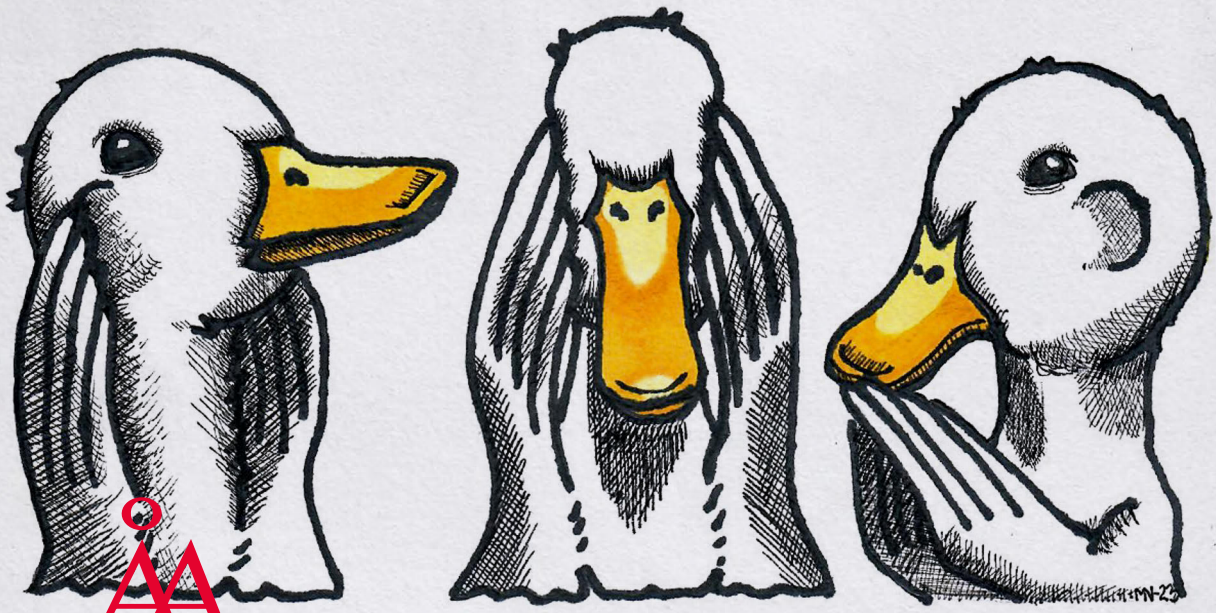
Sofia Wanström

When the Dam Burst

Perspectives on Genre and Tellability in Testimonies of Rape



Åbo Akademi University

Sofia Wanström

Born 1993

Master of Arts 2017, Nordic folkloristics, Åbo Akademi University

Cover Art by Malin Nyman

Åbo Akademi University Press
Tavastgatan 13, FI-20500 Åbo, Finland
Tel. +358 (0)2-215 4793
E-mail: forlaget@abo.fi

Sales and distribution:
Åbo Akademi University Library
Domkyrkogatan 2–4, FI-20500 Åbo, Finland
Tel. +358 (0)2-215 4190
E-mail: pubkliationer@abo.fi

WHEN THE DAM BURST

When the Dam Burst

Perspectives on Genre and Tellability in Testimonies of Rape

Sofia Wanström

Åbo Akademis förlag | Åbo Akademi University Press
Åbo, Finland, 2023

CIP Cataloguing in Publication

Wanström, Sofia.
When the dam burst : perspectives on genre and tellability in testimonies of rape / Sofia Wanström. - Åbo, Finland : Åbo Akademi University Press, 2023.
Diss.: Åbo Akademi University.
ISBN 978-952-389-054-1

ISBN 978-952-389-054-1
ISBN 978-952-389-055-8 (digital)
Painosalama Oy
Åbo 2023

Acknowledgments

Research is a collaborative project. Although I have conducted the research and written the thesis, it is also the result of cooperation with others who have commented, critiqued, questioned, and aided both the research and writing process. These different comments have been presented in seminars, conferences, texts, or emails, but also in the informal discussions at the morning coffee break, lunches, or post-seminar functions. I consider myself lucky to have written my dissertation in an environment as supportive and amiable as the one we have at our cluster for folkloristics, ethnology, culture analysis, and the archive Cultura at Åbo Akademi University. The past five years have presented both fun and less fun new challenges, but there have always been people ready to help in my many times of need, and I would like to thank all of you for making this dissertation possible.

I thank my supervisors, Professor Lena Marander-Eklund and university lecturer Maria Bäckman, for guiding me through this process. Thank you, Lena, for being a support during my years of studying at Åbo Akademi; your door has always been open. And thank you, Maria, for providing me with a different perspective and insightful comments, with a positive attitude that was ever so motivating. Thank you, senior lecturer Blanka Henriksson, for your help and support during my doctoral studies and before, and for supervising my master's thesis that prepared me for doing a doctorate. Thank you, Professor Fredrik Nilsson, for all your help not only in organizing my exchange period at Lund University but also in reading and commenting on my manuscript beyond the context of the seminars. The exchange period was also made possible thanks to docent Gabriella Nilsson, who further made it interesting and fruitful by organizing seminars, as well as offering comments on my text to eventually oppose it in its entirety in the fall of 2022—a great thanks to you; your comments and suggestions were sharp and valuable. And then there are all the other people, from within and outside our cluster, who have offered helpful comments both at seminars and in informal discussions, which includes the other doctoral students in the subjects of folkloristics and ethnology at Åbo Akademi, to whom I have also been able to vent about all the difficulties of doing a dissertation—many thanks to all of you for getting me this far. I do not dare to attempt naming you all, lest I forget someone, but you know who you are.

Furthermore, I thank Professor Elaine Lawless for examining my dissertation and offering me insightful comments. Thank you, docent Lena

Karlsson, for the same, and I am also looking forward to discussing it with you as my opponent during my defense.

I particularly thank Jenna Emtö, Ida Kronholm, Nina Nyman, Ylva Perera, and Vilhelmina Öhman, who organized *Dammen brister* campaign, not only for giving me this fascinating, albeit horrible, material to study but also for bringing these issues to light in Swedish Finland and giving 950 women a place to narrate their experiences. Your chat reflects the considerable amount of time and energy you dedicated to organizing the campaign, an extent to which I think few people are aware. You did an incredible job, and I hope you are proud of yourselves.

I also thank the Åbo Akademi University Foundation for offering me a stipend for the first year of my studies and Åbo Akademi for subsequently offering me employment, allowing me to focus on research rather than grant applications. I also thank The Swedish Literature Society for the stipend that made it possible for me to finish this thesis, and for giving me access to the archived material on *Dammen brister* that deepened my understanding of its organization in particular.

I am also very grateful for my friends and family, who have been supportive of my studies and listened to me rant about a situation entirely of my own making. In particular, I thank my friends Malin Nyman, who drew the fabulous picture on the cover of this thesis, and Alexandra Nyberg, who unhesitatingly granted me help with last-minute edits. You are both amazing women, and I am so happy to have you in my life. Last but not least, I thank my partner Oskar, who, despite joining the party at the end, has been crucial for me reaching the finish line. Without your persistent cheerleading and support, it is highly doubtful I would have gotten through this past year. You are the best.

Turku, 10.10.2023

Sofia Wanström

Abstract

In 2017, the #MeToo movement called attention to the prevalence of sexual violence in all corners of the world, including the Swedish-speaking parts of Finland. A feminist campaign titled *Dammen brister* published 950 testimonies of sexual harassment and assault that had occurred within the minority, while the call published with the campaign demanded the silence around sexual violence to be broken. Beyond merely breaking a silence, however, the testimonies provide personal insight into the experience of this violence, a valuable aspect that this thesis argues is often overlooked. The campaign does not merely call attention to the problem but also provides knowledge that can broaden our understanding of it. By starting from a folkloristic assumption of a connection between the form, content, and meaning of stories, this thesis moves to consider how these stories are presented. The thesis seeks to provide insight into the social and cultural context that frame and inform how rape is narrated and experienced.

The aim of this thesis is to study how women narrate stories of rape within the campaign, and hence, it focuses on 360 testimonies describing experiences of rape. The breadth of the scope of the campaign meant that a variety of different experiences of rape are presented among the testimonies, conveying the diversity of possible experiences as well as the ambiguity that can surround an experience of rape. Through using a method of close reading and listening, the thesis stays close to the material and proceeds from the ways in which the writers narrate and construct meaning from their experiences. By proceeding from the assumption of tellability as depending on the audience's ability to hear the stories in the intended way, the *Dammen brister* campaign is perceived as a space of increased tellability, as it represented a place in which writers could share with the assumption of being believed and validated, rather than questioned and blamed. The concepts of genre and positioning provide theoretical insight into how various narrative structures and strategies are used to convey certain meanings, as well as how the tellable space of *Dammen brister* allowed the writers to deviate from and challenge narrative expectations, telling both little and a lot.

This thesis provides important insight into the variety of ways in which raped women can narrate their experiences. As a subject that can be difficult to tell, it is argued to be crucial to allow those victimized space to narrate as little or as much as they find necessary in that time and space without requiring them to adhere to a specific structure or discourse. Such understanding of the narration of rape would increase tellability of the subject and hence allow women to interpret and recreate their experiences in their own voice. Thus, this thesis contributes to making women's own stories of rape to be rendered hearable and respected.

Abstrakt

Hösten 2017 uppmärksammade MeToo-rörelsen förekomsten av sexuellt våld i alla hörn av världen, inklusive de svenskspråkiga delarna av Finland. En feministisk kampanj med namnet *Dammen brister* publicerade 950 vittnesmål om sexuella trakasserier och övergrepp som hade upplevts inom minoriteten, medan uppropet som publicerades i samband med kampanjen krävde att tystnaden kring sexuellt våld skulle brytas. Utöver brytandet av tystnaden ger vittnesmålen även en inblick i upplevelsen av våldet, en viktig aspekt som denna avhandling hävdar att det ofta bortses från. Kampanjen uppmärksammar inte bara problemet, utan ger också kunskap som kan bredda vår förståelse av det. Med en folkloristisk utgångspunkt, som förutsätter ett samband mellan berättelsers form, innehåll och mening, undersöker avhandlingen hur berättelserna presenteras. Därigenom ämnar avhandlingen ge insikt i de sociala och kulturella sammanhang som ramar in och informerar om hur våldtäkt berättas och upplevs.

Avhandlingens syfte är att studera hur kvinnor berättar om våldtäkt inom kampanjen, och fokuserar därför på 360 vittnesmål som beskriver upplevelser av våldtäkt. Kampanjens räckvidd innebär att många olika erfarenheter av våldtäkt presenteras bland vittnesmålen, vilket förmedlar mångfalden av möjliga erfarenheter samt den tvetydighet som kan omge en upplevelse av våldtäkt. Med metoderna närläsning och lyssnande håller avhandlingen sig nära materialet, och utgår från skribenternas sätt att berätta och skapa mening från sina erfarenheter. Genom att utgå från en uppfattning om berättbarhet (eng. tellability) som avhängigt publikens förmåga att höra berättelsen på det avsedda sättet, uppfattas kampanjen som en plats med ökad berättbarhet, eftersom den erbjöd skribenterna en plats där de kunde dela sina upplevelser med antagandet om att de skulle bli trodda och validerade, snarare än ifrågasatta och anklagade. Begreppen genre och positionering ger teoretisk insikt i hur olika berättarstrukturer och strategier används för att förmedla vissa betydelser, samt hur det berättbara utrymmet i *Dammen brister* tillät skribenterna att avvika från och utmana narrativa förväntningar.

Denna avhandling ger insikt i de olika sätt våldtagna kvinnor kan berätta sina erfarenheter. Som ett svårt ämne att berätta om, hävdas det vara avgörande att låta de utsatta få utrymme att berätta så lite eller så mycket som de vid det tillfället anser nödvändigt, utan att kräva att de följer en specifik struktur eller diskurs. En sådan förståelse av berättandet om våldtäkt skulle öka ämnets berättbarhet och därmed ge kvinnor möjlighet att tolka och återskapa upplevelsen på eget sätt. Därav bidrar denna avhandling till att göra kvinnors egna berättelser om våldtäkt hörbara och respekterade.

Contents

1. Introduction

> It is time to speak of sexual harassment in Swedish Finland. At the time being, too many men and boys avoid being held accountable for their actions. Therefore, we want to expose the harassment and assaults that happen. The duck pond is small, and many of our partners, colleagues, acquaintances, bosses, teachers, and employees are best brothers with each other. In a small social entity, it is difficult to speak up when you know that many will have the perpetrator's back.
>
> But we know who you are. And our stories bear witness to what you have done.
>
> Now 6,111 women demand–*Break the silenc*e! (Emtö et al. 2018, 6)

Such was the opening of the call by the *Dammen brister* campaign (Eng.: *The Dam is Bursting*) that was published on November 29, 2017, on the feminist journal *Astra*'s webpage. The call was signed by 6,111 women and accompanied by 950 testimonies of sexual harassment and assault. The purpose of the campaign was to hold men accountable for their actions and reveal how these crimes also occur within the small community of Swedish-speaking Finns. A community that is often purported as safe, especially in contrast with the Finnish-speaking population.

The *Dammen brister* campaign sprung from the international #MeToo movement that spread across the world in the autumn of 2017. Although initially introduced by Tarana Burke in 2006, the phrase received global attention after actor Alyssa Milano in October 2017 tweeted, "If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet." Apart from simply replying "me too," people worldwide started telling their stories of sexual violence. In the year following the tweet, the MeToo hashtag was used approximately 19 million times on Twitter, roughly 55,000 times a day (Anderson and Toor 2018), circulating in 85 countries (Gill and Orgad 2018). The #MeToo movement was arguably one of the most significant cultural and media movements in the West that focused on sexual violence (Phipps 2020, 35), although it followed a growing trend of engaging in different forms of resistance and challenges to sexism and other forms of oppression using digital communication (Karlsson 2019b; Loney-Howes et al. 2022). From this international hashtag, many other campaigns specific to a nation, profession, or other groups of people were introduced; one of these was the *Dammen brister* campaign.

The testimonies of sexual harassment or assault shared by the campaign were collected in a secret Facebook group during the week preceding the publication. These testimonies vary significantly in length,

structure, form, and the kind of experience recounted. For this thesis, I decided to focus on experiences of *rape*, omitting those describing other assaults and harassment. This demarcation is made due to my perception that rape was overlooked in the public discussion of the campaign that instead focused more on harassment,[1] and it allowed me to narrow down a large body of material, leaving me with 365 testimonies. Nonetheless, the selected testimonies often include experiences other than rape, allowing me to consider and discuss the connection between different sexually violent experiences.

