Ibid; 471-472.

nuclear family historically used to be economically tied to each other, the rise of capitalism had undermined the necessity of this foundation in favour of other options.²⁴⁵

The capitalist society, however, still glorified the heterosexual nuclear family model, as this resulted in structures for reproduction pivotal to the society. Thus, homosexual couples threatened the heterosexual nuclear family and the stability of the society built upon this distinct notion, which further threatened the capitalism upheld by said institution and its values. Nevertheless, capitalism did create the outlets and the material conditions for homosexual desire and gay culture to emerge and find means to express itself. Academic Michael Bronski attests to the consumer culture having first emerged among the LGBTQ community in the United States in the 1950s. In fact, society's slowly improving opinion of homosexuals and other sexual minorities was chiefly due to their identities being built upon "consumption, not sexual behaviour".²⁴⁶ D'Emilio argues this also alleviated the separation of procreation and human desire as conditions for said institution, allowing gay men and lesbian women "to exist on a social terrain beyond the boundaries of heterosexual nuclear family", and thus enjoy a sense of freedom heterosexual individuals could not exhibit in the capitalist society.²⁴⁷

Researcher David L. Eng theorises that the 1980s as well as the 1990s saw the "merging of an increasingly visible and mass-mediated queer consumer lifestyle".²⁴⁸ In other words, representatives of sexual minorities could enjoy visibility through consumption. One must not ignore the importance of the urban space as the growing ground for such a lifestyle – Eng argues that the movement from agrarian-based units to cities with wage labour facilitated the creation of such urban zones of gay life.²⁴⁹ Thus capitalism possessed an important role in the urban gay life and lifestyle, part of which the Pride festival embodies and represents.

In classic festival study, festivals can be recognised as a method of consolidating "the shared values, identities, histories, ideologies and mythologies that bind a

²⁴⁵ D'Emilio 1993, 473.

²⁴⁶ Bronski 2011, 189.

²⁴⁷ D'Emilio 1993, 474-475.

²⁴⁸ Eng 2007, 40.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

community”. The dominant social hierarchies and prevalent norms can be questioned and challenged through political means veiled as cultural aspects, like carnivalisation.²⁵⁰ Celebrations like the Pride event can therefore reinforce the minorities’ culture on their own terms, in the public space usually reserved for the heterosexual hegemony, and thus bring the LGBTQ community more visibility. Researcher Jodie Taylor argues for the contemporary gay pride festivals being able to perform all the functions listed above, and by doing so taking back the city – the public space, from the heteronormative majority.²⁵¹ According to researchers Kates and Belk, “parades are political events that demonstrate and generate power”, whether in terms of more informal and local carnivals or official, governmental celebrations.²⁵² In the 1970s, when semblances of gay pride parades were organised for the first time in the United States, these were “indistinguishable from a gay protest or political demonstration”.²⁵³ Although the 1980s and 1990s separated the notions of protest and carnival more clearly from each other,²⁵⁴ it would take until the year 2000 for the Finnish LGBTQ community and the ensuing Pride events to accomplish this same kind of distinction.

Essentially, any kind of festival likely to attract huge crowds of spectators present the marketers and advertisers with potential interest and opportunities, as such events work well for commercial and consumerist agendas. The market caught early onto the escalating popularity that defined the Pride festivals, along with all the possibilities of gay consumerism.²⁵⁵ With an ever-growing and diverse crowd, the celebration united public and private spheres; the political with the personal. This epitomises the gay culture and LGBTQ community: the political manifestations and demonstrations blend harmoniously together with colourful and extravagant carnivalisation. And this in turn presented good opportunities for marketing different kind of goods and merchandise: food, meals and souvenirs, among others.²⁵⁶ The market realised early on the influence and potential buying power the LGBTQ consumers possessed in comparison to the straight ones; as many homosexual couples did not have children,

²⁵⁰ Taylor 2014, 27.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 27-28, 32.

²⁵² Kates & Belk 2001, 404.

²⁵³ Taylor 2014, 29.

²⁵⁴ Markwell & Waitt 2009, 158; Adam 2009, 301, 303-304.

²⁵⁵ Taylor 2014, 1; 32-33.

²⁵⁶ Kates & Belk 2001, 394, 399-400.

they had money left from the domestic life available for consumption.²⁵⁷ Researcher Katherine Sender indicates that the market targeting LGBTQ consumers have tried to strip the commercial trade of uncomfortable, political notions, claiming that targeting these consumers are matters of “business, not politics”, and not related to gay rights. This so that marketers may reach their target groups without having to affect any implications of social relations or cultural politics, which would further complicate the process.²⁵⁸ Notwithstanding, *everything* at Pride events and public LGBTQ celebrations are somehow connected to the political dimensions of gay right activism – despite being shrouded in commercialism. Just as consuming and spending can be considered *patriotic* or aligned with other political or social implications,²⁵⁹ consuming can be an act of political activism in its own right. Sender argues, that consumerism can also be considered an act of rebuilding or establishing an identity, whether in social or sexual context, which has historically applied to many of the American gay and lesbian consumers.²⁶⁰ Therefore commercialism is not free of ideological connotations, especially not in relation to public LGBTQ events.

In the wake of the growing expansion and popularity of gay culture and Pride festivals, several cities in many countries started to see such festivals as profitable investments and a way of boosting the city’s international reputation and prestige as “tolerant”.²⁶¹ This improves and increases the flow of tourism, as tourism is largely controlled and aided by commercialism and capitalism.²⁶² International leading and model cities for gay pride, such as San Francisco, New York, Berlin and Sydney, established new global ideals for a colourful and powerful Gay Pride festival tradition.²⁶³ These worked as model cities for smaller cities such as Helsinki, who followed suit, albeit in at a slower pace. The late 1990s already showed signs of growth in the city’s interest and investment in queer festival related news and representations. In the “Where to go” section of HS’s weekly television guide and entertainment-oriented supplement, *Nyt*, Helsinki was depicted as having become a rather gay friendly city over the past few years, with the map of the city having been

²⁵⁷ Sender 2004, 33; 146.

²⁵⁸ Sender 2004, 2-3.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁶¹ Johnston 2005, 67-68, 100, 103.

²⁶² Taylor 2014, 33-34; Markwell & Waitt 2009, 145-146.

²⁶³ See e.g., Johnston 2005; Markwell & Waitt 2009; Taylor 2014; Cook & Evans (eds.) 2014.

redrawn to accommodate a gay perspective.²⁶⁴ Although these remarks are written in the context of Seta's Liberation Day event, the approach is still quite positive and informative in general, which demonstrates the warming of attitudes towards the LGBTQ community and gay tourism in 1998. It was also mostly during the time of public events organised by the LGBTQ community, that the Finnish media featured gay related news, and generally directed marketing towards gay friendly topics and products.²⁶⁵ Since the beginning of the 2000s, Helsinki City also endeavoured to promote itself as an international, tolerant and "gay-friendly" attraction. These efforts became significantly more visible with the city and marketing agencies putting an effort into advertising the city for international LGBTQ tourists, attempting to follow the global trend.²⁶⁶

As earlier established, Helsinki Pride's political agenda changed with the new millennium and the ensuing facelift along with the reconstruction of the visual aspects of the event. Like with its international counterparts, it is possible to assume that maybe the political nature of the Finnish Pride celebration simply adopted another form or guise. This may have transpired in order to serve its political purpose and agenda, since the conditions and the interest of the gay community had shifted considerably. Pride may have started working towards advocating the victories they had acquired, and taken to other means in order to gain more rights.²⁶⁷ Notwithstanding, many representatives of the Finnish LGBTQ community indicated that there was still much to be done for sexual minorities and consolidating their civil rights.²⁶⁸

Carnivalism and commercialism walk hand in hand in the context of Gay Pride events. The concept of commercialism as a driving force and a form of resistance is

²⁶⁴ Sykkö, S., "Homojen Helsinki", *Nyt-viikkoliite (HS)*, 25/1998.

²⁶⁵ See e.g., Sykkö, S., "Homojen Helsinki", *Nyt* 25/1998.; Similä, V., "Homojen hommaa", *Nyt* 04.07.2003; Lämsä, H., "Ihanko totta yhdenvertaisia?", *Metro* 18.06.2009; Nyman, J. & Holmberg, B., "Helsingfors följer nordisk trend – marknadsförs som gay-vänlig stad", *Hbl* 22.06.2009;

²⁶⁶ Rantanen, M., "Johan on homoilla markkinat", *HS* 17.04.2005; Yrjölä, R., "Helsinki on homoystävällinen?", *HS* 04.04.2009; Tiainen, A., "Ihan jokaisen Helsinki", *HS* 14.06.2009.

²⁶⁷ Knutar, S., "Stolt parad på marsch genom Vasa", *Jakobstads tidning* 13.07.2003.

²⁶⁸ See e.g., Korhonen, O., "Setan puheenjohtaja Tiia Aarnipuu: Paljon työtä vielä tehtävänä", *Kansan Uutiset, Viikkoliite* 18.07.2003; Lämsä, H., "Ihanko totta yhdenvertaisia?", *Metro* 18.06.2009; Dahl, V., "Kultur betonas på Pridefestivalen", *Jakobstads tidning* 11.07.2003, Dahl, V., "Så glad att vi inte längre är osynliga", *Vasabladet* 11.07.2003.

firmly integrated into the Pride festival tradition as of late, Kates and Belk concur.²⁶⁹ The perception of commercialism in relation to Pride festivals can be examined from different perspectives, as they appear in different aspects and forms at the parades themselves – not only in physical attributes like merchandise. Kates and Belk argue that certain consumer habits and behaviour at Pride parades can be considered as consumer resistance: lesbian women and gay men may choose to frequent and support shops and vendors managed by sexual minorities, instead of heterosexual mainstream ones. LGBTQ events and celebrations also “illustrate the importance of celebratory fun and leisure in pursuits in the construction of forms of resistance”.²⁷⁰ In other words: consuming can be both a fun pastime as much it may become a condition of resistance, and various forms of similar resistances can be experienced as “personally and socially empowering”. Gay and lesbian consumers may take the meanings and ideologies connected to consumerism at Gay Pride events and implement them to another context outside of the celebration: to their everyday life. If interpreted as a form of resistance against the heterosexual society, these endeavours become conscious acts of “resistance to the dominant culture *through* consumption”.²⁷¹ Kates and Belk accentuate, that Pride festivals worldwide serve as “vehicles for political power and community solidarity”, bringing the otherwise scattered and divided sexual minorities together under a common agenda. The LGBTQ community also forms an economic power of a kind, with commercialism and shopping regarded as a “proud expression of the gay community’s purchasing and political influence”. Crowds have power, not only commercial buying power. In this context the commercial and economic aspects of the festival becomes of outmost importance to its participants. Simply put, “more is stronger”.²⁷²

In terms of carnivalisation as a mode of resistance, *visibility* is one of the key concepts of constructing, as well as further enabling and alleviating, dimensions of public and political defiance. Excess – not least in terms of sexual freedom, flamboyance, and theatricality, has played an important role in consolidating the new image of the Pride festival and harnessing different notions of experience. Among

²⁶⁹ Kates & Belk 2001.

²⁷⁰ Kates & Belk 2001, 401.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 402.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 413-415.

these, the visual, audible, physical elements²⁷³ are decisive, not only as parts of the Pride agenda, but to the LGBTQ community because of its status as a stigmatised minority group. The Pride festivals are just as much about role-reversal – challenging the residing norms, as they are about offering crowds entertainment. They also operate well as arenas for political demonstration, much like the medieval European festival tradition permitted.²⁷⁴ For some participants, the bawdy and carnivalistic representations of excess were too much or directly unpleasant to withstand. These individuals felt that those kinds of renditions and acts did not represent them and their personal values in question of the LGBTQ culture and ideology.²⁷⁵ The same applies to Helsinki Pride: whereas many rejoiced and praised the visual excess, the enjoyable and celebratory elements of the refreshed Finnish Pride festival,²⁷⁶ others accused the festival for hiding behind a colourful façade in favour of ignoring the actual problems whilst focusing excessively on the commercialism.²⁷⁷

At the Helsinki Pride parade of 2008, one of the onlookers compared the festival to its Swedish equivalent, all while expressing astonishment and even gratitude for the much less commercially oriented nature and presentation of the Finnish Pride parade.²⁷⁸ For many Gay Pride participants and paraders the event identified itself on a much more symbolical level: as a physical space for coming-out experiences and a celebration of “personal liberation”. It also included notions of wanting to claim public, space beyond any social and sexual territorial borders of the city, as their own. To these individuals, the notions above were ones meant to be celebrated with excess, loud and clear, in order to show the heterosexual society and mainstream, that oppression could be fought with extravagance, and in public. All of this could take space in a space that was usually reserved only for heterosexual citizens.²⁷⁹

²⁷³ Ibid., 404-405.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 408.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 405-407,

²⁷⁶ See e.g., Silfverberg, A., “Helsinki täyttyy homoista”, *Nyt* 25/2000; Knutar, S., “Stolt parad på marsch genom Vasa”, *Jakobstads tidning* 13.07.2003; Dahl, V., “Homoparad med mycket skratt”, *Vasabladet* 13.07.2003; Huhta, M., “Helsingin homokulkue oli pitkä, iloinen ja kansainvälinen”, *HS* 28.06.2009.

²⁷⁷ Teir, P., “Glöm inte politiken”, *Hbl* 16.07.2003; Dahl, V., “Så glad att vi inte längre är osynliga”, *Vasabladet* 11.07.2003.

²⁷⁸ Anna Svartström, “Fest i regnbågens färger”, *Hbl* 29.06.2008.

²⁷⁹ Kates & Belk 2001, 419-420.

Even the queer capitalism, embodied by the consumption and consumerism present at Pride celebrations worldwide, is not void of discrimination from within the LGBTQ community. Kates and Belk mention the notion of “resistance to consumption” as one of the two major courses of consumption in relation to resistance.²⁸⁰ Johnston highlights the paradoxical notion, that vulnerable social groups, such as lesbians and gay men, “are not just marginalised and/or oppressed, but can also marginalise and oppress each other”.²⁸¹ Sender argues for the marketing world mostly focusing on gay and lesbian consumers, whereas only featuring bisexual and transgender customers as potential marketing target group to scarce extent. This due to that “--most believe these groups to be too small to warrant marketing attention”.²⁸² According to Sender, the ‘gay market’ was assumed by many to entitle solely the gay *male* market, disregarding the lesbians as potential consumers. Much of this was done on because women’s income levels being significantly lower than men’s back in the 1980s, when the gay consumer market first started establishing itself.²⁸³ On a cursory level, the market has also resorted to conservative advertising strategies, which focus on publically presenting only the “most *desirable* members of the market”, which often than not appeared to be the white, middle-class gay male.²⁸⁴ The marketers also often associated lesbian couples with the adoption and housing of children – more often than gay males, and lesbians would thus have less money to spend on commercialism than their homosexual male counterparts.²⁸⁵

The Pride festivals are frequently accused of this kind of *homonormativity*, often in relation to the escalated consumerism,²⁸⁶ which favours homosexuals above other sexual minorities. It is best physically recognised in the merchandise sold at Pride parades at celebrations, where the assortment mostly favours gay men.²⁸⁷ Researcher Lynda Johnston verbalises the complexity of the Queer Pride ideology and problematic identification of gender and sexuality at Pride events, questioning whether it is “possible to march united and proud under one banner when sexualities

²⁸⁰ Kates & Belk 2001, 402.