The campaign received considerable attention when it was released. As with #MeToo in general, it was hailed for breaking the silence around the subject of sexual harassment and assault. However, beyond simply breaking a silence, the testimonies are *stories*, which can be understood as "accounts of what happened to particular people—and of what it was like for them to experience what happened—in particular circumstances and with specific consequences" (D. Herman 2009, 2). Thus, the testimonies offer insight into experiences of sexual violence and rape (Karlsson 2019a) and constitute an essential and unique source of knowledge regarding such experiences (Alcoff, 2018). This thesis is in the field of folkloristics and presumes a connection between the form, content, and meaning of stories (cf. Bauman 2004). Analyzing the structure of stories, as well as how characters are positioned, is a way to reach the perceptions and attitudes the teller holds to the recounted experiences (Stahl 1977). In consideration of this, I here intend to shift the focus from the silence being broken to examining what was, in fact, *told* in the campaign. How is rape narrated in *Dammen brister*, and what meanings are conveyed through different narrative structures?

Background and purpose

A central aspect of this thesis is the *tellability* of stories. The demand made by the campaign was to "break the silence" around sexual harassment and assault, and this was propelled by people telling what was perceived as untellable. A tellable story can be understood as one that is accepted, while an untellable story is one that is rejected (Shuman 2005, 27). Tellability is sometimes described as being determined by the experience recounted, whether it is interesting or extraordinary enough to be told (cf. Labov

1 For example, after *Dammen brister* was published, there was a debate in parliament on the subject of sexual harassment (Ulander 2017); politicians in the small town of Raseborg reportedly wanted to initiate working against sexual harassment, with assault hanging on as a sidenote (Valtonen 2017). Similarly, in describing the campaign created within the church, #sanningenbefirar (Eng.: the truth shall set you free), the focus is on harassment with abuse as an occasional attachment (Brink 2018).

1972, 370–371). Conversely, untellability can be assumed as resulting from the experience as stigmatized or traumatic (D. E. Goldstein 2012). Without contradicting such claims and their influence on tellability, I assume that tellability is also determined by the context of the telling, both the situational and the wider cultural context. The term culture here refers to a shared understanding of reality that influences, and is influenced by, communicative practices and practices of meaning-making (cf. Arvidsson 2022, 10). The immediate situation of narration affects which stories are perceived as "appropriate," but stories' tellability is also constrained by the culture's perception of reality in that specific time and space and *who* is telling the story. In other words, what is tellable in one place at one time is perhaps not in another (Plummer 1995), and the position of the narrator can determine whether they have the right to tell the story or if they are worthy of being heard (D. E. Goldstein and Shuman 2016).

Thus, tellability is connected to the reception, or the interpretation, of the story. Most stories can be tellable if the teller accepts how it is interpreted by the audience (Shuman 2005, 7). For example, stories of rape have a long history of being interpreted as "not that bad," "just sex," or the victim's own fault (McKenzie-Mohr 2014). These stories have been tellable to the extent that the teller has been willing to accept such interpretations. However, a broadened understanding of what constitutes rape and what causes it has increased tellability of these stories by changing how they are received and perceived by the audience (Shuman 2005, 15). In this perspective, even though the *experience* of rape often is what is assumed to be untellable—and certainly, untellability can stem from the experience as violent and traumatic—the difficulty of narrating experiences of rape can rather be understood as a problem of *hearability*. The stories are not heard correctly, that is, how the teller had intended.

For a story to be heard, there needs to be an audience ready to listen and interpret it in the right way (Plummer 1995). However, people's capacity to hear stories depends on their socialization and perception of reality, which is determined by culture. As people are socialized into culturally formed ways of hearing and interpreting, they become oriented toward and open to particular kinds of stories while deaf to others (Andrews 2007, 36). Consequently, tellability becomes dependent on the successful navigation between personal experience and that which is perceived as a collective truth within the cultural context (Shuman 2005). This understanding of tellability connects to this thesis's ontological point of departure, which assumes that reality is constructed by *discourse*.

My understanding of discourse is mainly influenced by philosopher Linda Alcoff, who presents a Foucauldian definition of it as "the background system that organizes our knowledge and the practices that relate to knowledge" (Alcoff 2018, 2). Discourse organizes the realm of intelli-

gible meaning by determining not what *is* true but what *can* be true and thus be uttered (Hacking 2002, 79). Culture, then, describes the general perception of reality in which discourses operate and which they help to re-establish. Dominant discourse on rape makes general claims regarding who is a "real" victim and a "real" perpetrator (Andersson et al. 2019; Christie 2001). It also describes what is regarded as "real" rape, a description often limited to include only the instances of violent attacks perpetrated by a stranger (Ryan 2011). As a result, discourse on rape establishes an interpretive framework in which stories of rape are judged, not according to evidence or logical arguments, but by notions regarding who can be victimized, who can be accused, what are possible narratives, and how rape is allowed to be spoken about (Alcoff 2018, 3). In other words, stories of rape are understood not merely by the described event but according to discourse that pre-determines the meaning of such narratives.

Furthermore, discourse describing intersecting identity categories, such as sexuality, race, class, and ability, operate within this framework. The position of the speaker affects what they can disclose, to whom, and in which circumstances (Fileborn 2019). Hence, one person's story can be judged very differently from another's, depending on in what group(s) they are categorized and the discourse describing such groups, affecting whose experiences are heard. These discursive frameworks affect both the production and interpretation of stories, as they limit both tellability and hearability.

The *Dammen brister* campaign can be viewed as a "counter-cultural space" (Fileborn 2017), as it aimed to disrupt dominant representations of sexual violence. Because of previous digital feminist campaigns that had created a framework for carrying out and interpreting such counter-discussions and activism (Loney-Howes et al. 2022), the space was perhaps easily understood by participants as one in which they were allowed to think differently and voice different experiences, and have these experiences validated and believed. Thus, the campaign increased tellability by promising hearability, offering *narrative space to* the writers. What were the results of this?

The purpose of this thesis is to study *how women narrate stories of rape within the* Dammen brister *campaign.* By focusing on the structure of the stories, proceeding from the assumption of there being a connection between the form, content, and meaning of stories, I consider *how the stories account for experiences of rape and what meanings are thus conveyed* in this space of increased tellability and hearability. Starting from expectations posed by different genres—which can be understood here as a speech structure that informs the production and interpretation of text—I question how these violent narratives are structured and present-

ed. How do writers use the space of increased tellability when narrating their stories—adhering to or deviating from genre—and what does it tell us about the narration or experience of rape? How do the audience and the situational and cultural context affect the construction of these stories?

What becomes vital for meeting this purpose is also the discursive construction of gender, sex, and heterosexuality. Central to philosopher Michael Focault's (1991) understanding of discourse is that it not only informs people's understanding of the world but is also a disciplinary force that regulates human life and imposes certain behaviors. Discursive power is enforced mainly through the creation of norms, with the expectation that deviation from such norms would lead to punishment and following them to rewards (ibid., 179–184). Thus, the perception applied here is that dominant discourse does not simply constrain how we understand an experience but is also productive and constitutive; that is, it creates meanings, desires, behaviors, and bodies (Gavey 2019, 82).

Per extension, this means that discursive contexts not only inform and shape the *stories* of experience but also the *experiences themselves*, at least partly (Alcoff 2018). I take "experience" to include "perceptual sensations, affective responses, and cognitive attitudes as these are clustered within a specific time and space" (Alcoff 2018, 57). By informing people of what is possible, discourse determines what people can do and what can be experienced (ibid., 3). Foucault (1990) claims that experience has history; thus, how people experience is affected by their knowledge, norms, and how they perceive themselves. In this view, experience does not precede discourse, but discourse constitutes the foundation of experience (Scott 1992).

From this understanding of experience, the notion of different *scripts* has emerged. Scripts can be perceived as a framework that informs how certain social behavior is supposed to be played out (Löfgren-Mårtenson 2013, 58). For example, gender scripts have been used to describe how or why individuals conform to patterned behavior expected of them (Alcoff 2018, 64). For understanding gender, I follow historian and philosopher Joan Scott (2018) in considering gender not as determined by any natural differences between the sexes but as produced through a perception of difference that makes gender both meaningful and connects it to power (Scott 2018, 42–46). In other words, gender emerges through discourse that determines what men and women are and how they should be perceived, which informs social relations and legitimizes and reproduces a system of domination and subordination. Thus, social relations and hierarchies in society are created by claims of gender, meaning that power relations are legitimized, and differences between the sexes are naturalized as they are repeatedly reconstructed and supported in individual and social practices (ibid.). With this perspective, cultural understand-

ing of gender contributes to recreating the current social relations. How the testimonies create and interpret gender is sidelined in this thesis, as I have chosen to focus on different questions that are more helpful for meeting my purpose. Nonetheless, I perceive sexual violence as a practice that recreates gender, gives it meaning, and functions to place women in a subordinate hierarchal position (cf. Cahill 2001, 122). In contrast, gender simultaneously contributes to creating the perceptions of (hetero)sexuality, the duality of gender, and sexual violence as "normal." As a result, I do not perceive gender as an established category but consider how it can be used to create meaning in the stories.

The gender script both informs and is informed by a (hetero)sexual script. People's sexual will and desires are therefore not assumed to be emerging from a sort of natural "self" but as constituted by discourse (Butler 2011). Although sexuality does not necessarily follow gender, the normalization of heterosexuality has caused gender to be understood in terms of having sexual desire toward the opposite sex (Bäckman 2003, 16). Fundamentally, the heterosexual script expects men to actively seek out sex and women to passively wait for the man's initiative and answer to it (Gunnarsson 2020, 39). This script constructs the genders as not only different but complementary, causing the active/passive positions to be perceived as both natural and necessary. Psychologist Nicola Gavey (2019) argues that this script creates preconditions for rape, as it allows for sexual situations in which signs of the woman's desire are absent. The woman not showing desire and even her active resistance can be presumed as part of the "heterosexual game," which normalizes men's continuous "seduction" attempts and even the use of force (Ekström 2002; Nilsson 2018) as a woman's will is always negotiable (Gavey 2019). Consequently, it becomes the woman's responsibility to clearly show non-consent if she does not want to have sex, creating a perception of the female body as inherently boundaryless, accessible until claimed otherwise (Andersson 2001). A result of this is that instances of rape can be reinterpreted as "just sex" (Gavey 2019; McKenzie-Mohr 2014) or simply an unfortunate misunderstanding on the perpetrator's part (Nilsson 2009, 44).

Thus, the discursive understanding of heterosexuality approves sexual encounters that are not easily distinguishable from rape, causing the boundaries between sex and rape to become blurred (Gavey 2019, 3). Nevertheless, discourse on rape often presents it as a clear-cut category, the binary opposite of sex, and the experiences as easily distinguishable and recognizable (Alcoff 2018). This dichotomous construction of rape and sex can obstruct people's ability to comprehend more ambiguous and complex sexual experiences that do not neatly adhere to either category (ibid., 9). Alcoff (2018) argues that there is a lack of language to describe the complex experiences that could be placed somewhere in a gray area

between rape and sex, making such experiences difficult to conceptualize. A lack of language does not make these experiences impossible, as experience is not completely constructed by discourse, and experiences can be meaningful even if we do not have the means to express them. However, this lack can obstruct people's capacity to interpret complex experiences, as these are not readily understood as possible experiences.

Therefore, *how women relate to discourse on gender, heterosexuality, and sex* becomes essential for my purpose of considering *how* women narrate experiences of rape. Gender and sexual scripts affect the understanding of rape, but such scripts can also be problematized and countered by narrators. Thus, what I further ask is how are normative assumptions regarding gender, sex, and heterosexuality used to make sense of experiences of rape; and how are they interpreted, reinterpreted, and challenged within the tellable space of the *Dammen brister* campaign?

Using a discursive framework for understanding experiences requires some clarifications. Firstly, I do not assume discourse as contradicting or eliminating agency. Discourse and discursive power should not be considered determinative and inescapable but as means of understanding why people are shaped in certain forms rather than others and why they may act and argue in ways that are to their own disadvantage (cf. Gavey 2019, 84). Secondly, it is crucial to remember that the disciplinary power of discourse is accompanied by more traditional forms of power, such as violent force or threat thereof (Cahill 2000). Failing to follow expected gendered norms, especially in sexual situations, is accompanied by a very real threat of rape (Gavey 2019, 146). This risk can be compared to the dangers people face when deciding to speak out about their experiences of rape. The untellability of rape is not only protected discursively, but speaking out about rape can potentially lead to severe negative consequences, including harassment, violence, and retaliation (Alcoff 2018; Gottzén and Franzén 2020; Manne 2019). Thirdly, it is crucial to emphasize that experiences are never just "in the head," constituted by discourse (Alcoff 2018, 74). Although discourse makes experience intelligible, *what* is being interpreted is not a blank slate that can be given any meaning whatsoever. Bodily parts, especially those as unique and intimate as sexual organs, provide meaningful content to experiences that cannot be manipulated at will (ibid., 13).

***

To summarize, the tellability of stories of rape is not only constrained by the subject as stigmatized or by the trauma of the experience but also by the cultural context that determines how these experiences are understood, narrated, and heard. Discourse on rape, gender, and sex describes the normative experience, what experiences count as "real," as well as who

is allowed to speak about rape, how, and in what situations. As a result, discourse can exclude and silence many voices. The *Dammen brister* campaign could be perceived as a counter-cultural space in which the limits of tellability were expanded by promised hearability, perhaps permitting the narration of different stories as well as creative ways of telling. What is examined here is how these kinds of violent narratives are structured and presented—in this space of increased tellability and hearability—and what meanings are conveyed. It is questioned how writers adhere to or deviate from expectations posed by different genres and what this informs us about the narration or experience of rape; how such narration is affected by the audience and the situational and cultural context; and how discursive constructions of gender, sex, and heterosexuality are operational, interpreted, and challenged within these testimonies.

Disposition

The following three chapters continue introducing the thesis by presenting the material, theoretical and methodological approach, and describing the research field. Chapter 2 introduces the *Dammen brister* campaign and the ethnic minority of Finland-Swedes. Additionally, it presents the material and the demarcation made, my method of approaching the material, and ethical considerations. Chapter 3 outlines this thesis's theoretical and methodological framework, focusing on genre and positioning. Lastly, chapter 4 presents prior research the present study builds on, clarifying the understanding of narrating violence and the practice of digital feminist activism.

The analysis that follows is divided into two parts. Part I examines different parts of a story—the beginning, the middle, and the end—questioning what is expected from a story, how the different parts are narrated, and what meanings are conveyed. Part II instead focuses on other structures and styles of narration present among the testimonies and how these represent the experiences and convey meaning. Thus, part II considers the width of tellability and hearability offered by the campaign that allowed writers to tell a little, tell a lot, and tell their selves.