²⁸¹ Johnston 2005, 123.

²⁸² Sender 2004, 11.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 33; 35.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 7-8; 33.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 212.

²⁸⁶ Taylor 2014, 28.

²⁸⁷ Johnston 2005, 414.

are understood to be diverse and different?”²⁸⁸ Since the 1990s, the international Gay Shame movement has also been one to criticise this kind of gendered and sexually limited approach of the Pride celebration, as well as the escalated commercialism and the commercialistic nature of the Pride festivals.²⁸⁹ A growing concern for the commercialised nature of the Pride festivals started rising among the LGBTQ community during this decade. This manifested in the fear of the festivals “becoming little more than displays of material consumption”,²⁹⁰ which in turn could easily lead to them losing sight of their original purpose. Taylor speculates whether Pride festivals in their current state as commercially driven spectacles, are still “able to maintain its potential for political and sexual agitation?”²⁹¹

In my opinion Taylor’s inquiry is a valid one, and a setting for a much larger speculation concerning the Pride concept and festivals. Since the 1990s, the international Pride festivals have committed to the escalated visual spectacle, and open, public spaces with up to tens of thousands of spectators, in order to reinforce political and sexual agitation. This elicits attention on much wider scale in comparison to earlier, when the parades were more akin to protest marches. The biggest advantage marketing and commercialism has brought the Pride parades and LGBTQ community, is the increased attention and entitlement to public spaces for the gay pride agenda and activism. The concept of space is also important in establishing identities, not least in terms of “making and remaking social identities” as well as “sexual identities”, as described by Taylor.²⁹² These play important parts in the Pride ideology and LGBTQ culture. Public performances, such as Pride events and celebrations, as well as public displays of affection between same-sex couples, not only challenges the established heteronormalisation of the society but also “makes queerness visible”.²⁹³ In this context, visibility is politically imperative and just as important to the consolidation of the LGBTQ identity and culture as consumption is.

Critique against the escalating marketing and hyped commercialism, pushed onto LGBTQ travellers and tourists has also risen from outside of the Finnish LGBTQ

²⁸⁸ Johnston 2005, 4.

²⁸⁹ Lähteenmäki 2013, 20.

²⁹⁰ Taylor 2014, 32-33.

²⁹¹ Taylor 2014, 33.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 32.

community, where Helsinki and its image as a safe, trendy and gay-friendly tourist attraction and city has been challenged and questioned. According to researcher Riina Yrjölä, these advertisement campaigns – albeit amicable, are guilty of renewing stereotypes of the sexual minorities.²⁹⁴ The focus of the interests and preferred activities linked to LGBTQ tourists lean inherently towards superficial aspects of tourism. These consist of activities such as shopping and nightlife, with the assumption that the interests of this group are mostly hedonistic ones. Yrjölä states that such campaigns reveal the Finnish society's true stances on homosexuality; gays and lesbians are not accepted as individuals, but as tourists, and catered for as long as they are willing to spend their "pink money". In Yrjölä's conclusive words: "We accept and understand you as a group, *when* you consume." According to Yrjölä, the image of a city should not be built exclusively upon notions of categorisation, and she demands better comprehension and acceptance of LGBTQ tourists as individuals, instead of solely as consumers.²⁹⁵

Despite the criticism against the escalated commercialism and consumerism of Pride festivals, some counter-critical voices have risen to defend the commercial carnivalisation. Now that commercialisation is quite inevitable and unstoppable, it may even have positive effects on Pride, and help to legitimise the event, as well as further strengthening its position and growing authority.²⁹⁶ The Pride parades identify themselves as much as entertainment, as they do as political resistance in this context.²⁹⁷

But has carnivalism, now one of the most defining aspects of the Pride celebration, become the norm for 'normal' concerning Helsinki Pride? The Pride festival tradition started as a celebration for sexual minorities, embodying what the society found deviant or abnormal. Thus one has to also take into account, that the means to gain visibility quickly yielded to emphasising the carnivalesque nature of the event itself. The bigger the floats, the louder the music, the bolder and more flamboyant the participants were, the better.²⁹⁸ The power of the LGBTQ festival lies, according to Johnston, in the "capacity to challenge, subvert and invert - - hegemonic, commonly

²⁹⁴ Yrjölä, R., "Helsinki on homoystävällinen?", *HS* 04.04.2009.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁶ Kates & Belk 2001, 401.

²⁹⁷ Johnston 2005, 55.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 404-405, 413, 422, 424.

accepted cultural categories such as traditions, norms, and discourses - -“.²⁹⁹ In other words, the emphasised nature of flamboyance – even in its garishness and attention-seeking aspects, has become the norm which the event which goes by. Although the level of flamboyance may differ considerably with Helsinki Pride in comparison to its Australian and American counterparts, it is bold by Finnish standards – especially in visual terms.³⁰⁰ The flamboyance may not be wielded to purposefully cover or omit the political aspects and influences of Pride events. Underneath the glitz and glamour, the makeup and provocation, lie more pressing matters and messages, not only in terms of the international, bigger cities and Pride events. This is epitomised in the words of a Helsinki Pride parader from 2002:” We are all the same, humans. It is not until we all understand this fact that we can learn to accept ourselves just as we are.” According to this admission, in the end the essential joy comes not from highlighting the elation of being lesbian or gay, but from the pivotal joy of being able to identify as a human being.³⁰¹ This is something no amount of layers, makeup, flamboyant posturing or defiant provocation can dismiss or obliterate.

Eventually, the Pride tradition and ideology, not least with the colourful parades, are vital parts of the current gay culture. They also identify as parts of the gay identity for many gay men and lesbian women, in part because of the political elements and dimensions. Pride celebrations physically embody different stages and attributes of gay life: the protests and demonstrations symbolise not only the difficulties and obstacles the community has historically faced, but also the victories and accomplishments it has acquired. The colourful and boisterous parades represent the past and present struggles of the LGBTQ community as much as the loud and sombre protest marches have in the past. Both appear just as defiant to the heterosexual mainstream culture, and the political components integral to the ideology of the gay liberation movement are still very much present, although in another guise and context. “Personal is political”, as earlier established, is a slogan very much inherent to the modern day gay community and culture, as well as the nature of the Pride

²⁹⁹ Johnston 2005, 424.

³⁰⁰ Bold in consideration to Finnish festivals, not least in terms of a festival for sexual minorities, whereas many popular and public festivals focus mostly on music and other kind of entertainment, see e.g. Sjöblom, Y., “Stolt parad tågade genom Hfrs”, *Hbl* 02.07.2000; Knutar, S., “Stolt parad på marsch genom Vasa”, *Jakobstads tidning* 13.07.2003; Ämmälä, A., “Paraatissa loistivat sateenkaaren värit”, *Aamulehti* 10.07.2005.

³⁰¹ Jaakkola, M., “Olemme kaikki ihmisiä”, *HS* 30.06.2002. Translation of quote my own.

celebration. Despite the changes to the visual and physical form of the event, the political tradition is still present and tangible as an internalised part of the Pride festival tradition. Commercialism and consumerism are thus just other forms of political and civil activism important to the LGBTQ community and culture.

3.3. Representations and Stereotypes Uncovered

In my work so far, I have endeavoured to study and consider the different aspects and perspectives regarding representations of the Finnish homosexuals and sexual minorities. These are constructed, maintained and reconstructed historically by both the Finnish media as well as the LGBTQ community. As briefly discussed earlier, stereotypes have played a decisive role concerning the directions and perspectives of broadcasting the Finnish media has chosen in relation to the LGBTQ population. This concept has also applied to the general public's representations of homosexuals, which I believe have affected the population and their opinions on sexual minorities to a certain extent as well.

In this subchapter, my intention is to examine the depths of the stereotypes concerning Finnish homosexuals: their potential origins, different physical forms and manifestations, the processes and methods used by the Finnish media to sustain them, as well the practises used by people within and outside of the LGBTQ community to expose, break and change said stereotypes. The notion of stereotypes and their effects on homosexual representations in this particular context is complicated to process concisely and comprehend in such a limited manner, but I will try to offer extensive and comprehensive insights as thoroughly as possible in the following passages.

In social psychology, stereotypes are recognised as standardised renditions or psychological impressions of the characteristics of a specific group of people.³⁰² As asserted by research psychologists Craig McGarthy, Vincent Y. Yzerbyt and Russell Spears, stereotypes are defined as three principles; 1) “as aids to explanation”, 2) as “energy-saving devices” and 3) as “shared group beliefs”. These help people to

³⁰² McGarthy, Yzerbyt & Spears 2002, 2; Nachbar & Lausé 1992, 236.

comprehend and process phenomena and groups unfamiliar to them – in order to tell the difference between the other group and themselves. More often than not, these representations formed through stereotypes are deficient, fragmented, and thoroughly subjective, with important features ignored in favour of a simpler rendition. Hence, in situations like these, stereotypes quickly become aids and structures not of comprehension, but of misunderstanding. Whether built upon notions of deliberate misunderstanding or accidental miscomprehension, the power of maintaining stereotypes lies with a bigger group. The stereotype is only powerful and valid when shared by larger quantities of people, while the stereotypes maintained by single individuals attract sparse attention.³⁰³

From this perspective, it is therefore easy to see and comprehend, as to why an entity as extensive and diverse yet divided as the Finnish press, is not only prone to cultivating stereotypes, but also offers an ideal breeding ground for these. Also, according to Kevin Lausé and Jack Nachbar, critics of American pop culture, “stereotyping is a natural function of the human/cultural mind”, and thus “so common that it occasionally functions in a useful way” as well.³⁰⁴ The Finnish press – if roughly generalised, represents the mainstream opinion and the culture prevalent in Finnish society. Thus they are prone to asserting their perspectives and attitudes regarding minorities, especially if they are previously unfamiliar with them. Although stereotypes are not always directly negative or intended as purposefully offensive, they are usually narrow, built upon false, inadequate, or fragmentary notions.³⁰⁵

Stereotypes are also very much subjective notions, and products of their constructor’s personal manifestations and beliefs.³⁰⁶ In this context, the Finnish media does not necessarily consider the stereotypes upheld and manufactured by it directly false or hurtful. As the objects of such subjective renditions and stereotypes, the homosexuals themselves have found such portrayals incompatible with their own subjective self-images of sexual orientation and identity.³⁰⁷ One possible method of battling against

³⁰³ McGarthy, Yzerbyt & Spears 2002, 2-5.

³⁰⁴ Nachbar & Lausé 1992, 237-238.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ See Yzerbyt & Rocher 2002.

³⁰⁷ See e.g., Järvi, A., “Kapea kaistale todellisuutta”, *Hämeen Sanomat* 10.07.2005; Rauhamäki, M., “Pride 2005-tapahtuma syventyy stereotyyppioihin. Kaikki homot eivät ole rikkaita”, *Kansan Uutiset* 05.07.2005; Huikkonen, M., “Heterot heteroina ja homot homoina”,

stereotypes is to fight them with *countertypes*, positive stereotypes. These evolve to combat and replace the negative stereotypes adhered to a group of people, and “arouses *good* emotions and associates a group of people with socially approved characteristics”.³⁰⁸ Despite this, Nachbar and Lausé forewarns against mistaking countertypes as anything other than being particular stereotypes, despite the positive notions and dimensions they may possess.³⁰⁹ Positive stereotypes such as these may also be empowering for the group they are endeavouring to represent. The camp notions, deeply embedded in the gay culture and the Pride festival tradition, offer means of taking hold of originally ridiculing and patronising stereotypes of aspects associated with gay people, and reforming them into humorous, satirical and parodistic renditions of features within the gay culture. Thus, in this context, these notions become empowering manifestations of gay culture itself.³¹⁰

Tuula Juvonen describes the 1990s as being very much the decade of “coming out” for many private and public figures in the Finnish society, despite of the public image of sexual minorities still being somewhat problematic during this time. Famous homosexual individuals and celebrities had been seen in the Finnish media to a limited extent, where as “normal” gay men and lesbian women had yet to be seen in magazines and on television.³¹¹ The first Finnish homosexual celebrity who officially exposed his sexual orientation, was celebrity hairstylist and makeup artist Raimo Jääskeläinen, alias Monsieur Mosse, who came out in 1971.³¹² Jääskeläinen was a man prone to dramatic and provocative behaviour and antics, which came to spark controversy within the Finnish LGBTQ community.³¹³

This affected without doubt the changes and transitions the public image of sexual minorities underwent within the Finnish media during this decade – especially concerning homosexuals. Freedom of existence is often limited and regulated for representatives of minorities, as it has been with homosexuals and other members of

Journalisti/Journalisten 12/2005; Takala, S. "Kiintiöhomossa tulevat esiin pelkät stereotypiat", *Karjalainen* 28.06.2009.

³⁰⁸ Nachbar & Lausé 1992, 238.

³⁰⁹ Nachbar & Lausé 1992, 239.

³¹⁰ Sontag 1966, 279, 282, 287-288; Halperin 2012, 203.

³¹¹ Juvonen 2015, 49.

³¹² "Miten homous rikoksena poistui?", *TS* 24.11.2007.

³¹³ Tolvanen, O. "Meikkitaiteilija Raimo Jääskeläinen Monsieur uskalsi elää," *HS* 24.9.1992; Juvonen 2015, 37-38.

Finnish the LGBTQ community. The prospect of belonging to a sexual or ethnic minority in the media and/or public is not completely problem free, but notably easier compared to being homosexual in everyday life. Famous and renowned gay and lesbian media personalities are easier to tolerate and accept than your fellow homosexual Finnish citizens of flesh and blood, more up-close than the glossy figures in the papers and on the television screen.³¹⁴ As a result, hiding behind stereotypes or remaining altogether obscure becomes valid solutions for many members of the sexual minorities, because it is safer than being out of the proverbial closet.

The 1990s was also the era when homosexuals, due to the slow increase in public visibility and space, started consciously battling against the stereotypes promulgated by the Finnish media. They demanded of equal rights to live, love, and acceptance by the Finnish society.³¹⁵ National newspapers, such as *Helsingin Sanomat*, had more neutral and benevolent standings on sexual minorities,³¹⁶ at least in terms of official statements written by the paper itself. In many of the letters to the editor on the Opinion Pages prejudices still flourished,³¹⁷ and tabloids fed on the stereotypes, as well as any sensational or scandalous news related to sexual minorities.³¹⁸ Remarkably, many of the articles written by tabloids were surprisingly positively oriented towards sexual minorities, with many of them even emphasising the interviewed gay men's or lesbian women's status as "normal and ordinary Finnish citizens".³¹⁹

³¹⁴ Jonkka, M., "Olemisen rajoitettu vapaus", *Orimattilan Sanomat* 25.06.1998.

³¹⁵ See e.g., Lahtonen, M., "Homot ja lesbot eivät halua elää kaapissa", *SE!* 05/1991; under pseud. *Hintti*, "Homous ihmisten mielissä yhä sairaus", *Aamulehti* 11.03.1992; Miettinen, H., "Paukun saunan suosikkipari", *Seura* 13.11.1992; Sandlund, A., "Majoritetens kommer aldrig att godkänna oss", *Studentbladet* 29.09.1993; Uitto, T., "Minäkö olen sika?", *Turkulainen* 24.09.1997; under pseud. *HOMO ANNO -30*, "Ociviliserat", *Hbl* 23.09.1997.