2. Method and material

In this chapter, the campaign is contextualized by an overview of the development of the #MeToo movement in the Nordic countries and its meaning in relation to feminist activism in general, as well as a presentation of the ethnic minority of Finland Swedes. Subsequently, the material examined is introduced, including how it has been collected, the demarcation made, and the method of approaching it. Additionally, ethical considerations will be presented and discussed.

The formation of the *Dammen brister* campaign

Feminist activists have regularly made use of technological advances, and the internet is no exception. Research on how feminists challenge discourse on rape, harassment, and misogyny shows how digital spaces are used as creative sites for activism while simultaneously teaching the audience about these issues (Mendes, Ringrose, and Keller 2019, 16). The #MeToo movement can be considered exceptional because of its sheer size and because the victims were being believed (Savigny 2020, 1). However, criminologist Rachel Loney-Howes and her colleagues (2022) suggest that the movement was made possible and understandable because of the feminist consciousness-raising campaigns that had taken place before #MeToo. The researchers argue that previous campaigns created "digital footprints," an interpretive framework for these kinds of campaigns, which not only made #MeToo possible but also more intelligible and impactful.

In contrast with countries such as Sweden (Karlsson 2019a) and the United States (e.g., Loney-Howes et al. 2022), similar digital activism campaigns against sexual violence had not been conducted in Finland prior to #MeToo (to the best of my knowledge). Nonetheless, different actors in Finland have been working against the problem of sexual violence, often focusing on legal reformation. National legal and social science scholars have criticized the inefficiency of the criminal process and legal definition of rape (e.g., Leskinen 2017; Niemi-Kiesiläinen 2000), that prior to 2023 was based on the use of force rather than lack of consent. In 2019, the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, a group monitoring the Istanbul Convention, reported that not all forms of sexual violence are outlawed in Finland, as required by the convention (Alaattinoğlu, Kainulainen, and Niemi 2021). This lack of legislation was also noted in 2014 by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (ibid.).

Furthermore, different human and women's rights organizations have pushed for the implementation of a definition of rape that relies

on the lack of consent (Leskinen 2017). Among these is the Amnesty International sector in Finland, which has advocated against violence towards women since 2004 (Amnesty International 2023). In a report published in 2019, the organization proclaimed that Finland has a high level of impunity for sexual violence, emphasizing the nation's failure to address the problem of sexual violence (Amnesty International 2019). In 2018, after #MeToo, a range of private actors and non-governmental organizations, youth organizations, and political parties launched a citizens' initiative for the implementation of a consent-based law in Finland ("Samtycke2018" n.d.). As of January 2023, rape is legally defined as the act of having intercourse with a person who does not participate willingly (The Criminal Code of Finland 1889/39, 20 § 1).

Despite the absence of similar campaigns having been held prior to #MeToo in Finland, the movement's impact, and particularly its breakthrough in Sweden, made its appearance in Finland not unexpected. Sweden's response to the #MeToo movement had been almost immediate, and distinct for the country was the vast number of industry-specific campaigns initiated (Pollack 2019). Between October 2017 and March 2018, 65 different calls were made by different petition groups, representing mainly various occupational groups (ibid.) The situation in Norway was similar, where 29 occupational groups and seven other groups had published calls within the scope of the #MeToo movement by mid-February 2018 (Sletteland 2018). Doctoral student in gender studies and one of the organizers of *Dammen brister,* Nina Nyman (2022b), notes how many participants in the campaign had a preconceived understanding regarding how this kind of activism was to be realized. Particularly, the #MeToo calls published in Sweden created expectations for the campaign and canon regarding how it was to be organized (ibid.).

***

The idea for creating a "MeToo-campaign" for the Finland-Swedish minority[1] originated in a feminist Facebook group and was subsequently brought to the feminist journal *Astra*. The people within *Astra* who were interested and willing to further the initiative created a chat: freelance

1 Besides the *Dammen brister* campaign, Finland had several branch-specific campaigns. In #milläoikeudella (Eng.: with what right), 230 people testified of harassment in the sector of law. The seamen had #lättaankar (Eng.: anchors away) to highlight the problem at sea and restaurant-and tourist workers #notonthemenu. #MeMyös (Eng.: us too) was the Finnish equivalent of *Dammen brister* and collected testimonies of general experiences rather than connected to a specific field. The largest branch-specific campaign in Finland was #kulissientakana (Eng.: behind the scenes). The call received 1039 signatures and collected 150 testimonies of harassment and assault. These campaigns led to a discussion in the parliament on the subject of sexual harassment, but no concrete actions against the problem were taken.

journalist Jenna Emtö, theater worker Ida Kronholm, Chief Editor of *Astra* Nina Nyman, writer Ylva Perera, and writer Vilhelmina Öhman. Herein started the *Dammen brister* campaign, and the chat was the only means of communication that the admins used during the campaign's organization as they were located in different places/countries (Nyman 2022b).[2]

The chat was created on November 22, 2017, a couple of days after one of the largest campaigns in Sweden—#silencerecording—had a public reading with more than 200 of the country's most famous actors at Södra Teatern in Stockholm, attended even by Queen Silvia and Crown Princess Victoria (Požar 2022, 15). The admins subsequently created a "secret" Facebook group named "vimed" (Eng.: "us too"). Facebook's "secret" setting meant that members had to be added to the group by someone and subsequently accepted by the admins. A low threshold for sharing experiences was emphasized in the group, which also aimed at being inclusive—only cis-men[3] were not allowed in the group. How this would be phrased was discussed extensively, and eventually, admins decided on "women, girls, and people who present themselves or are perceived as feminine" (Nyman 2022b, 191). This description was meant to be inclusive while still recognizing the connection between the role of sexual violence in relationships of power and the reestablishment of a binary gender system (ibid.). The reason for excluding cis-men was based on the statistical evidence that presents them as constituting the perpetrators in most cases of sexual violence and to lessen the risk of writers testifying against someone who was a participant in the group (ibid.). The campaign was explicitly aimed at collecting experiences from within the minority: sexual harassment and assaults perpetrated by *Finland-Swedish* men.

The admins started by inviting their friends, who subsequently invited their friends and acquaintances. Hence, the campaign and collection spread through digital word-of-mouth. Ultimately, the group had more than 20,000 members (of a minority of approximately 280,000 people). Members started sharing their experiences of sexual harassment and

2 This chat is archived at the Swedish Literature Society and has the conversation held between the five women from 22.11.2017-16.5.2018. The chat is 402 pages long and offers a unique insight into how the campaign was organized. Since the organizers were located in different cities and/or countries, all of the campaigns' planning and coordination took place in the chat. The labor involved in these kinds of campaigns is often incorrectly assumed to be minimal, despite involving much hidden labor, not to mention the emotional toil of reading these stories (Mendes et al., 2018). This chat clearly presents both the amount of work behind the campaign and the demand placed on the organizers by a variety of social actors, including the media and members of the group. In 2018, the organizers received the Fredrika Runeberg's prize for their effort with the campaign. *Astra* was the legal recipient of the prize money of 10 000€, but the money was donated to *The Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters.*

3 Cis-gender refers to a person whose gender identity matches the sex the person was identified as having at birth.

assault in the group. They could either post it themselves or submit it anonymously by messaging—and eventually e-mailing—the admins, who then posted the testimony in the group. The atmosphere was supportive, as shown by other members through commenting or using the "liking" function on Facebook. The call that was to be released with the testimonies was created and posted in the group where participants could offer suggestions and comments, making it the result of an interactive process. Certain expressions in the call were also borrowed from Swedish campaigns that had been published, such as "we know what you have done" (Nyman 2022b). The name "Dammen brister" was also suggested in a discussion in the group, causing the admins to exchange the name "vimed" for *Dammen brister.* A finished version of the call was published in the group on November 24, and started collecting signatures.

Thus, the process of collecting the testimonies and writing the call was all carried out in the group, in collaboration between the members and admins. The admins did not edit the testimonies (at this point), and all experiences were welcomed. Still, the admins had to maintain the group and answer demands made by members and different media channels. Partly resulting from criticism received by the Swedish media for their reporting on #MeToo regarding accused people being named, the group did not allow names or identifying information, and the admins aimed to maintain the focus on structures rather than individuals. To assure anonymity, the admins eventually changed the page setting, requiring them to "accept" each post before it was posted. However, it appears from the chat that no post was prevented from being published. On November 23, the Finland-Swedish newspaper *Hufvudstadsbladet* broke the embargo and published quotes from the group, causing much distress among the members. In trying to maintain the group as a safe space for sharing experiences, it was declared that leaking from the group would result in a ban.

For legal reasons, the admins eventually started deleting posts, moving the text to a different document for publication. The testimonies were documented and numbered in the order they were posted. People who did not want their testimonies made public were allowed to withdraw them, and it was then replaced with the text "the testimony has been deleted upon request of the writer" so that the total number of testimonies would remain the same. Sixteen people chose not to make their testimonies public. The Facebook page was deleted approximately a month after the publication of the campaign.

On November 29—merely a week after the group was created—the call, signed by 6,111 people, and around 200 of the 950 collected testimonies were published on *Astra'*s webpage. All 950 testimonies collected were uploaded by the one-year anniversary, November 29, 2018. The time was needed for editing the testimonies to remove all information that could

allow the perpetrator or the victim to be identified (e.g., names of cities, schools, and organizations). The testimonies and the call are archived at the Swedish Literature Society. Additionally, some of the testimonies, the call, and an excerpt from the chat are published in the book *Dammen brister* (Emtö et al. 2018), edited by the admins.

For this thesis, I use the material published on *Astra's* webpage ("#dammenbrister" 2018). I was a member of the Facebook group in November 2017, but I neither saved any material from it nor did I submit a testimony of my own. I have read the chat between the admins, archived at the Swedish Literature Society. It has given me significant insight into the campaign's organization and the collaborative work conducted in the campaign. However, the chat will not be analyzed. The Swedish Literature Society also sent out a questionnaire regarding the campaign in 2019, titled *Me too and dammen brister—what happened after?* that asked the informants how they experienced the campaign and what effects of it they observed, etc. The questionnaire received only twenty answers, which appears surprisingly few considering the attention the campaign first received. I have read the answers to the questionnaire, but these are also not subjected to analysis.

Before giving a more detailed account of the material and the demarcation made among the testimonies, I shortly present the Finland-Swedish context of the campaign as it is crucial both for understanding why the campaign was needed and how it was carried out. As noted, the process of collecting the testimonies was technically through "word-of-mouth," as members invited their friends, who in turn invited theirs. This process shows the inherent smallness of the minority, although it also opened the possibility of people being excluded.

Finland-Swedes

Finland-Swedes refers to a group of Swedish-speaking Finns located mainly on Finland's western and southern coast, a geographical area referred to as Swedish Finland. It is not a minority in the legal sense, as Finland does not have legally acclaimed minorities. Instead, both Finnish and Swedish are national languages, and people's right to Swedish is fortified in the constitution (The Constitution of Finland 731/1999, 17 §). Finland-Swedes can still be considered a language minority, as only around 5.2% of the Finnish population of 5.5 million speak Swedish (Klinkmann, Henriksson, and Häger 2017; Tilastokeskus n.d.). However, such numbers can be misleading as they do not include bilingual people—you can only have one mother tongue—and it cannot be guaranteed that all people registered as Swedish-speaking Finns identify as Finland-Swedish

(Klinkmann, Henriksson, and Häger 2017). Nonetheless, the language still forms the basis for different institutions, such as schools, and it creates small social circles that make voicing accusations of harassment or assault difficult (Nyman 2022b).

Finland-Swedes can also be considered an ethnic minority, proceeding from the requirements of self-identification or -categorization, ancestry, cultural characteristics, and social organizations (Allardt and Starck 1981; cf. Klinkmann, Henriksson, and Häger 2017). Finland-Swedish is often something people self-identify as (especially in meeting the Other) (Mattsson 2011); it is an identity that is generally received from one or both parents; and the minority has a wide variety of organizations that focus on maintaining the interests of the minority (Klinkmann, Henriksson, and Häger 2017).

Specific cultural characteristics are also assumed to be shared among people of the minority. Although the most significant distinction between the Finnish- and Swedish-speaking population is the language, there are also assumed character traits, or stereotypes, often ascribed Finland-Swedes. Finland-Swedes are often presented as more prosperous, well-situated, or better in some ways—in contrast with the Finnish-speaking population—summarized in the common idiom "Swedish-speakers better people" (Klinkmann 2017). Finland-Swedes are also often presented as happier (ibid.) and more tolerant (and thereby more "civilized") than Finnish-speaking Finns (Backa 2017). Still, there is no consensus regarding how the minority is to be understood or perceived and what meanings are ascribed to it (Nyman 2022b). However, according to one of the admins of *Dammen brister*, Nina Nyman (2022b), the absence of consensus made it possible for the campaign to form around the minority, as it made a multifaceted understanding of the "place" of Swedish Finland possible.

The minority has also been described as an "imagined community," which refers to a sense of community and togetherness despite such a community not existing in any concrete sense (Mattsson 2011, 29). The name of the campaign and the purpose of highlighting sexual violence within the minority reflects this idea of a shared community. The name—*the Dam is Bursting*—can be understood metaphorically as a water dam (silence) bursting, with large bodies of water (speech) flowing out. However, it also relates to "Ankdammen," the "Duck Pond," a common nickname for the minority of Finland-Swedes. Without going into the many different meanings that can be applied to the metaphor of the Duck Pond, people seem to generally agree that it refers to Swedish Finland being a small community where "everyone knows everyone." This understanding of the duck pond is noticeable in the call published with the campaign, where it is stated that "The duck pond is small, and many of our partners,

colleagues, acquaintances, bosses, teachers, and employees are best brothers with each other. In a small social entity, it is difficult to speak up when you know that many will have the perpetrators' back." (Emtö et al. 2018) Earlier in the call, it also stated that the purpose is to show that sexual harassment and assault *also* happen within this minority, indicating how such things could be assumed to occur only *elsewhere.*

Thus, besides Finland-Swedes constituting a small social entity where people know each other, the campaign notes how the Duck Pond is often considered a *safe* community, in contrast with the Finnish-speaking population. One of the admins reports hearing that Finland-Swedes are "more equal" than Finnish-speaking Finns (Emtö et al. 2018, 13), and a person who had initially signed the call wanted her name removed if it placed the blame on Finland-Swedes because, in her experience, it had always been Finnish speakers who were harassing (ibid., 26.).