³¹⁶ See e.g., Toikka, T., "Jo muinaiset helleenit...", *HS* 07.08.1992; Miettinen, J., "Yhdestoista käsky; älä makaa miehenpuolen kanssa", *HS* 01.08.1993; Nenonen, S., "Seta osaa nauraa", *HS* 05.08.1994; "Suvaitsevuu den koetinkivi", *HS* leader, 16.06.1994; Miettinen, J. O., "Suomalaisia näkökulmia homokokemiseen", *HS* 09.09.1995; Nykänen, A. S., "Tämä ei ole homojuuttu", *HS* 14.06.1998; Jaakkola, M., "Olemme kaikki ihmisiä", *HS* 30.06.2002.

³¹⁷ See e.g., Ilén, P., "Sukupuoli määrää viekä paljon", *HS* 17.01.1991; Sihvo, T., Puonti, A. & Salomaa, F., "Setan tulisi kohdata elämän kenttä kipuineen", *HS* 15.04.1991; Harva, U., "Ei liikaa oikeuksia homoille", *HS* 07.05.1992.

³¹⁸ See e.g., Lahtonen, M., "Homot ja lesbot eivät halua elää kaapissa", *SE!* 05/1991; Lehtinen, J., "Ravintolat vetävät nyt erikoisuudellaan", *IS* 09.12.1992; Brantberg, R., "Homobisnes kukoistaa Suomessa", *Hymy* 07.08.1995; Anttila, A., "Anja ja Tuula menevät naimisiin ja hankkivat lapsen", *SE!* 06/1998; Nousiainen, R., "Tytöjen välisestä ystävydestä", *Ilta-Sanomat Plussa* 14.06.2003.

³¹⁹ See e.g., Uitto, T., "Minäkö olen sika?", *Turkulainen* 24.09.1997; Anttila, A., "Anja ja Tuula menevät naimisiin ja hankkivat lapsen", *SE!* 06/1998.

What also struck as especially interesting, was the rhetoric used by different newspapers and tabloids when depicting members from sexual minorities. More than often gays and lesbians were described in an outwardly positive manner in such media, yet with emphasis on peculiarities or notions contradicting the mainstream. Many of the headlines along with the articles themselves featured words with negative connotations, e.g. “a woman falls into the embrace of another woman”³²⁰ or “censored version of dreaded gay programme to be broadcast”³²¹. Articles also employed clearly or partially derogatory epithets for homosexuals in their headlines in hopes of attracting attention, such as “*puppelipoika*” (something along the lines of “nancy boy”).³²² The interviewer’s or paper’s own attitude towards homosexuals were still visible in the 1990s Finnish press, e.g., referring to a homosexual as “deviant” or “divergent” (*poikkeava*), instead of, e.g. “different” (*erilainen*).³²³ These examples accounted for above are not, however, the only types of stereotyping or discrimination towards homosexuals that the Finnish media and press manufactured and maintained.

The most common stereotypes about homosexuals are illustrated by the archetype of the homosexual as a masculine, handsome, wealthy, well-dressed and promiscuous young man.³²⁴ Preconceived stereotypes such as these were as damaging as the ones depicting lesbian women as butch “dykes” and robust athletes.³²⁵ Another early stereotype, originating from the Stonewall times, was the one of the homosexual man as pitiful and pathetic.³²⁶ Early attempts at breaking such stereotypes and media tropes of homosexuals in Finland occurred in the 1990s, with the popular television show *Hyvät herrat*, renowned for blending comic elements with contemporary and political themes. The series featured the reoccurring homosexual character Timo, alias Håkan, a waiter at the sauna establishment frequented by the main protagonists. The film

³²⁰ Haunia, A. “Sirpa ja Eila kihloutuivat keskenään”, *SE!* 6/1992. Translation my own.

³²¹ Keränen, J., “Pelätty homo-ohjelma esitetään sensuroituna”, *IS* 21.02.1992. Translation my own.

³²² Javanainen, P., “Hyvien herrojen hykerryttävä puppelipoika. Mikko otti heti yleisönsä”, *Ilta-lehti* 15.02.1992.

³²³ See e.g., Haunia, A. “Sirpa ja Eila kihloutuivat keskenään”, *SE!* 6/1992; Brantberg, R., “Homobisnes kukoistaa Suomessa”, *Hymy* 07.08.1995; von Hertzen, A., “Homoseksuaalisuuden tabut hiljalleen murtumassa”, *Kymen Sanomat* 28.06.2000.

³²⁴ Hekma 2006, 360; Järvi, A., “Kapea kaistale todellisuutta”, *Hämeen Sanomat* 10.07.2005; Rauhamäki, M., “Pride 2005-tapahtuma syventyy stereotyyppioihin. Kaikki homot eivät ole rikkaita”, *Kansan Uutiset* 05.07.2005.

³²⁵ Rubin 1993, 12; Laine 2007, 195, 198.

³²⁶ Halperin 2012, 39; Miettinen, H., “Paukun saunan suosikki pari”, *Seura* 13.11.1992.

crew contacted Seta with a request for an actual homosexual actor to play the intended part, which also allowed the chosen actor, Mikko Roiha, to influence his role figure's character traits and developments to some extent. In his own words Roiha chose to depict Håkan as a "liberated young gay man", believing that the series contributed to breaking established homosexual stereotypes maintained by the society. This was in spite of the at times crude approaches to subjects such as homophobia and racism featured in the show. Nevertheless, Roiha's character and his portrayal of an active gay man seemed to be quite popular with the Finnish television audience,³²⁷ which indicates something about the public's opinion to sexual minorities at the time.

It would take nearly a decade until other Finnish homosexual characters would start appearing on television in significant or reoccurring roles, often having been reduced to temporary and passing curiosities or comical characters. Prior to this phenomenon, the Finnish gay image received profound new portrayals when one of the young protagonists of the vastly popular television series, *Salatut elämät*, came out at the end of the 1990s. Other than these cases, the Finnish population was mostly presented with stereotypical renditions of sexual minorities in terms on domestic television.³²⁸ As previously established, many homosexuals were unhappy and discontent with the stereotypical rendition the media and television offered and advertised to the Finnish public in the early 2000s. Some members of the Finnish gay community were, however, able to dismiss or ignore the provocative dimensions of such representations. They considered television shows such as *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* void of gay stereotypes, as long as the viewer managed to find the humour and irony in said gay portrayals.³²⁹ Most homosexual men and women merely wanted to be portrayed and acknowledged as normal, ordinary Finnish citizens, instead of the glamorous renditions the television repertoire of the 2000s offered in terms of gay representations.³³⁰

Most of the stereotypes regarding homosexuals in the Finnish media were related to homophobia in some manner. Homophobia has had a decisive influence on the

³²⁷ Miettinen, H., "Paukun saunan suosikki", *Seura* 13.11.1992.

³²⁸ Juvonen 2015, 50.

³²⁹ Huikkonen, M., "Heterot heteroina ja homot homoina", *Journalisti/Journalisten* 12/2005; Larros, H., "Teatterin paljastaja", *City* 13/2008.

³³⁰ Alanen, K., "Seksuaalivähemmistöt juhlivat tavallisuuttaan Tampereella", *HS* 08.07.2005.