It has been argued that speaking out about violence in minorities poses more challenges for the speaker (Willis 2011). As people in small social circles might know each other, the risk of negative consequences, such as being disbelieved or retaliated against, is increased. Furthermore, a disinclination to reproduce negative stereotypes against the minority might urge women to stay silent about abuse (Kagal, Cowan, and Jawad 2019). However, because of the positioning of Finland-Swedes rather as "better people" (Sandell 2022) and perceived as being of the same racial category as Finnish-speaking Finns, I doubt that the concern about affirming negative stereotypes has affected women's capacity to speak about violence. Instead, I assume that the difficulty of speaking stems from the perception of this violence not occurring in the minority—meaning that the experiences are less likely to be heard—as well as the fear of consequences and retaliation that is possible in a community where "everyone knows everyone."

The testimonies

In the introduction, it was established that the focus of this thesis will be on the narration of experiences of rape, sidelining stories of sexual harassment, and other forms of sexual violence. By reading through the published material, 365 testimonies were selected that form the material for this thesis. In this section, I present the selected material and how the demarcation was made. Additionally, some focal terminology used when addressing the writers and the testimonies is clarified.

In *Rethinking Rape,* Cahill defines rape as "the imposition of a sexually penetrating act on an unwilling person" (Cahill 2001, 11). When selecting the material, a slightly modified version of this definition was used that

included sexual acts that were not (explicitly) penetrative. In practice, this meant that narrated acts of simply touching genitals were included. All sexual acts described in the testimonies have been understood as unwanted simply by being presented within the campaign. Hence, I have made no judgment of the experiences proceeding from consent, which is a common way to differentiate between sex and rape (Gunnarsson 2020), nor based on what would constitute rape according to the Finnish Criminal Code.

Because of the low threshold of sharing experiences in *Dammen brister*, and the request for stories of "sexual harassment or abuse," the campaign and #MeToo in general offered space to present a wide range of experiences, including sexual acts perhaps not easily understood as rape or perceived as such by the writers themselves, in other words, the testimonies also describe experiences from within the gray area between sex and rape, ones that might not fit comfortably within either category. Many writers do not name their experiences at all, while others could refer to it as something else, such as "harassment" or "coerced sex." Not having to categorize one's story as rape might have made these stories more tellable, and as a result, the campaign presents a wide variety of experiences, offering crucial insight into rape as a complex and ambiguous experience.

However, the fact that the writers might not perceive their experience as rape posed some problems for me. I was reluctant to define and determine someone else's experience, yet omitting the term rape would conversely signal that the presented experiences are inherently something *other* than rape. The disinclination to using the term rape conveys a reluctance to acknowledge the commonality of it, a wish to differentiate between assumed "real" rape and other "normal" experiences of sexual violence. Therefore, I use the term rape, but rather than as determining others' experience, it should be understood as an analytical term that guides my view of the told experiences and allows me to rethink and reinterpret what rape is, how it is experienced, and how it is narrated.

When speaking of rape, I rely on the gender binary that presents women as the victims and men as the perpetrators: partly because the campaign explicitly focused on experiences perpetrated by men, meaning that most testimonies orient within this gender binary, but also because rape is a crime mainly committed against women and perpetrated by men (Skilbrei, Stefansen, and Heinskou 2020), and gender-neutral language functions to obscure such facts, as well as the relationship between rape and gendered power structures (Cahill 2000). Indeed, Cahill (2001, 145) keenly notes how the fact that men *can* be raped but *are not* to the same extent as women, reveals rape as part of the systematic control of women. She presents rape as an embodied experience, connecting it to the material reality of the body while emphasizing how such embodiment is also discursive and situated and hence laden with meanings embedded within

various material and discursive systems (ibid., 113). This means that rape is experienced by individual bodies that are constructed and marked—albeit not completely determined—by discourse (ibid., 9). As sexual difference is one of the primary means of differentiating between embodied subjects, Cahill holds that rape cannot be understood in gender-neutral terms because doing so ignores the social function of rape to recreate sexual difference (ibid., 121). For example, Cahill notes how the experience, or even the threat of rape, affects the formation of the feminine body and limits women's space and lives by forcing them to be aware of this threat to their bodies constantly. In this thesis, the focus will be on discourse, but what I mean to emphasize here is how discourse can become lodged in the body, affecting its materiality. Discourse and experience of rape affect how women perceive and move their bodies, and hence sexual violence contributes to the recreation of gender according to a structure of domination and subordination.

With the term woman, I refer to all those who travel under the sign of "woman" (Ahmed 2017, 25). Using this definition, I aim to encapsulate the group of people that were included in the campaign, that is, "women, girls, and people who present themselves or are perceived as feminine" (Nyman 2022b, 191), while using only the term woman. However, in the analysis, those testifying are generally referred to as writers or as participants/members when discussing the campaign more broadly. This allows me to refer to the informants according to their actions rather than identity labels such as victim or survivor.

The discussion on whether to use the term victim or survivor is complex. On the one hand, it has been noted that those with experiences of rape prefer the term survivor as it signals agency instead of passivity (Sigurvinsdóttir, Ásgeirsdóttir, and Arnalds 2020), while on the other, the connection between victimhood and passivity has been contested, suggesting that the term victim simply recognizes the reality of violence (Mardorossian 2002). Following this later perception, the term victim is used when referring to people who have been victimized more generally.

The 365 testimonies in my material vary widely in length, detail, and style. The shortest is but a sentence, while the longest is 3,636 words. Some describe one experience, while others present many. Some provide detailed accounts of the writer's feelings and the effects of the experience, while others merely state what happened, offering little insight into the results. The testimonies being numbered according to the order in which they were submitted, it is easy to notice how they grew longer during the week the collection process went on. Such an increase in length could be explained by people reading others' testimonies, giving them ideas of what could be shared. The support, validation, and belief in people's experiences that was underlined and reestablished during the week of collecting

testimonies could also have prompted writers to share more, as it has unsurprisingly been noted that witnesses tend to speak more in supportive environments (Sigurvinsdóttir, Ásgeirsdóttir, and Arnalds 2020; Squire 2013). Perhaps the Facebook-page was not unquestionably accepted as a safe space initially but rather established as such during the collecting process in interaction between the members and admins, creating it as a "safe space" for sharing (cf. Ganetz, Hansson, and Sveningsson 2022a), explaining the increase in the texts' length.

As a result of some testimonies describing multiple experiences, the ones selected for examination in this thesis might also include experiences of harassment and other types of assault. Therefore, the suggestion that sexual violence exists on a *continuum* (Kelly 1988) rather than as being inherently different is not ignored. For example, verbal harassment is not regarded as fundamentally different from rape, but both experiences are perceived as existing on a continuum of men's sexual violence toward women and as functioning to recreate (hierarchal) gender positions. The understanding of a continuum of sexual violence conveys how different sexually violent experiences are not distinguishable, and establishing a hierarchy of different forms of violence is problematic (ibid., 49).

The wide variety in length, style, and structure makes the material apt for my purpose of studying *how* women narrate experiences of rape due to representing multiple different ways of narration. The variety of narrative structures allows me to examine how the stories are made tellable and hearable as the writers adhere to or challenge different genres, which is fundamental for meeting this purpose. The fact that *all* kinds of experiences were permitted in the group opened the space for tellability, but furthermore, this space allowed writers to structure their stories however they wished without necessarily needing to adhere to structural expectations on stories, particularly stories of rape. When someone narrates their experience of rape within the judicial system, the teller is often expected to disclose it in a very specific way, according to a narrative structure that is not sensitive to the needs of a victim of rape (J. L. Herman 2005). In contrast, in online spaces such as *Dammen brister,* writers are offered the freedom and emancipatory potential that comes with being allowed to narrate in their own voice. Although not absolute, this narrative space could have increased tellability for the writers.

However, the material also has certain limitations. Some writers are so brief in their narration that it is difficult to understand what they are trying to convey. Since the material is not only written but also anonymous, I cannot ask the writer to elaborate or explain, which is an advantage of conducting interviews or even in written email correspondence. The campaign also specifically asked for experiences with Finland-Swedish *men*, excluding experiences with women or non-binary people. The collecting

work being conducted on Facebook and the group requiring an invitation might also have resulted in people being excluded. Despite admin's attempts to be inclusive of everyone, the campaign was by some understood as excluding gender minorities (Nyman 2022b, 191); therefore, the queer perspective has been argued missing in the campaign by a representative for the LGBTQ+ organization *Regnbågsankan* (rbadmin2014 2018).

In general, studying written text is different from studying oral. As folklorists started recognizing in the 1970s, much of the story lies in the telling of it, in the performance (Gunnell and Ronström 2013). Gestures, tone of voice, and the audience significantly impact how a story is presented and what meaning is conveyed. Thus, written text is more limited when considering the communication of meaning. On the other hand, written narratives have been noted to adhere to order and literary principles to a further extent than oral narratives (Langer 1993), meaning that written narratives might be easier to follow, at least to some extent. Written material also gives me more distance to my material, making me less affected by the person telling (cf. Johansson 2010, 26), and questions regarding whether I should help or support the writers are made irrelevant due to this lack of contact with them. Conversely, this means that the writers neither decided nor consented to tell *me about* these experiences, which opens some ethical problems with me using this material.

Ethical considerations and listening

The testimonies are anonymized and published online, making it admissible for me to use this material from a legal point of view. From the admins' chat, it can also be read how making the material available to research constituted part of the reason for publishing it in its entirety, and the admin Nina Nyman (2022a) argues similarly for why the archiving of the material was considered important. The women who shared a testimony did consent to it being published, not automatically by posting in the Facebook group, but they were later allowed to withdraw their testimony from the publication if they so wished. However, as Nyman also points out, this consent was given for publishing this material, not explicitly for archiving it nor for research. Informed consent regarding the research being carried out would be preferable (franzke et al. 2020), but this is made impossible due to the material being anonymized. Instead, the anonymization is relied on to protect the identity of individual subjects, which included the removal of names of cities/towns, workplaces, etc. The translation of the stories from Swedish to English has also increased their anonymity by making them unsearchable (cf. O'Callaghan and Douglas 2021), on top of the original Facebook group being deleted. The original

versions of the testimonies (which also excluded names of people) are, as stated, archived and accessible at the Swedish Literature Society. Still, the material used here is derived solely from the published versions due to the collecting taking place prior to the archiving of the material, and upon reading the archived versions, I found no reason to update this material to meet the purpose of this thesis.

Nonetheless, a focus on anonymity does not address the rights of the speakers to their stories. Simply stating that "they consented" is meager reasoning for ethics. Yazir Henri (2003, 266–67) notes that the argument of consent does not address the rights of self-authorship and intention of the speaker, their voice, and agency when appropriating, interpreting, and reinterpreting public testimony in various contexts, including research. The writers sharing their experiences in *Dammen brister* could not know what their stories would be used for, and personal stories can be re-told and re-interpreted in contexts that change or even distort the meaning intended by the teller (cf. Alcoff and Gray 1993; Shuman 2005).

I address these issues by attempting to stay close to the material and "listening" to the voices in the stories (cf. Lawless 2001). This means that in approaching the material, my intention has been to centralize the text and listen to the voices in the stories, attempting to hear beyond expectations regarding these stories or what I have intended my research to be about. Researchers are not exempt from having their capacity for hearing depending on their socialization and perception of reality. On the contrary, narrative researcher Molly Andrews (2007, 15) argues that researchers' skills in listening can even decrease as their knowledge about a subject expands, as it makes them more involved with their own arguments and less open to new ways of considering the problem (ibid.). Being aware of this potential risk, however, drives me to attain a critical perspective towards my own knowledge and expectations, to make me open to the unknown, and to allow myself to be exposed to new frameworks of meaning (ibid.).

Previous knowledge of the subject can also be beneficial for the listener, as it might help them hear and pick up the cues conveyed by the teller (Laub 1992, 61). The fact that I am positioned closely to the writers in *Dammen brister* could, therefore, be considered favorable, increasing my ability to hear these stories. I am myself a Finland-Swedish woman who grew up in the minority that is studied. I was also a member of the Facebook group in 2017, and even though I did not share a testimony, it was not due to a lack of possible experiences to share. This positions me close to my informants and aids my understanding of the testimonies. Nonetheless, such understanding should not be exaggerated as there is always a gap between the teller and listener that makes it impossible to understand someone else's experience fully (Andrews 2007; cf. Shuman

2005). It should also be underlined, however, that what is examined here are the *stories* of the experiences, not the experiences in themselves.

The present study is also a feminist one; therefore, it is necessarily political (Gunnarsson Payne 2006, 153). Proceeding from a feminist perspective means that the study is meant to not only examine culturally established discourses on rape, sex, and gender but also to challenge them (cf., ibid.). As a result, the aim of this thesis is aligned with that of the campaign, and per extension, it can be argued to have the speakers' intentions in mind, which addresses one of the problems using public testimonies emphasized by Henri (2003).

Speak-outs and personal experience narratives have long been used by different feminist movements to challenge discursive perceptions of rape, raise consciousness, and create knowledge (Mardorossian 2002; Plummer 1995, 67). Still, truth and knowledge created "from the margins" are not automatically "more true," as these facts are just as constructed as the ones they are challenging (Haraway 1988). Therefore, it is crucial for feminist research to maintain a reflexive point of view, continuously criticizing its own terms of existence, boundaries, and limitations (Gunnarsson Payne 2006, 153). Donna Haraway (1988) uses the concept of "situated knowledges" to emphasize the impossibility of presenting "truth" in research, as all knowledge is partial and situated. Haraway contradicts the idea of the objective point of view as presented by realism or relativism—as being either a view "from nowhere" or "from everywhere"—and instead highlights the possibility of creating rational and objective knowledge claims from a partial perspective. However, rather than delegitimizing the research by noting the impossibility of objectivity, the standpoint that all observation is done "from somewhere" underlines the importance of including women's voices and feminist points of view in research (Haraway, 1988).

I hold that these stories represent important partial truths regarding the experiences of rape, and such voices need to be heard and validated. Using a critical stance toward my own position, knowledge, and limitations, as well as listening carefully to these voices and understanding them in relation to the campaign, I attempt to grasp the writers' intentions and the meanings and interpretations they have meant to convey in their stories.

To successfully listen to the testimonies, however, requires that I understand the stories, at least to some extent, which is not the case with all testimonies. A few testimonies are presented in a way that makes them difficult to follow, causing uncertainty regarding the sequence of events presented by the writer. Some of these testimonies can be understood as chaotic narratives, presented by folklorist Diane Goldstein (2012, 183) as narratives that "lack an apparent order or organization and that

are unpredictable and confusing." Chaotic narratives may suggest that the writer finds the experience difficult to articulate, which could be the result of trauma (ibid.). Experiences of rape have been noted to result in untellability and chaotic narratives (Bletzer and Koss 2004), and to some extent, such narratives might even be even *expected* from victims of rape (Loney-Howes 2020, 65). Yet, chaotic narratives can also be used to challenge a victim's truth claim and present them as damaged and to blame (Smith 2019). If the narrative is not contextualized, the narrator risks being perceived as confused, inarticulate, or unbalanced (Ferrell 2009). Thus, Goldstein notes that allowing people to speak and be heard can be counter-productive if, by doing so, they misrepresent themselves. The consequences of such misrepresentation can be silencing.