Finnish media's and population's attitudes and opinions towards sexual minorities, colouring and distorting public representations and portrayals of homosexuals. Homophobia can be seen as a method employed by the heterosexual mainstream in order to "preserve gender-role stereotypes", and thus the notions of homosexuality defy this existing heterosexual hegemony the society is built upon.³³¹ This explains the society's need for homophobia and homophobic rhetoric used in order to categorise homosexual males and females with such reverse heterosexual traits as *effeminate* (for gay men) and *butch* (for lesbian women).³³² It can also be seen as the driving force behind the renewal and institutionalisation of LGBTQ stereotypes through homophobic rhetoric and verbal action, as much as through physical demonstrations. In a heterosexual society homosexuals are defined by the heterosexual models and roles institutionalised by this society, in order to fit into it and gain a legitimate status as a citizen.³³³ In this context the heterosexual practise of categorisation becomes inherently homophobic and discriminating.

In 2009, the openly homosexual Finnish MP Oras Tynkkynen declared that homophobia was still a part of the discrimination and anti-gay violence present in the Finnish society, despite the significant changes of the past ten years.³³⁴ The same year, the Finnish Bureau of Physical Education and Exercise in Helsinki and Espoo³³⁵ launched a poster campaign against homophobia in order to battle discrimination against sexual minorities. One of reasons behind this campaign was to dissect the prejudices surrounding homosexuality in competitive sports, and as detected in exercising facilities. These internalised misconceptions of homophobia were incorporated in many professional athletes' fear of being branded as homosexual, since this would complicate their lives within the sports world. Curiously enough the campaign provoked surprisingly much negative feedback, although it was created in accordance with several official Finnish sports clubs and smaller associations.³³⁶ These reactions proved the critical necessity for such a campaign in the first place. According to many professional Finnish athletes, homophobia and prejudices toward

³³¹ Fajer 1992, 624.

³³² Halperin 2012, 40-41, 43, 62; Halberstam 1998, 129-131; Fajer 1992, 607-633.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 42, 410-411.

³³⁴ Saukkonen, K., "Homofobia istuu tiukassa", *TS* 18.07.2009.

³³⁵ *Fin. Helsingin ja Espoon liikuntavirastot.*

³³⁶ Hämäläinen, M., "Helsinki ja Espoo mukaan homofobian vastaiseen kampanjaan", *HS* 15.08.2009.

sexual minorities still flourish stubbornly in the sports world as well as within competitive sports. Open homosexuality was often seen as means of ending and compromising a promising career.³³⁷

Apart from Helsinki Pride, film festivals and other cultural events with LGBTQ themes also conveyed certain representations of the sexual minorities and distinguished themselves in the battle against stereotypes. Especially within the world of cinematography, this approach was important, as homosexuals were usually cast in clichéd and stereotypical roles. Smaller events such as *Pervoplanet*, a film festival in Turku aimed for sexual minorities featuring movies with distinctive LGBTQ themes and actors, garnered significant attention in Finland in the mid 1990s. The organisers of the event deliberately wanted to acknowledge and display various LGBTQ movies, in order to affect the established portrayals and renditions of homosexuals in the broader film industry.³³⁸ A reoccurring theme for many smaller, cultural festivals with LGBTQ themes and agendas was the gay community's reinforcement of their own image of the sexual minorities. Events such as these offered the LGBTQ community means to counter, reconstruct, and renew the established negative stereotypes and renditions prevalent in the society on their own terms.³³⁹ Regardless of whether the changes these events attempted to popularise affected the public opinion or attitudes regarding LGBTQ minorities, the news of similar events gained moderate attention in Finnish newspapers and magazines. However, these events were covered partially as curiosities and oddities, for the entertainment value of the heterosexual public.³⁴⁰ The notion that prestigious newspapers such as *Turun Sanomat* and *Helsingin Sanomat* chose to feature such topics among its news established the existence of an underlying interest in similar events.

Homosexual stereotypes were publicly exposed and challenged during the Gay Pride festival in 2005, organised in the neighbouring city Tampere, with stereotypes as its

³³⁷ See Laine 2007.

³³⁸ Suominen, R., "Pervoplanet-festivaalilla katsellaan elämän intohimoja", *TS* 19.10.1995.

³³⁹ "Romantiikkaa ja intohimoa. Turun perveelokuvafestivaali on komistunut puitteiltaan ja tarjolla on myös entistä monipuolisempia elokuvia", *HS* 19.10.1995; Salminen, K., "Perveelokuva kaataa rajat", *HS* 25.10.1996; Lehtonen, V. P., "Jeffrey kaipaa rakkautta eikä turvaseksiä. Turun Pervoplanet-festivaali näyttää homoelokuvan trendit", *HS* 25.10.1996; "Turun Pervoplanet keskittyy tänä vuonna romantiikkaan", *HS* 21.10.1997.

³⁴⁰ "Romantiikkaa ja intohimoa. Turun perveelokuvafestivaali on komistunut puitteiltaan ja tarjolla on myös entistä monipuolisempia elokuvia", *HS* 19.10.1995; Salminen, K., "Perveelokuva kaataa rajat", *HS* 25.10.1996;

theme. Special focus was directed on the stereotypes crafted and reaffirmed by the media.³⁴¹ The festival with its agenda of breaking and countering stereotypes garnered a lot of attention in the Finnish press, and some of the participants and organisers hoped to generally influence the discussion concerning homosexuality in the Finnish society.³⁴² The next year, in 2006, renowned artist and entertainer Jari Sillanpää came out, which according to Tuula Juvonen would improve the life and coming out of other Finnish homosexuals. The occurrence was especially important because Sillanpää was a public figure; a renowned musician and popular artist,³⁴³ and thus a potential ideal for other struggling, closeted homosexuals. The importance of a homosexual identity and the consolidation thereof was not, however, necessarily as important to the newer generations of homosexual citizens as it had been to their predecessors. I mentioned earlier how David M. Halperin dejectedly claiming that the gay culture was dead, and that gay identity was being frequently disregarded, partially due to many young gay men and lesbian women apparently no longer resolutely identifying themselves as homosexuals. In other words, being homosexual was not a defining or revolutionising factor in their identities or in relation to their personal lives.³⁴⁴ Juvonen recounts having stumbled upon similar phenomena in the Finnish LGBTQ community and the Finnish society altogether. Young people abandoned the labels of gay, lesbian and straight, whilst considering such borders and boundaries no longer of any critical importance to them.³⁴⁵ Although this occurrence is not directly a conscious effort against homosexual stereotypes or those of sexual minorities in general, it can be interpreted as an effort against any kind of classification or labelling. The young Finnish citizens wanted to build their own image and identity, and find their place in the society unimpeded by any residual stereotypes³⁴⁶ – whether negative or positive.

Space has also played an important role as much in establishing as breaking stereotypes, with the images of the rural countryside and smaller cities as stagnant, intolerant and discriminating spaces, versus the capital city as a tolerant, social and

³⁴¹ Satola, J., "Gay-kulttuuri näkyy heinäkuussa Tampereella. Onks noi niitä?!", *TampereLainen*, 06.07.2005.

³⁴² Järvi, A., "Kapea kaistale todellisuutta", *Hämeen Sanomat* 10.07.2005;

³⁴³ Nykänen, A. S., "Viimeinkin kaapista ulos", *HS* 05.03.2006.

³⁴⁴ Halperin 2012, 110-112, 118-119, 412-413.

³⁴⁵ Nykänen, A. S., "Viimeinkin kaapista ulos", *HS* 05.03.2006.

³⁴⁶ Heikkilä, M., "Homopiirit juhlivat 1980-luvulla Helsingin Punavuorella", *HS* 27.06.2015.

international arena.³⁴⁷ Opposite stereotypes also existed: the countryside as small, yet safe and sensible haven with the city as big, dangerous and merciless, focused only on superficial aspects such as beauty and youth. The latter stereotype was something that did not only prosper among the rural heterosexual population, but among homosexuals as well.³⁴⁸ Much of the local gay migration took place from smaller, more distant cities to bigger cities such as Helsinki, Turku and Tampere,³⁴⁹ which were generally described and marketed as generally more tolerant and gay-friendly.³⁵⁰

As much as heterosexuals played a big part in constructing stereotypes, homosexuals themselves have also participated in this exercise. As earlier mentioned, individuals of discriminated and oppressed groups are more than capable of discriminating within their own groups – especially with concerns how divided the Finnish LGBTQ community is. One also has to take into account the stereotypes launched by members of the gay community themselves, often with the purpose of pinpointing the ridiculousness of existing stereotypes and caricatures. Many of these may have been originally created by the heterosexual society, but have been adapted and used by homosexuals in terms of empowerment.

In the world of drag show caricatures play an important role, not least in terms of challenging the established gender norms and rules, and in portraying the heterosexual society and order as a parody. Camp is ever-present in gay culture and a defining factor of both gay pride and gay shame; both the fun and the tragic aspects of homosexual history, with all the discrimination and losses, as well as victories. Caricatures are not only an important part of camp, but also manifest as empowering stereotypes and thus as a variety of countertypes. The men drawn by Finnish gay

³⁴⁷ von Hertzen, A., "Homoseksuaalisuuden tabut hiljalleen murtumassa", *Kymen Sanomat* 28.06.2000; Korhonen, O., "Pohjanmaako ahdasmielistä seutua? Sateenkaarimessu ensi kertaa Pride-festivaaleilla", *Kansan Uutiset, Viikkoliite* 18.07.2003; Kohonen, O., "Setan puheenjohtaja Tiia Aarnipuu: Paljon työtä vielä tehtävänä", *Kansan Uutiset, Viikkoliite* 18.07.2003; Väkevä, P., "Helsinki on homohyvä kaupunki", *HS* 26.06.2008; Saukkonen, K., "Homofobia istuu tiukassa", *TS* 18.07.2009.

³⁴⁸ Their, P., "Homosexualitet inte orsak att flytta", *Hbl* 13.07.2003; ; Knutar, S., "Ut ur skåpet och lev öppet som homosexuell", *Jakobstads Tidning* 12.07.2003.

³⁴⁹ Knutar, S., "Ut ur skåpet och lev öppet som homosexuell", *Jakobstads Tidning* 12.07.2003; Määttänen, L., "Toisenlainen pelottaa", *TS* 18.07.2009;

³⁵⁰ See e.g. Rantanen, M., "Johan on homoilla markkinat", *HS* 17.04.2005; Yrjölä, R., "Helsinki on homoystävällinen?", *HS* 04.04.2009; Tiainen, A., "Ihan jokaisen Helsinki", *HS* 14.06.2009. Väkevä, P., "Helsinki on homohyvä kaupunki", *HS* 26.06.2008; Melajoki, T., "Helsinki on homolle ystävällinen", *HS* 24.07.2009.

illustrator Tom of Finland, mentioned in Chapter 2, were much exaggerated. With their bulging muscles and reality-defying anatomical and physical traits, these characters can be interpreted as types of positive caricatures³⁵¹ – as much as they are embellished demonstrations of their maker’s dreams and ideals. These kind of caricatures Tom of Finland’s production represent allow homosexual men not to laugh at *themselves* and their ideals and desires, but to laugh *together* with other homosexuals at established notions, and thus achieve a sense of community.

The earlier introduced notion of gay shame has played its own part in rectifying and crushing gay and lesbian stereotypes, often driven from an urge born within the LGBTQ community. “For all its undeniable benefits, gay pride is now preventing us from knowing ourselves”, David M. Halperin surmises bleakly,³⁵² and there might be more truth to his words than initially assumed. According to Maija Lähteenmäki, the rhetoric of pride is always dependent on the whims of the cultural hegemony,³⁵³ which in this case is possessed by the heterosexual mainstream and further affects the structure of the LGBTQ identity.

Criticism against select homosexuals from within the Finnish gay community and Seta has materialised at times, especially in relation to the preferred renditions and representations these individuals chose to personify. The 1990s had marked an era of transition towards more tolerant attitudes and approaches concerning sexual minorities in the Finnish society. Despite this, individuals embodying the negative stereotypes – whether intentionally or accidentally, were seen as a threat to the integrity and representation of the LGBTQ community. Especially openly gay personas, constantly visible in the Finnish press – often accompanied by heavily exaggerated stereotypical gestures, manners and behaviour, were a threat to the more neutral and ordinary portrayal Seta and the LGBTQ community had tried to develop for the past few decades.³⁵⁴

Abovementioned makeup artist and hairdresser Raimo Jääskeläinen, more familiarly known as ‘Monsieur Mosse’, was a flamboyant, openly gay man and pet of the

³⁵¹ Rossi, L. M, ”Turvaseksin Michelangelo Tom of Finland välitti ja iloitsi piirtämistään miehistä”, *HS* 16.01.1992.2

³⁵² Halperin 2012, 71.

³⁵³ Lähteenmäki 2013, 20.

³⁵⁴ Juvonen 2015, 37-38.

Finnish media and press, known for his dramatic antics and behaviour.³⁵⁵ According to Seta and the gay community, Jääskeläinen's manner of conduct confirmed and renewed negative stereotypes of homosexuals.³⁵⁶ He was often featured in scandalous news in tabloids,³⁵⁷ openly talking about his life and conquests, managing to anger the Finnish gay community with his controversial opinions and provocative behaviour.³⁵⁸ Jääskeläinen was in his own category to create and renew existing gay stereotypes through the latter half of the 20th century in the Finnish media and society, not least with the open interview he gave the notorious tabloid *Hymy* in 1971.³⁵⁹ Seta hoped for better public portrayals of homosexual individuals: active and academic figures instead of the attention seeking kind.³⁶⁰ Especially in public and political contexts, the organisation aspired to present gays and lesbians as trustworthy and professionally serious figures.³⁶¹

The biggest dilemma surrounding stereotypes is how persistently they prevail, and breaking their hold has become a main purpose and agenda for the Finnish LGBTQ community. Although the main theme for the Gay Pride Parade in Tampere in 2005 was stereotypes, the struggle against stereotypes is present at all Finnish Pride parades and celebrations – having become one of the core agendas of the festival itself. In other words, the Finnish Pride festival, Helsinki Pride, is the epitome of the ongoing struggle against LGBTQ stereotypes. The Pride parade is a good manifestation of the diversity of the Finnish LGBTQ community, featuring and parading everyone identifying themselves with the agenda of *pride* – regardless of sexual orientation or other types of categorisation.

As is evident from the presented observations above, most of the Finnish press material from between 1990 and 2010 concerning homosexuals is somehow informed by stereotypes and/or countertypes – whether in terms of unconsciously maintaining them or consciously attempting to counter and break them. More than anything else,

³⁵⁵ Juvonen 2007, 265; Hytönen, M., "Onko Pepe Åhmanissa ainesta uudeksi Monsieur Mosseksi?", *HS* 30.08.1992.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁷ Juvonen 2015, 37-38, 172.

³⁵⁸ Juvonen 2015, 37-38, 172; Tolvanen, O. "Meikkitaiteilija Raimo Jääskeläinen Monsieur Mosse uskalsi elää," *HS* 24.98.1992; Hytönen, M. "Monsieur Mosse jahtaa yhä alla kolmekymppisiä", *HS* 26.05.1992.

³⁵⁹ Juvonen 2007, 265.