Some testimonies are only partly difficult to follow, accentuated perhaps by poor sentence structure and grammar, which can be explained by the platform vernacular of social media lacking strict grammatical requirements. Writing on a mobile phone could make such issues even more likely. Hence, a testimony being difficult to follow does not necessarily indicate a chaotic narrative. Nonetheless, there are a few testimonies toward the chaotic end that are incomprehensible to me, and I argue that citing these here would be ethically problematic. Even though these writers deserve to have their voices heard, these testimonies have been excluded to avoid the risk of mispresenting them and perpetuating negative stereotypes against victims of rape. This exclusion is not to claim that chaotic narratives should not be told (or heard); in fact, I will argue the opposite, but due to the lack of context to these testimonies, the present material is found too limited for an analysis of these narratives.

Method

In this section, the methods for collecting and approaching the material are described, whereas the methods for analyzing the testimonies are presented in a later chapter on the theoretical and methodological framework.

With listening and a partial subject position as points of departure, I utilize a method of close reading when approaching my material. Close reading can be described as a method of carefully and repeatedly going through the material while focusing on specific aspects of it, such as structure or discourse (Gustavsson 2017). When starting out with this project, the idea was to conduct a discourse analysis, and hence, my initial reading focused on delineating different themes and discourses in the material. Eventually, my focus shifted to the structure of the text, prompting me to start categorizing the testimonies according to different narrative genres and structures distinguished from the testimonies. These genres, but also

the discourses initially focused on, informed and focused my theoretical readings, which subsequently deepened my understanding of the material. Phrased differently, the narrative structure, genres, and discourses delineated from the testimonies directed me toward certain studies and scientific theories that, in turn, affected my perception of the testimonies. Thus, in approaching the material, I have shifted back and forth between closely reading the material—listening to it—and theoretical understandings of genre, narrative, and discourse.

Most testimonies can be understood as *personal experience narratives* (Stahl 1977), which is here defined as "texts which bring stories of personal experience into being by means of the first person oral narration of past, present, future or imaginary experience." (Patterson 2013, 43). However, many of the testimonies also bore a resemblance to other narrative genres, such as reports (Polanyj 1985), self-stories (Denzin 1992), life stories (Arvidsson 1998), and poetry. First off, I began categorizing the testimonies according to these five genres.

Roughly half of the testimonies could foremost be understood as personal experience narratives, which compelled me to allocate approximately half of the analysis to this genre. As a result, the first part of the analysis is focused on examining how these testimonies adhere to or deviate from an expected structure of a "complete" personal experience narrative, considering what is included, what is left out, and what meanings are conveyed in the different parts in the testimonies. This structure for a "complete" personal experience narrative is presented by linguist William Labov (1972) and is introduced more in the following chapter. A selection was made among the personal experience narratives to facilitate this analysis, which includes ones describing only a single experience as opposed to multiple. The reason for this selection is that Labov's model for personal experience narratives is best applicable to mono-linear narratives (cf. Johnstone 2016) and, therefore, less suitable for considering personal experience narratives that describe multiple experiences. Despite focusing on a selection, however, the conclusions derived in the analysis are based on my work with all testimonials in this category.

The mono-linear personal experience narratives still did not fit neatly into the model structure (nor were they expected to), which is why the first part of the analysis is divided according to the three main components of a story: *the beginning*, *the middle*, and *the end*. Focusing on the different parts and how they adhere to conventions determining a personal experience narrative, I examine what is included, how it is presented, as well as what is absent.

When examining the other narrative genres more closely, the distinction between them became increasingly diffuse. The "report" can be distinguished from the story by its lack of a clear evaluation or point

(Polanyj 1985, 12–13). This genre was present, yet rare, and could also apply only to parts of a testimony. Testimonies presenting multiple experiences could describe these very differently—some in much detail, while others merely mentioned. This made distinguishing between a report and a personal experience story difficult. The genre of "life story" was similarly difficult to identify. A life story is a narrative that a person tells of their life (Arvidsson 1998, 8), and sometimes writers could present their testimonies as describing their lives, but they could also merely string up experiences from childhood up until the present with no explicit connection. Referring to these as life stories, I have argued, would assign them a particular meaning perhaps not held by the writer.

In consequence, I found that the categorization according to these genres was too limited or diffuse for conducting a substantiated analysis. The genres are still used as points of departure, but as parts within a wider examination conducted in the second half of the analysis, where different narrative structures among the testimonies are investigated. Thus, in the second part of the analysis, I move even further away from an expected genre structure to highlight different ways of structuring stories of rape.

However, it was still necessary to find a way to conceptualize and approach this extensive material. After going through the material many times, I realized it roughly divided itself into two categories: writers who *tell a little* and writers who *tell a lot*. This insight offered me a point of departure for approaching these different structures and the genres of report and life story while also setting up the analysis to be both inclusive and composed.

The testimonies categorized as self-stories did not fit into this discussion. A "self-story" can be understood as a story describing how a person became who she is (Denzin 1989), and considering the discourse describing rape as something that irrevocably changes a woman's innermost self, I wanted to examine how these testimonies are structured and presented. Therefore, the final chapter in the second part of the analysis is allocated to examining how writers reflect on becoming and changing, hence, how they are *telling a self*.

Although interesting, the poetry category has been excluded from the analysis. The fact that writers could, and did, share their experiences in the form of poetry, I argue, still indicates the extent of the tellable space provided by the *Dammen brister* campaign. However, as will be noted in the analysis, writers were also creative in their presentation of experiences in other ways, challenging structures of genre that might have been expected of them.

3. Theoretical and methodological framework

As outlined in the introduction, discourses on rape, gender, and sex affect and inform rape stories. The silencing power of such discourse might have been less effective in *Dammen brister,* and these stories could also have been less restricted by structural expectations that can otherwise be placed on the stories, in spaces such as legal and therapeutic ones (cf. Loney-Howes 2020, 62–63). However, this does not mean they exist outside of narrative conventions, as even when presenting a personal narrative, it is constructed using traditional aspects of storytelling (Stahl 1983). As I assume there to be a connection between form and content of stories, focusing on the narrative structure of the testimonies presented in the tellable space of *Dammen brister* not only gives me insight into how the experience of rape can be narrated but also what meanings are conveyed through such representations.

To approach the structure, I use the concept of *genre*, focusing on the emic genre of testimony and etic perspectives afforded by research on narratives of personal experience. In addition, the theory of *positioning* is used to consider how the writers navigate between discourse on sex, heterosexuality, gender, and rape to affirm that the stories are heard correctly.

Genre

The term genre is perhaps most commonly understood as a system of categorization but can also be used to refer to a cultural coding of language (Eriksen and Kverndokk 2022). Literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (1986) presents genre as fundamental for presenting and interpreting speech, arguing that all areas of communication develop their own speech structure that informs how speech is to be produced and understood. Inspired by Bakhtin, folklorist Richard Bauman defines genre as "one order of speech style, a constellation of systematic, related, co-occurrent formal features and structures that serves as a conventionalized oriented framework for the production and reception of discourse" (Bauman 2004, 3). In other words, genre offers guidelines for how a text is to be produced and understood, and therefore, both writers and readers relate to genre and expectations of genre (Asplund Ingemark 2022).

Similarly to language, genre competence can be considered a fundamental means for facilitating communication between people (Österlund-Pötzsch 2022). Genre makes a text understandable by placing it in intertextual relation to other texts (Bauman 2004, 4). Intertextuality refers to how texts are oriented toward other texts, how they refer to, borrow from, or are influenced by other texts. It combines texts concern-

ing meanings, allusions, and connotations and must hence be understood in relation to each other (Briggs and Bauman 1992). When a text is connected to a genre, it becomes produced and interpreted through these intertextual links to other texts (Bauman 2004, 4). A classic example of genre invocation is the phrase "once upon a time," which prepares the listener for a fairy tale and affects how the story is interpreted by creating expectations regarding both form and content. However, genre is used in all areas of communication and is not only relevant when considering such established categories as fairy tales. Different social media platforms—or groups within them—have their own rules determined by genre (also referred to as platform vernacular, (cf. Karlsson 2019b)), as do different social movements.

Genre thus organizes discourse into coherent and understandable text, but furthermore, the connection to discourse can also grant the text historical or social associations (Briggs and Bauman 1992). Returning to the example of fairy tales, such stories can bring the assumption of a traditional past, while social media is associated with the present. Discourses create different social, political, and ideological assumptions connected to certain genres and present genres as typical for specific groups based on age, gender, class, etc. (ibid.). As a result, genre not only informs how discourse is to be presented and understood, but it also connects a text to other texts, to specific social or political discourse, as well as to other people existing in another space and time. Relevant to this thesis will be how genre creates expectations regarding not only the structure of the text but also what should be presented in the testimonies and how it should be presented, as determined by discourse.

Although the connection to a specific genre creates expectations of the story, a text is never a perfect equivalent of the generic model (Bauman 2004, 7). Bauman and Charles Briggs refer to the disparity between genre and text as the "intertextual gap," which the narrator can attempt to narrow or widen depending on the text's intended meaning (ibid.). Another way of conceptualizing the difference between genre and text is by relating to the interaction of continuity and process when producing text. To be able to communicate meaning, the text needs to be recognizable by the listener (continuity), while it also expresses the teller's individual, creative usage of common narrative tools (process) (Flinterud and Tolgensbakk 2022). Following this later perception, I view genre as structuring text to make it meaningful and understandable while also facilitating creativity. In other words, by establishing the rules, genre implements the conditions for breaking the rules, as long as the text can still be connected to the genre. By adhering to or deviating from genre, writers in *Dammen brister* could counter perceptions of *how* rape is to be narrated. Examining genre allows me to question the expectations placed

on these kinds of stories, how they affect the tellability and hearability of experiences of rape, and subsequently, how the tellable space is expanded in *Dammen brister* as the writers are allowed to be creative and narrate in their own voice.

Genre is a useful tool for approaching this material, as it can be used in multiple ways. In this thesis, it is used as an analytical tool in two ways. Firstly, as a means of categorizing the material, which was noted in the previous chapter. This categorization allows me to conceptualize a large material, identify specific styles and structures in the narratives, and consider their typical or unique aspects (cf. Eriksen and Kverndokk 2022). Secondly, I use genre as a means for understanding the narrative by considering how these styles and structures communicate meaning through their organization of discourse and intertextual relation to other texts (cf. Bauman 2004).

Furthermore, the term genre is used to refer to both emic and etic categories of the texts. As the stories shared in *Dammen brister* are referred to as testimonies, I view testimony as an emic genre that conveys the intentions and aims of the writers. In contrast, etic genres refer to ones described in research on personal experience narratives and are used to interpret how people narrate and convey meaning. In other words, the genre of testimony conveys how there is an emic understanding of the stories shared within *Dammen brister*, whereas etic genres allow me to discuss and problematize the material according to theoretical understandings of the narration of personal experience.

Testimony: an emic perspective

The stories shared within the campaign were referred to as testimonies, and therefore, testimony can be viewed as an emic genre that indicates how the text is perceived by the writer herself. The emic perspective is necessary for understanding the context of a text, but in comparison with the etic genres, they can be more inconsistent and flexible (Granbom-Herranen 2016). This means that the emic genre can be viewed very differently by different people, which further emphasizes how it can be used creatively. In describing my material, I noted that the testimonies differ vastly in style and structure, indicating that writers had different ideas regarding how to present a testimony. Rather than attempting to delineate a shared understanding of the genre of testimony among the writers, the emic perspective is meant to conceptualize the framework within which the writers orient themselves when narrating a testimony. Therefore, the intention here is to consider different perceptions of the genre of testimony that might have affected how the writers formed their stories.

As public testifying of sexual violence has grown increasingly common, new genre rules and regulations on "speaking out" have been noted to limit and govern such stories, as well as who is allowed to tell them (Karlsson 2019b; Serisier 2018). The call published with the campaign provides insight into how the *Dammen brister* testimonies are supposed to be interpreted. It states that the testimonies are to *bear witness* to crimes that have been ignored, *expose* the prevalence of harassment and assault, and hold people accountable. The testimonies are also referred to as stories used to make *demands*, and the call speaks of a "we:" *we* know who you are (Emtö et al. 2018), implying a collective voice. As a result, the emic genre can be perceived as aligned with the etic genre of *testimonio* or testimonial (Sommer 1988). The testimonial has been presented as aiming to construct knowledge from personal experience, create new understandings, break silences, and offer both opposition and propositions (Benmayor 2012). Testimonials are generally perceived as being told from the margins to offer insight into problems of repression, poverty, and exploitation (Beverly 2000).

Furthermore, "speak-outs" and public testimonies have long been used within feminist movements. In the 1970s, when the second wave and radical feminists started viewing rape as a structural problem and redefining the concepts of violence and rape (Plummer 1995), victims and their stories were central (Alcoff 2018). Testimonies of rape were used to counter dominant discourse on rape and introduce new interpretations and understandings of the problem, which included making people aware of how their experiences are not something they individually "had" but were socially constructed and discursively mediated (Mardorossian 2002). Consequently, these testimonies allowed women to reevaluate their experiences and consider them as structural rather than personal problems (Mendes, Ringrose, and Keller 2018).

By invoking the genre of testimony, the stories in *Dammen brister* are connected to feminist practice and a history of speaking from the margins to challenge oppression. The genre connects the stories to a specific social and political discourse and borrows textual authority from the genre, making its own truth-claim. However, the genre can also create certain expectations regarding the form and function of the stories.

A testimony can be understood differently in different contexts. It is often associated with declarations given in court, which are not only highly structured, including a certain level of detail but are also meant to be subjected to an external interpretation that decides the validity of the text (Alcoff and Gray 1993). The solemnity of this genre may give the stories a certain quality of seriousness and authority; however, it also expects the texts to be subjected to external evaluation to determine the "truth" of it, which places the witness in a subordinate role (ibid.). Therefore, an under-

standing of legal testimony could constrain people's space to narrate. Even though this is not the kind of testimony that was expected of the writers, their intentions and who they perceive as their audience affect how these stories are narrated (Andrews 2007, 16).

The way in which a story is told is influenced by the narrator's perception of their audience. The writers in *Dammen brister* might have imagined speaking to the other participants in the group, but knowing these testimonies would be published, they could also imagine speaking for a wider national and international audience. Although interpretations of "truth" and validity of the text were not necessarily expected within the campaign, speaking for a wider audience could have made such concerns more focal as well as affected the meaning the writer wanted to convey in their stories. Thus, writers could still feel compelled to adhere to a certain structure implemented by the genre of court testimony to establish credibility and authority.

To conclude, the emic genre of testimony aids the understanding of the aims and goals of the writers as well as offers insight into the structural and discursive expectations they might have assumed. The writers are perceived as aiming to convey knowledge of a silenced subject while simultaneously offering resistance to dominant discourse and contributing to a collective voice (cf. Fileborn 2017; Mendes, Ringrose, and Keller 2019). However, this is a process in which the audience is co-creator, and the situational and cultural context structure and constrain how this narration is carried out and whose voices are heard.

Narrating personal experience: etic perspectives

To approach the material, I use etic genres derived from the field of narrative research. The term narrative is used interchangeably with *story* (cf. Andrews 2004), and both for referring to the testimonies shared within *Dammen brister.* In the introduction, "story" was defined as an account of something that has happened—and what it was like to experience that which happened—in a specific circumstance and with specific consequences (D. Herman 2009, 2). Beyond representing things that have happened, narrating is a fundamental means of making sense of our experiences, organizing them into coherent entities, and giving them meaning (Johansson 2005, 16–17). Through narration, our experiences can become perspicuous and reality manageable; it is a means of creating order out of chaos. Narration is also a means of sharing these experiences with others, in addition to discussing opinions, creating communities, and representing the self (Nylund Skog 2012, 19).

Different narrative genres and styles offer insight into how writers understand their experiences (Mathisen 2022). Therefore, I use etic narrative

genres as methodological tools for approaching the material. The stories shared in *Dammen brister* describe personal experiences, making the category of *personal experience narratives* central.

The term personal experience narrative was first introduced by folklorist Sandra D. Stahl (1977), who defined these stories as "first-person narratives usually composed orally by the tellers and based on real incidents in their lives" (Stahl 1983, 268). Since then, the academic interest in personal narrating has increased following what is often referred to as a "narrative turn" in various disciplines (Andrews, Squire, and Tamboukou 2013). Stahl followed the interest in personal narrating introduced by linguists William Labov and Joshua Waletsky (1967), who proposed a structural approach to these narratives. The researchers considered different parts of the stories, their function, and what should be included for a "complete" narrative (ibid.).

In Labov's later work, he presents a minimum requirement for narrative as containing at least two events in a fixed temporal order (Labov 1972, 360), which implies a structural expectation of linearity and temporality in stories. Labov also presents a complete model for the structure of a personal experience narrative that places additional requirements or expectations on such stories. The model includes six steps, although not all are considered necessary for it to be a "complete" story. The steps are abstract, orientation, complicating action, resolution, evaluation, and coda (ibid. 363).

The *abstract* is a way of indicating that a story is about to begin. It sometimes includes a summary of the event that encapsulates the point of the story or uses some other means to signal to the audience that a story is about to begin, requesting their attention. The *orientation* provides the listeners with background information regarding time, space, and actors that is necessary for understanding the story. The *complicating action* retells the significant parts, the event, or the problem that is the reason for the story. Here, the tension is created, which receives its release or explanation in the *resolution*. The story's point and how the experience is perceived by the narrator is clarified in the *evaluation,* and lastly, the *coda* is a finalizing touch that signals the end of the story and brings the listeners back to the present (Labov 1972, 363 ff; 2013).

Applying this model to a narrative can reveal its structure and allow for comparison, for example, in regards to the amount of evaluation (Patterson 2013) or how different stories are described (Bell 1988). Thus, instead of comparing the testimonies to each other to find similarities—such as structural or thematical—I foremost consider how they adhere to expectations on personal stories, as well as stories of rape. Labov's model, though, should be perceived as a *possible* structure rather than a required one. In other words, it will not be used to determine what is a "proper"

personal experience narrative and what is not, but rather as a suggestion or expectation of what could be included in such a story. Hence, it is a methodological tool to approach and understand the structure of the testimonies.

Labov's model has been influential and widely used in narrative research, but it is not applicable to *all* kinds of narration (Johnstone 2016). His description of a "complete" narrative is based on mono-linear narratives collected in interviews and can therefore be restrictive, excluding speech that does not fit the model or his definition of narrative (Squire 2013). Additionally, research on so-called "small stories" (Bamberg 2006; Georgakopoulou 2006) emphasizes how speech that falls outside the idea of "big stories"—referring to the long, interrupted, teller-led accounts of a specific event, that is, precisely the kind that Labov focuses on—is also crucial for understanding how tellers communicate meaning and construct identity. These small stories include, for example, non- or multi-linear narratives of past events or narratives of the mundane and ordinary (Georgakopoulou 2006). By deviating from the idea of a complete narrative to examine small stories, I aim to consider different ways of communicating meaning and further question the neat narrative structure of a beginning, middle, and end. Small stories emphasize how many of our stories are messy, develop in interaction, and can lack a clear end or point but are still means of communicating meaning.

Personal narratives as developing in interaction are disregarded by Labov, who focuses on speech by a single person. On the other hand, narrative researcher Corinne Squire (2013) underlines how stories are co-constructed between the teller and audience and with the broader cultural context. As a result, she notes that stories are inherently in flux, as they are constructed in the present, for present purposes, and in the interaction between tellers and listeners (ibid.). This overlook correlates with the critique of Labov's approach to narrative as focusing on *events* rather than *experiences.* Labov defines a narrative of personal experience as "one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which (it is inferred) actually occurred." (Labov 1972, 359–369). This definition has been argued ill-fitted for considering how narrators present subjective experiences, of "events that unfold over time and even extend into the present… [as such narratives are] as much about affective "actions," things the narrator feels and says to herself, as it is about "what happened" in a more objective sense" (Riessman 1993, 51–52). A definition that better encapsulates this understanding of personal narratives as representations of subjective experiences is provided by narrative researcher Wendy Patterson, who presents it as "texts which bring stories of personal experience into being by means of the first person oral narration of past, present, future or im-

aginary experience." (Patterson 2013, 43). This broad definition is suitable for my purpose here, as I do not aim to differentiate between texts but assume the whole testimony as *a* narrative. However, I will adjust the definition to include written, as opposed to only oral, texts (cf. Squire 2013).

Proceeding from this, I understand personal experience narratives as reconstructions of subjective experiences rather than recapitulations of past events. The personal experience narrative is therefore regarded as the result of a process of recreating experience, a process that is carried out in the present, with present understanding, and in collaboration with the audience and cultural discourse. Rather than reflecting a picture of a past event, a story is perceived as representing an interpretation of an experience made in that specific time and space. Importantly, however, this does not make stories "untrue." Following the work of folklorist Elaine Lawless (2001), I contest the idea that there is a single, objective version of events. Instead, the narratives reflect how the women view themselves and their world, providing insight into their perspectives on a given day. As Lawless argues, "as far as we are concerned, there is no other truth than that one" (Lawless 2001, 6).

To summarize, in the analysis, I initiate by considering how the testimonies adhere to a rigid structure of personal experience narrative and Labov's model. The etic perspective of genre provides insight into what could be expected from this kind of story and how the testimonies relate to these expectations. This expected genre is the focus of part I of the analysis, split into the most fundamental parts of a story: beginning, middle, and end. Proceeding from this, I continue in part II of the analysis to use a broader perspective on the genre of personal experience narratives that focuses on the interactive reconstruction of experience to consider the variety of ways the writers employ to communicate meaning. In both parts, the genre of personal experience narrative is used both as a means of categorizing and recognizing structures in the text and subsequently to understand the meaning that is conveyed. The interpretation of meaning further relies on how the writer relates to discourse and discursive expectations placed on stories of rape.

Positioning

Part of the purpose of this thesis is to consider how women relate to discourse on sex, heterosexuality, and gender when narrating rape. For this, I have found the term *positioning* an additional helpful tool.

The concept of positioning is introduced by sociolinguist Michael Bamberg (1997) and refers to the emotional and social stances that individuals take against real or imagined others when narrating experience.

The term accentuates how narrators navigate between different discourses[1] to produce their truth. When telling a story within a specific context, the narrator needs to take stances for or against assumed discourse to be "heard" correctly (ibid.). For example, when telling a story of rape, the narrators can counter dominant discourse that determines the incident as being their fault by presenting that they were sober or well-dressed, hence refuting possible interpretations of them having "asked for it." Thus, narrators position themselves according to discourse by which they assume to have been positioned by the hearers (ibid.), underlining again how the narrator's perception of the audience is focal for how a story is constructed. Bamberg (1997; 2004) distinguishes between three levels of positioning: 1) how the characters in the story are positioned in relation to one another, 2) how the speakers position themselves to the audience, and 3) how narrators position themselves to themselves (ibid., 337).

Bamberg (2004) notes that positioning is about creating identity rather than simply aligning oneself according to discourse. Through constructing her narrative, the narrator presents who she is, and thus, positioning opens the possibility of establishing agency. This understanding of narration reflects the one presented above as a means of recreating experience and constructing the self (Squire 2013). It also relates to tellability as dependent on the audience's ability to hear the stories by underlining how the narrator can navigate and influence such tellability/hearability. In other words, positioning highlights how tellability can be negotiated in the stories as the writers navigate between "assumed" discourse and their own experiences (D. E. Goldstein and Shuman 2016).

The concept of positioning is used here to consider how writers navigate discourse on rape, sex, and gender to increase tellability and affirm that the audience hears the story correctly. It is a helpful tool as the field of rape discourse is complex, making positioning necessary for guaranteeing hearability. The concept also complexifies the perception of stories as either countering or supporting dominant discourse, addressing how they can do both. While the testimonies challenge conventional notions of who has the authority to speak about rape and where, the ways in which the writers position themselves in their stories can also reproduce dominant discourses. Furthermore, even if the dominant discourses are challenged, they can still be reinforced and perpetuated through the text (Paal 2010, 285). However, more interesting here is what discourses are negotiated and how this negotiation is carried out in the stories. In other words, I consider what discourses the writers use and how they use them when constructing their stories of rape.

1 Bamberg uses the term "narrative" here but as I use narrative interchangeably with "story," and his perception of narrative is similar to how I view discourse, I have opted to refer to positioning as aligning according to discourse.

***

To summarize, I assume the testimonies in *Dammen brister* to be affected both by *genre* that informs the stories of what should be included and how the testimonies should be structured and by *discourse* that determines what is "normal" and, thus, hearable. The emic genre of testimony offers insight into the context of the stories shared and the aims and intentions of the writers, while perceptions of the genre might have informed and constrained how these stories were formed and presented. In addition, etic genres of personal experience narration are also assumed to affect expectations by the writers and audience. For example, a story is generally expected to have a beginning, a middle, and an end; the different sequences of events to be connected; and the focal event to be described. These structural expectations are assumed to be accompanied by understandings of discourse determining, e.g., what is a "real" rape, who is a real victim, and how one should react to rape. Such discourse affects how stories of rape are to be presented to be hearable (and tellable). Thus, in the analysis, I shift between considering structural expectations by genre and discursive expectations regarding the content of the stories.

4. Previous research

In this thesis, I examine how experiences of rape are told when given space for narration by the promise of the stories being heard. The difficulties and problems of telling the untellable, or perhaps simply the difficult, traumatic, or stigmatized, have been highlighted in narrative research and folkloristics. In the first section of this chapter, I present previous research on these kinds of difficult stories, what possibilities narration offers, and what restrictions are placed on these stories.

The untellability of rape has long been challenged by feminist groups through different kinds of speak-outs where victims have been allowed to voice their own stories. These groups have been aided by the introduction of digital technologies that allow people to connect more easily and share experiences and knowledge, creating feminist solidarity. Research on these digital feminist campaigns is presented and discussed in the second section of this chapter.

Although my material is presented by the specific ethnic group of Finland-Swedes, I do not mean to analyze the unique cultural specificities of this group or their social and economic circumstances. In other words, I do not claim that my arguments and observations are particular to this group, which is why I rely on insights from research from all over the (Western) world. This results in a quite generalized concept of culture that obscures the differences among people. However, it has been noted that through different kinds of media, a kind of hybrid global Western culture has been produced that, to some extent, has a shared discursive understanding of reality (Gavey 2019, 4). *Dammen brister* itself is indicative of this, as it grew out of a global movement.

Narrative expectations

In his work *Telling Sexual Stories. Power, Change and Social Worlds* (1995), sociologist Ken Plummer underlines the need for stories to have an audience ready to hear them correctly in order to be tellable. The rising interest in personal narratives, including marginalized sexual stories such as stories of rape, is explained by these stories being increasingly hearable. Plummer suggests that stories operate within "interpretive communities" of speakers and hearers that determine how a story is understood and can even come to produce their own shared memories (ibid., 22). Consequently, interpretive communities can unite people, build collective identities, and even bring forth cultural shifts and political change. I suggest that *Dammen brister* was understood as an interpretive community, which affected how the experiences were narrated. There was an

assumption that the marginalized, stigmatized, and silenced stories would be heard correctly, and this opened a narrative space that increased tellability. However, the narration is still constrained by genre and discourse that form our expectations.

The anthology *The Stigmatized Vernacular: Where Reflexivity Meets Untellability* (2016), edited by folklorists Amy Shuman and Diane Goldstein, emphasizes how that which is perceived as "normal" deems other things untellable. In the introduction, Shuman and Goldstein present how the navigation of tellability and untellability depends on the positions that the speaker can take in relation to imagined others, to stigmatized events, or to discourse used to make the listeners accept or reject certain interpretations (D. E. Goldstein and Shuman 2016). For example, in their chapter, Shuman and Carol Bohmer (2016) present how asylum seekers are granted asylum depending on whether their story is deemed credible by the officials—according to their knowledge and expectations that determine what they assume as "normal." Thus, tellability and untellability are restricted by an assumed norm, and people are granted asylum depending on whether their stories are heard as credible in relation to this norm. Starting from positioning, I also aim to highlight such navigation, but this material differs from many of the cases described in *The Stigmatized Vernacular.* People who have been raped might be stigmatized, but their position in *Dammen brister* was different than it would have been in a court of law; most importantly, they were not in a subordinate role. Not being in a position of having to "convince" someone of their experience might have affected how these stories are presented.