³⁶⁰ Juvonen 2015, 37-38.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*; 46.

physical as well as abstract stereotypes, with homophobia as their direct byproduct, have decisively defined the Finnish media's attitudes and images of homosexuals during these two decades. The origins of historical homosexual stereotypes are difficult to fully discern, but in the timeframe of my work the internalised homophobia and negative attitudes maintained by the media and population flared up considerably with the appearance of AIDS in the 1980s. These negative attitudes powered by the AIDS crisis progressed into the 1990s, with the purpose of this decade becoming one of justification and rectification for the LGBTQ community. This manifested further in the demands for public acknowledgement and approval. The public "coming outs", which Juvonen recounted, can be seen as an important part of this particular process in establishing and illuminating the existence of a homosexual Finnish population alongside the heterosexual majority. Breaking homophobic stereotypes often became the responsibility of select public members of the LGBTQ, although stories of ordinary homosexual individuals or same-sex couples would still be featured in the press. Usually the targets of such articles were the general Finnish population, but opportunities such as these allowed homosexuals to genuinely represent themselves and their circumstances – towards which newspapers and tabloids were occasionally very sympathetic.³⁶²

Many of the tabloids from the era of 1990 to 2010 featured stories on gay and lesbian couples and matters more personal than any official or formal newspaper or magazine did, thus affecting the expansion of homosexual representations as defined by members of the LGBTQ community themselves. McGarthy's, Yzerbyt's and Spears' principle of stereotypes only being valid whilst constructed and controlled by a bigger group is logical and well-founded, but cases such as the ones with Monsieur Mosse also confirm the damage a single person can inflict in terms of reinforcing and consolidating negative stereotypes. The situation worsens significantly, if the informant is a representative of said minority or group himself/herself. With the majority of the population and mainstream public usually retaining little or limited insight on the lives of minorities, stereotypes quickly become their only way to build personal attitudes upon, if no remedying or opposing information is offered as an alternative.

³⁶² See e.g., Haunia, A. "Sirpa ja Eila kihloutuivat keskenään", *SE!* 6/1992; Anttila, A., "Anja ja Tuula menevät naimisiin ja hankkivat lapsen", *SE!* 06/1998.

The 2000s also brought a lot of favourable opportunities for the LGBTQ community to publicly speak out, especially with the emergence of the gay and lesbian chic notions, and homosexual men and women becoming permanent additions on television. Despite these renditions often being primarily stereotypical or biased, these visible and public homosexual representations allowed Finnish homosexual citizens to openly and publicly question and counter them. The Pride festivals organised outside of Helsinki in smaller cities such as Vaasa, made important efforts to break stereotypes ingrained into areas less likely to independently acknowledge and recognise the discrimination against sexual minorities, and attempt to oppose it. These festivals also proved the absolute necessity of similar public celebrations like Pride as validations of homosexuality and the existence of the Finnish LGBTQ population. Although the work in order to break stereotypes and remedy the extensive damage done by them between 1990 and 2010 has been successful, and significant changes in representations of sexual minorities have occurred, there is still a long way to go.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis, I have examined and documented the reasons and circumstances behind the changes in the Finnish media's representations of homosexuals in the period from 1990-2010. This topic of research has offered significant insight on both the Finnish media's attitudes towards sexual minorities, as well as the Finnish LGBTQ community's continuous struggle for public recognition. While the circumstance of being different from the Finnish mainstream population have not been entirely benign or unproblematic in Finnish history, this period in question witnesses a clear transition towards improvements and more tolerant attitudes in the Finnish society.

Until the 1990s, the public images and representations of sexual minorities had been firmly maintained and controlled by the Finnish media, with members of the local LGBTQ community unable to partake in the construction of said definitions. The AIDS crisis with its aftermath in the 1990s had drawn homosexuals out of the shadows of anonymity and into the public space for scrutiny. This in turn offered this minority group long-coveted opportunities to openly demonstrate their existence, in order to battle established stereotypes and homophobic conceptions. For the first time homosexuals were presented with the opportunity to extensively represent themselves publicly in the Finnish media, on their own terms. The abolition of many discriminatory pieces of legislation against homosexuals in the late 1990s and early 2000s allowed for further expansion of the homosexuals' visibility and influence in the Finnish media and society.

Throughout my study, the concept of *visibility* has played a role of utmost importance in terms of determining and fortifying the LGBTQ community's right to exist. Visibility has the effect of legitimising existence, which illuminates the political nature of the gay culture and the history of the LGBTQ community, both in Finnish and foreign contexts. In terms of the Finnish media and its representations of homosexuals and other sexual minorities, visibility has been of vital importance, warranting attention and acknowledgement for these minorities. Whereas many formal newspapers during this period of study focused on topics of homosexuality with a more neutral demeanour and attitudes, the tabloids favoured a more straightforward approach. Despite occasionally sparking demeaning ideas, this

method also allowed for displays of recognition and sympathy towards sexual minorities. In the Finnish media, the 2000s marked the transition from homosexuality as a human rights topic and political consequence to one of representations of a minority group struggling to shake off stereotypes and false public renditions.

One of the most important – if not *the* most important, factors concerning the construction and maintenance of public representations has been stereotypes. These, along with homophobia, are solidly ingrained into the social structures the heterosexual society is built upon, not least in terms of the Finnish media as a product and herald of this society. Heteronormativity can also be identified as one of the accelerators for problems such as stereotypes and homophobia, based on the idea of a gendered society, into which rarities such as homosexuals and lesbians do not fit on their own terms. Stereotypes have also had a profound effect on the fortification and maintenance of the Finnish media's representations of sexual minorities during this period of study, which has been extensively criticised and acknowledged both within and outside of the Finnish LGBTQ community.

Discoveries in this research have led to the conclusion, that the Liberation Days and more specifically Helsinki Pride have played roles of utmost importance in consolidating and renewing the public images and representations of Finnish sexual minorities. This has mainly transpired through asserting the visual and spatial expressions and demands of the festival upon the public space of the city, usually reserved for the heterosexual mainstream. These actions have thus challenged the society's established ideals, as well as compelled the mainstream to acknowledge the sexual minorities and their existence. In these terms, the Finnish Pride festivals have been most importantly about "taking back the city", and offering visible alternatives to the heterosexual Finnish citizenship as the alleged single option. For the Finnish media, the reformed and carnivalesque appearance of Helsinki Pride in the 2000s became a subject of interest, with positive reactions attuning to homosexuals and their representations, not only in relation to the festival but outside of it as well.

The public image the festival has hoped to personify and embody has not, however, been completely accurate or honest due to the diversity and division within the Finnish LGTBQ community. This has complicated the construction of a unified public image, which would acknowledge all of these entities. The most publicly

visible, and in some cases overrepresented group within this community has most definitely been gay men. The gay male culture has in many ways become the defining factor and representation of the notions of homonormativity and other established forms of discrimination within the LGBTQ community. The visual lack of lesbians in the Finnish media has been extensively discussed and criticised, both from inside and outside of the Finnish LGBTQ community, although the 2000s still offered little in terms of amending this situation. Although the Pride festival tradition and its physical manifestations, such as the Pride parades, only represent a small segment of the Finnish LGBTQ population, it has generally become the semblance of a public image for the sexual minorities. Ultimately, the power of Helsinki Pride lies in its capacity to challenge established norms and ideals, forcing the society and media to momentarily relinquish its hegemonic hold of the established public images and representations, as well as the inherent categorisation.

Although the discussions and topics concerning sexual minorities and homosexuality in the Finnish media and society often drifted towards human rights and political notions, the most important concern for the sexual minorities has been to be acknowledged and recognised as ordinary Finnish citizens, with the same civil rights as the heterosexual mainstream. To conclude, between 1990 and 2010 the representations and public images of homosexuals in the Finnish media have changed from those of ridiculed deviants towards those of more normal, Finnish citizens. Still, there is a long way indeed, until homosexuals will be considered as normal, ordinary and uninteresting as any other Finnish citizen – heterosexual or otherwise, by the Finnish media.

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