That victims of rape or other kinds of sexual violence need to adhere to rigid ideas of stories has been clearly emphasized in research. For example, ethnologist Simon Ekström (2002), in his study on rape trials in 1940s Stockholm, presents how for stories to be tellable and hearable in court, men and women needed to adhere to certain moral understandings and expectations of femininity and masculinity, as well as to what was considered as "real rape." Leigh Gilmore (2017) similarly notes that to give testimony, you need to do more than serve as a witness to harm. To witness, you also need to legitimize the position to speak, and using the concept of "tainted witness," Gilmore argues that women's testimony—especially when presenting sexual violence—is subjected to practices of shaming and discrediting that preexist the specific case and is drawn from a reservoir of bias in which gender and race are connected (ibid., 5).

In contrast, the writers in my material are not "at the mercy" of the court, but this perception clarifies how it is not necessarily the event in itself that is untellable, but tellability can be determined by how well the story and the teller adhere to an expected norm. In the present study, the tellable space is perceived as expanded, but that does not necessar-

ily mean that writers would completely be rid of the need to position themselves according to discourse describing the "real" rape and a proper victim. Folklorist Piret Paal (2010) shows in her dissertation on written cancer narratives that even when stigmatized narrators are "allowed to speak," they may still adhere to expectations and structural restrictions while also countering discourse to create their own narratives.

That stories are constrained by a presumed "norm" relates to how certain narratives are preferred over others. In his influential book on illness narratives, *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics* (1995), Arthur Frank presents how the medical field shapes people's stories according to their preferred one, which emphasizes the return to health. This makes the "restitution narrative" the expected and preferred form of illness stories, affecting how people are expected to narrate illness (ibid., 77).

The necessity to convey overcoming and restitution in stories of trauma is also noted in research on autobiographies. Gilmore (2010) presents the "American neoconfessional" as a new genre of biographical writing that was introduced in the 90s. The neoconfessional style focuses on redemption and overcoming struggle—as opposed to reiterating "facts" of a person's life—and centers on the individual rather than structural difficulties. Gender researcher Lena Karlsson (2013) discusses this genre in her study on (auto)biographies by/about incarcerated women, noting how the genre establishes a narrative frame according to which women are expected to narrate struggles. This narrative structure is assumed to be useful for the audience, offering possibilities of identifying with the narrators while following an understanding of a journey and overcoming difficulties. As a result, the autobiographies become viewed as "self-help" books, using a mode of speaking that is motivated by a sense of "feeling together," invoking empathy by presenting seemingly collective experience (ibid.).

The expectation of overcoming difficulties and restitution as a preferred narrative constitutes a point of departure in parts of the analysis. I question the extent to which such expectations limit tellability and, conversely, how comfortable listeners are with stories that deviate from this structure. The aspect of hearability is central here, as these expectations are clearly perceived as residing in the audience. As Karlsson notes, the restitution structure is motivated by the idea of the audience being able to empathize with the teller.

Narratives provide a means to empathize with others and gain a deeper understanding of their experiences, which is generally perceived as something positive. However, in her work, *Other People's Stories* (2005), Amy Shuman presents how empathy not only fosters understanding but is also a destabilizing force as it creates the possibility for telling others' stories and can transform meaning from the personal to the allegorical. By

invoking empathy, she notes, people can retell others' stories, in other contexts, by arguing that they understand them, while additionally, empathy permits stories to be interpreted allegorically—as representing a collective truth—which can become a problem when the personal does not align with the allegorical (ibid., 4; 68).

Shuman argues that the ownership of a story—entitlement to the story and the interpretation of the experience—is generally understood to belong to the person who experienced it. But when stories travel and are retold by others, the meaning conveyed can differ from the one intended by the original teller, and stories can create collective experiences, which can be a conservative practice as it constrains experience into available narratives and acceptable scenarios (ibid., 18-20). Additionally, Shuman notes that although empathy is perceived as a necessity that allows people to understand one another, it rarely helps the person being empathized with (ibid., 5). Following this, I mean to critically examine the need for a certain type of narrative (e.g., restitution) to create empathy and understanding; and consider how aspects of ownership and collective truth might limit tellability and hearability of stories of rape.

As noted in the chapter describing the method and material, what is focused on in this thesis are the stories of experience rather than the experiences in themselves. In this, I follow Lawless (2001) who argues in her work *Women Escaping Violence: Empowerment through Narrative* that through listening to and studying women's stories of violence, what ought to be focused on is what we can learn about "the significance of speaking, through the act of telling our story, that becomes the significant moment, the *now* in the process." (ibid., 8), rather than simply aiming to gain insight to the experiences (although much is learned about these as well). Lawless notes that narrating violence can be helpful for those who have experienced it because through telling their life story, the narrators create a "self" that helps them to deal with the past, present, and future. In this perspective, narration is an important part of recreating and transforming a self that aids the healing process. Proceeding from this, what I aim to examine is not essentially the experience of rape but rather the process of recreating these experiences; what we can learn from these testimonies regarding how rape can be told (and heard).

Lastly, I want to underline how the narration of violence is affected by the position of a performer not being readily available for women. Folklorist Patricia Sawin (2002) notes how an understanding of performance as displaying competence, subjecting one's actions to evaluation, or calling attention to oneself does not align with a cultural understanding of femininity. Sawin argues that performance is perceived as threatening if it invokes feelings toward objects or the performer in a way that contradicts the "order of things" as understood by the dominant group, which is

why women have been excluded (2002, 42). This can be connected with philosopher Kate Manne's (2019) argument that patriarchal culture is constructed on a system of giving and receiving, in which women are expected to give and men to receive—care, compassion, sex, and attention. Manne argues that by claiming victimhood, a woman places herself at the center of the story, which is viewed as self-dramatizing and fuels suspicion and accusations of self-centeredness and manipulation—regardless of whether the accusation is true (ibid., 225). Tellability and hearability are therefore understood as possibly gendered, as the narration of experiences can, for women, be constrained by ideas of femininity and how women are taught to present themselves. Building on this, I perceive the writers in *Dammen brister* as claiming narrative space from which women have been excluded, an essential aspect of the feminist consciousness-raising tradition in general. This discussion is continued in the following section.

Digital narratives of sexual violence

Much research has been conducted on the #MeToo movement within different research fields using various approaches. Some studies focus on a particular campaign created within a specific branch or country to consider the problems and challenges found in different contexts (see, e.g., Chandra and Erlingsdóttir 2020b; Ganetz, Hansson, and Sveningsson 2022b). Other studies examine the campaign and how it was created: its significance, history, and possible impact (e.g., Savigny 2020; Gilmore 2023; Alcalde and Villa 2022; Sletteland 2018; Pollack 2019); and particularly the ethical dimensions of the media and their reporting prior to, during, and after #MeToo (Baker and Manchanda Rodrigues 2022; Sveningsson, Hansson, and Ganetz 2022). There are also studies highlighting marginalized voices in the campaign (Berg 2020; Trott 2021; Chandra and Erlingsdóttir 2020b; Alcalde and Villa 2022), as well as queer perspectives (Hindes and Fileborn 2021) men's perspectives (Flood 2019; PettyJohn et al. 2019); or focusing on the variety of mediums used within the campaign (Cook and O'Halloran 2023; Andreasen 2021). These studies focus much on the creation, establishment, meanings, and implications of the movement rather than the stories presented. However, some studies more specifically discuss the narrative aspects of the movement, both in the sense of what is shared and how it is shared, as well as the meanings and purpose of this narration. It is within this field the present study is situated, which will be elaborated on in the remainder of this section.

In describing the material, it was noted that the #MeToo movement was made possible and understandable due to previous digital feminist campaigns that had created "digital footprints," an interpretive framework

for these kinds of campaigns (Loney-Howes et al. 2022). Following this research, I assume that there was an established perception of this activism that made the campaign possible and guided participants in their engagement in the campaign (cf. Nyman 2022b); in addition, this established framework might have functioned to inform and shape people's testimonies.

The size of #MeToo and its reception has also been noted to have aided participation. Karlsson (2019a) presents how the context of the #MeToo movement caused hearability to be expected, which increased the tellability of the stories. The smaller national campaigns that preceded #MeToo in Sweden were perceived as riskier since the speakers were more likely to be dismissed (ibid.). Thus, being framed within the #MeToo movement not only increased the understanding of how to participate in these campaigns but also increased the tellability of experiences of violence. However, this tellability has also been presented as the result of the work of the organizers. Media researchers Hillevi Ganetz, Karin Hansson, and Malin Sveningsson (2022a) present strategies used by the organizers to create the campaigns as safe spaces, which centered mainly around creating a supportive community and openness. The sense of a supportive community and general trust in shared feminist values, the researchers argue, created a space in which people dared to narrate their experiences. Hence, the smaller national campaigns also facilitated tellability, even though such tellability might have been dependent on the wider #MeToo movement. These studies underline the hearability of stories both within the campaign and in the media. They inform my understanding of why these stories became tellable in *Dammen brister*, and the assumed shared understanding in this interpretive community is something the present study will further underline.

Furthermore, research on digital activism underlines the political aspect of these campaigns. Criminologist Bianca Fileborn (2017) presents digital media as a counter-cultural space that enables collective action, resistance, and political mobilization. The digital space opens the possibility of countering dominant discourse on violence, raising consciousness, and facilitating alternative forms of justice. Fileborn (2019) underlines the importance of discourse, arguing how the discursive framework affects the stories' tellability. The space to tell, she notes, is not neutral but dependent on the positions of the participants as well as the discursive construction of sexual violence. Following this, I assume *Dammen brister* as a counter-cultural space that enabled collective action and resistance and the challenging of discourse of sexual violence. Using a discursive understanding, I aim to narrow the gap in research that Fileborn highlights by considering how discourse on rape shape and restrict people's stories, as well as who is allowed to speak.

Studies focusing on members' participation in these campaigns provide essential insight into the motivations and perceptions of the participants. Researchers Kaitlynn Mendes, Jessica Ringrose, and Jessalynn Keller (2018; 2019) have studied the experiences of women and girls participating in digital feminist activism, finding that while such activism can be demanding both for organizers and participants, it is generally viewed very positively. The campaigns allow people to connect with like-minded individuals, learn about feminism, and raise awareness of important issues. Other studies have also shown that the support and connection with others in these feminist groups can make participation a positive experience despite the challenges it may pose (e.g., Sigurvinsdóttir, Ásgeirsdóttir, and Arnalds 2020).

The present study does not examine the experiences of participating per se, but the testimonies reflect the perception of the space as one of unity and support, where people could share and be believed. This perception of the space as supportive and counter-cultural sheds light on why these stories were assumed to be hearable, and the political aspect of wanting to challenge discourse provides insight into why women shared their experiences, even when it was perceived as difficult.

According to Mendes and Ringrose, together with Katia Belisário (2019), digital platforms such as YouTube or Tumblr can increase tellability of stories of rape by allowing victims to be creative in their presentations of experiences. By enabling the use of pictures and videos, these platforms provide victims with new ways to share their stories and bypass the barriers of untellability. The researchers argue that these platforms produce new vernacular practices that shape how experiences of sexual violence are disclosed and *felt* by the audience. This creativity is something I build on in my study while still focusing on text. I hold that both the platform of Facebook and *Dammen brister* allowed people to move beyond rigid ideas of what stories should look like, opening space for creativity.

A study that more closely resembles the present one is conducted by criminologist Rachel Loney-Howes (2020) in her work *Online Anti-Rape Activism: Exploring the Politics of the Personal in the Age of Digital Media.* Loney-Howes examines the practices and progress of digital platforms for anti-rape activism from multiple perspectives, including as a space for "talking back" and claiming an alternative form of justice. She recognizes that the perception of "real" rape can limit tellability, but suggests that online spaces provide room for pushing the boundaries of what is considered a legally or therapeutically "approved" rape story. In doing so, writers can become theorists of their own experiences (ibid., chapter 4).

Loney-Howes notes that in creating these spaces, anti-rape activists generate peer-to-peer witnessing, challenging assumptions regarding who provides recognition and determines the credibility of the testimonies.

Peer-to-peer witnessing disrupts the power relation between speaker and listener, as the listener is not an expert from whom to gain recognition but often a fellow victim. Following this, I assume *Dammen brister* was a space where writers were allowed to claim ownership of their experiences and counter dominant discourse. That the campaign exists outside of a legal or therapeutic arena meant it lacked the hierarchy present in such spaces, which might have affected the tellability of the stories. In other words, the idea of what is tellable is expanded by the assumption of hearability provided by an empathic audience with whom they share experience or understanding rather than someone they need to "convince."

Still, despite the affordances of speaking in these anti-rape digital spaces, Loney-Howes (2020) argues that they can regulate how writers are allowed to speak of their experiences. Some spaces, such as the Pixel Project, force structure on the writers by making participants share their stories according to a questionnaire. She presents this as an example of how these digital spaces can function to recreate a specific rape script (ibid., 82). Although her definition of rape script includes structural elements of genre, Loney-Howes does not explicitly differentiate between the form and content of this script. Thus, she concludes by underlining the risk of inadvertently recreating dominant discourse by adhering to the rape script, whereas I am also interested in how such rape script—to use her term—places conditions on how a story can be structured to be considered eligible. A rigid structure does not simply constrain the kinds of experiences that can be told, but forcing structure on narrators can disrupt the writer's narrative agency and creative space that might be necessary for them to voice these experiences at all.

Tanya Serisier (2018) similarly argues for how expectations on stories of rape can function to silence other stories. Consequently, she notes, even feminist spaces of increased hearability can constrain women's speech. In her book, book *Speaking Out. Feminism, Rape and Narrative* (2018), Serisier underlines how the increased speech around sexual violence has created an expected genre for constructing these kinds of stories. This genre, she suggests, has established new boundaries for tellability and untellability that might silence narratives that do not fit. As a result, feminist speech produces "new truths" of rape, and in order to make someone's experience fit the genre, people might offer different interpretations of an experience than the ones presented by the speaker (ibid., 11).

In *Rape and Resistance: Understanding the Complexities of Sexual Violation* (2018) Alcoff argues that the problem of fitting people's experiences into specific categories partly stems from an overly simplistic view of rape that acknowledges only these rigid, binary categories of rape and sex. Rigid categories ignore how experiences are not always clear-cut but can be surrounded by ambiguity. This discursive construction, Alcoff notes,

is ill-suitable for victims who may find their experience to be complex. Narrating complexity can be difficult if the listeners try to force the experience into ready-made categories. Following these studies, I assume that feminist understanding of rape also might constrain and affect how women narrate their experiences of rape. Still, the narrative space afforded writers in the *Dammen brister* campaign that placed no requirements on *what* could be narrated or *how* it could be narrated also might have opened the possibility of presenting ambiguous experiences.

Part I: Personal experience narratives

The purpose of this thesis is as stated to consider *how* women narrate stories of rape within *Dammen brister.* Starting from genre, I mean to examine how writers use the space of increased tellability and hearability to challenge both what can be said and how it can be said. In this first part of the analysis, I depart from the expected structure of a "complete" personal experience narrative to consider how writers adhere to or deviate from such a structure. By describing what could be included in a story, the structure allows me to consider what is incorporated or left out of the testimonies and with which results. Furthermore, interpreting this structure in relation to discourse on rape, sex, gender, and heterosexuality affords insight to the meanings conveyed in the testimonies and how they might recreate or challenge such discourse.

As presented earlier, this model for a complete narrative was introduced by William Labov (1972), and it identifies six steps in a narrative: abstract, orientation, complicating action, resolution, evaluation, and coda. However, these steps may overlap and generally not be easily distinguishable, which is why I have categorized them according to a different structural expectation of stories: having a beginning, a middle, and an end. The abstract and orientation are discussed in chapter 5. The beginning. The complicating action in chapter 6. The middle. And finally, the resolution and coda are examined in chapter 7. The end. The evaluation is often impossible to distinguish as a separate step, as evaluative information can be noticeable in all parts of a narrative and even the narrative itself told to fulfill an evaluative purpose (Patterson 2013). Therefore, the evaluation is discussed throughout the analysis rather than in a specific section.

This part of the analysis focuses on a selection of the testimonies categorized as personal experience narratives. More specifically, the personal experience narratives that present only one experience, as opposed to many. The reason for this selection is that Labov's model is created based on mono-linear stories, and therefore, it is ill-suitable for considering multi-linear narratives. Although it would be possible to derive *a* narrative from testimonies describing multiple experiences, I argue that doing so would ignore how different experiences within the same story build on and inform one another. Instead, I view the testimonies as *a* story and focus here on the ones that are already mono-linear. However, there are some exceptions to this among the abstract and codas, as these parts often offer a more general understanding of the presented experience(s) rather than being focused on a particular experience. It is also worth noting that despite focusing

on a selection of personal experience narratives, the analysis and conclusions derived are informed and influenced by my work with the complete material.

5. The beginning

The beginning is an essential part of any story, serving different purposes. The beginning can be used by the teller to claim the floor and ask for the listeners' attention, for example, by signaling that a story is about to be told and invoking interest by creating tension and expectations (Palmenfelt 2017a, 39). The beginning can also be used to establish a preferred frame of understanding for the audience by introducing the subject and choosing what background information to disclose (cf. Goffman 1975). This way, the beginning of the story can negotiate tellability and hearability, as it presents *why* it should be told and *how* it should be heard.

Focusing on the first two steps in Labov's model for a complete narrative—abstract and orientation—the aim of this chapter is to examine how the beginning of the testimonies in *Dammen brister* are structured to claim the floor, incite the attention of the listeners, and negotiate tellability and hearability. How does the beginning introduce the story of rape, and how does this relate to expectations of genre? How do the writers relate to the audience, asking for their attention and interest, and how do they position themselves according to discourse to assert a certain interpretation of the experience?

Abstract: summary, position, setting of the scene

The first step in Labov's model is the abstract. Roughly one-third of all testimonies categorized as personal experience narratives (not only mono-linear ones) start with a kind of abstract. In general, an abstract can summarize the event or, in some different manner, signal to the audience that a story is about to begin (Labov 1972). Still, the abstract is not given *in place of* the story, nor does it serve as an advertisement or warning as it does not require a response from the listener. Therefore, the purpose of the abstract can be questioned. What does it add to the presentation and interpretation of personal experience stories?

In a conversational setting, an abstract can be a means to ask for the floor, a narrative tool that requests the audience's attention and silence. The abstract can also be used to claim a story, arguing for the right to tell it while promising that it will be a good, relevant, suspenseful, or entertaining story (Johnstone 2016). However, it could be argued that the writers in *Dammen brister* already had a claim to the floor, afforded them by being admitted to the group. Furthermore, as the testimonies were posted instantly in full, the abstracts did not request permission to the floor. The testimonies were also narrated in response to a request

made by the campaign, and abstracts are usually less common when a narrator is answering a posed question (Patterson 2013).

Conversely, it should also be noted that the posed request and the writers' rights to narrate these stories were limited to the time and space of the campaign. Not needing to claim space or the right to present a story of rape could be considered unique for these types of anti-rape campaigns, as negotiating such space could otherwise be necessary for making stories of rape tellable and hearable. Additionally, if the position of the performer has not been readily available for women (Sawin 2002), and women telling their stories of being victimized are accused of self-dramatization and self-centeredness (Manne 2019), presenting a story that centers oneself might not be easy simply because writers are offered space to do so. My point is that the "need" for writers to claim the floor is not necessarily eliminated just because they were requested by the campaign but could be perceived as necessary by the writers to negotiate their position. This necessity also depends on who the writer perceives as their audience.

Furthermore, even though the testimonies are posted in full on the admin's request, I perceive the writers as partaking in a conversation, both in the situational context of the Facebook group and within a broader national and international discussion on sexual harassment and abuse. Therefore, requesting space and attention becomes relevant, as do questions of entitlement and authority. People may want to claim ownership of their own stories and, per extension, the interpretation of the experience—an entitlement claim if speaking with Shuman (2005). Or, by presenting themselves as a "person with experience," they can claim "category entitlement," which, according to Ann Phoenix (2013), can be a means of gaining the authority to speak on a subject.

In this section, I examine how the writers in *Dammen brister* use abstracts to introduce their stories. Rather than being a required part of the story, I consider the abstract as a narrative tool available for the writers to convey meaning and enhance the affective potential of the story.

The writers use abstracts in different ways to introduce their testimonies. The subsections below represent themes in the abstracts that have been identified through close reading and categorization, and these are exemplified with quotes that represent their respective categories. However, this presentation should not be considered an exhaustive presentation of themes among the testimonies.

Summarizing the story

Abstracts that present a summary of the event are generally very short. These can be one-sentence declarations that name and place the event in time/space. Despite their brevity, these summaries can effectively cat-

egorize the experiences in a way that conveys how the story should be interpreted and confirms the writer's position.

By naming the event as rape and positioning the characters in the stories as victims and perpetrators, the writers create an interpretive frame for the audience.

> I am 16 years old and a virgin when I wake up to a man raping me. (DB 570)[1]
>
> Hi, here comes my story about when I was locked in and raped at a small villa party on Midsummer's Eve as a 15-year-old. (DB 465)

These two abstracts shortly summarize the event about to be told. The first appears more as an observation and the second as informative, speaking to the audience. Both abstracts name the experiences as rape and position the characters as victims and perpetrators. The victim/perpetrator positions are fixed, as the writers are positioned as children. Although the age of consent in Finland is 16, the first writer's position is emphasized by her being a virgin and asleep, and the man's position as a perpetrator is underlined by him being presented as an adult. In the second abstract, the perpetrator's age is not mentioned, but the writer's position as a victim is underlined with her being "locked in," which creates a coercive circumstance that invalidates possible interpretations of consent (cf. Jokila and Niemi 2020). Thus, the positions of victim and perpetrator are clear, indicating how the story should be interpreted.

The experiences are also named rape, which further clarifies the interpretive frame. By placing the experience in the category of rape, the writers obstruct readers from interpreting the experience as something else. Naming the experience can also be an expectation by the genre of "speaking out," as feminist activism often requests such categorizing (Alcoff 2018, 61), perhaps because naming is perceived as necessary for establishing certain experiences to be rape and challenging dominant discourse describing "real" rape (Loney-Howes 2020, 72). Additionally, women speaking of experiences of sexual violence are urged to name the event, as it is considered beneficial for the victim. The recognition of having been victimized is assumed to be an important first step for re-creating a narrative that presents a more positive self-view (Lawless 2001). Either way, naming the experience as rape is to claim entitlement to the interpretation of the story from the very beginning.

1 All testimonies have been translated by the author and audited by a native English-speaker. I have attempted to stay close to the original text, while still making the text understandable and communicating the assumed intended meaning. Punctuation has been changed to improve the structure in English, though I have also tried to maintain an informal tone if used by the writer.

This entitlement could also be extended to include "category entitlement" (Phoenix 2013), meaning that the writer gains the authority to speak on the subject of rape by presenting themselves as part of the group of people who have been raped. The existence of an "in-group"—a "we" versus "them"—is also noticeable in these short abstracts. In fact, the shortness of the abstracts conveys an expectation of a shared interpretation within the group; the writers could be brief because they assumed that the audience would still understand them.

In the examples presented above, the perpetrator is merely mentioned. In other abstracts, he can be more clearly positioned:

> I was raped now during the fall. The one who raped me was my ex-boyfriend, active in student associations and organizations, a generally social, musical person who calls himself a feminist. (DB 868)

The writer here presents the experience as being rape, but beyond that; the perpetrator is positioned favorably. He is presented as social, musical, and a self-proclaimed feminist. But rather than trying to present the perpetrator as a "good guy," this positioning seems to challenge discourse determining who a "real" rapist is. The writer presents factors that could have been used to dismiss her testimony in other situations, most likely assuming that the audience would understand her intention with the description. This assumption conveys a shared agreement in the group and establishes a sense of community, a "we."

The writer also swiftly challenges the cultural organizations that she positions him within. Mentioning student associations, musical spaces, and feminism not only describes him but also labels these spaces as potentially unsafe. As a result, the abstract creates an interpretive frame for the writer's experience and conveys how it could be read as a broader social critique.

One of the summaries cited above also highlights the existence of a shared community by initiating with a greeting. This testimony is the only one that starts with a greeting, causing it to stand out. Without pondering too much on a small detail, I want to note that there is something careful about starting with a greeting. It gives a sense of asking for space from an outside perspective, that is, for access to a space to which you currently do not have access. This careful approach is something I have noticed repeatedly in this material and could be the result of women's restricted claim to the position of performer, of generally not being allowed to place oneself at the center and call attention to one's experiences.

By presenting a summary of the event, these abstracts, in a sense, "spoil" the story by giving away the "point" of it. Labov questioned such spoiling; what purpose does it serve? Here, I have noted that summaries

can establish an interpretive framework for the experience and affirm the writers' right to both the experience and the narration of it while also positioning the writers as part of a group. Moreover, these summaries set the scene as serious and uncomfortable: a discomfort that is then increased throughout the story and to which the reader may not find any release. This tension can also be created less bluntly than in the abstracts presented above, which is the subject of the following subsection.

Building tension

In contrast with the summaries above, other abstracts present a background against which the story is built. Forming such a background is the purpose of the orientation as well, but the abstract can offer a more stylistic introduction to the narrative. By contrasting the story about to be told to expectations regarding certain experiences, the abstract can create tension.

> I was a teenager and hopelessly in love. What started as something beautiful ended as something incredibly ugly. Trust turned into fear. (DB 396)

This writer presents an idyllic, nostalgic picture of teenage love that then turns ugly. The feeling of what it was is contrasted to what it became, which the reader, at this point, can only guess from the story being presented in the campaign. I hold that this is a narrative tool that creates tension by initially presenting the ordinary/beautiful and then introducing the unordinary/ugly. Barbara Johnstone (2016) notes that the evaluation of a narrative can be embedded by comparing what happened with what did not happen, could have happened, or might have happened. Such comparison is hinted at here, as the writer presents a contrast between what was (bringing the assumption it could have continued like this) and what it became. In other words, the story can be interpreted not only according to what happened but also to what could or should have happened, which is informed by a discourse on love and being a teenager. This abstract is not as blunt as the summaries presented in the previous section but still signals what kind of story is about to be presented and raises expectations for the listener, as it conveys the writer's evaluation of the experience.

Contrasting can also be used to convey irony or humor.

> I have, as too many others here, stories of drunk hands that take liberties they don't own, about long evening walks that turned into short evening runs because someone won't accept a "no" or "go away." But it is none of these stories that

> are the reason for my PTSD, which is the reason for my post. The reason is an ex-boyfriend. A "mother-in-law's dream." A "man's man." Someone you can "trust through thick and thin." Someone whose every action was "because I love you so much." In other words, a real asshole. (DB 605)

In this abstract, the writer presents how her ex-boyfriend has been presented favorably. The use of quoted speech, however, informs the reader that these are not the writer's own presentation of him, at least not at the time of writing. Instead, the quoted speech exemplifies how the ex has been described by others or himself. Only the last quote is undoubtedly presented by the ex-boyfriend; the others could represent speech by other people describing him to the writer, or even how she herself viewed him at the beginning of the relationship, hence representing the perception of the narrated "I."

Quoted speech refers to utterances presented as given by someone other than the narrator. Using quoted speech in narratives can be a means of dramatization or a way of underlining what is essential in the narrative (Marander-Eklund 2002). Additionally, quoted speech can be used to enhance the speaker's position, as it indicates that the utterance relies not only on her own perception of things but has support from someone else (Arvidsson 1999, 95). Phrased differently, quoted speech presents an utterance as given by someone other than the narrator, allowing her to borrow authority from a prior speaker (Shuman 2005, 31). The responsibility of the utterance is assigned to the former speaker, which gives it more credibility (ibid.). Thus, using quoted speech, the narrator presents an utterance as essentially not their own, allowing her to renounce the responsibility of it and make it appear more "objective." In the example presented above, the writer uses quoted speech to convey how others perceived her ex, only to have it contrasted in the last sentence with her own perception of him. However, compared to the first example, this second example creates a contrast that is more humorous.

The use of humor and irony in the testimonies is rare, which indicates the serious tone of the campaign. Nonetheless, I want to underline the possible use of irony and humor, both in how they can be used to challenge dominant discourse on rape and create tellable space for the writers; and how the use of self-irony and humor can be seen as a necessary tool by a narrator to abide by the feminine role.

Theories on humor note that a situation or utterance becomes humorous when two incompatible ideas are paired together (J. H. Goldstein and McGhee 1972; Wyer and Collins 1992) or when the listeners' expectations are subverted (Morreall 2009, 10). The last sentence in the example cited above can be considered a pun as it contradicts the picture of her ex formed by her description of him using others' words. However, I

doubt that the readers were surprised that the man was revealed to be an asshole. The writer presents the situation in a way that does not read as sincere, and thus, the abstract could perhaps better be considered ironic rather than humorous.

Irony can be described as the "mode of discourse where you say something you don't actually mean and expect people to understand not only what you actually do mean but also your attitude toward it" (Hutcheon 1985, 10). Irony and humor both play on the double meaning of things, which is why irony can be used as a comedic tool (Cox 2015). But whereas jokes require a shared attitude and perception of reality, to depend on their ability to create a sense of togetherness and intimacy within the group (Brodie 2014, 6), irony can be said to necessitate also an "outgroup," that is, people who do not understand the double meaning (Cox 2015). The writer of the abstract must have assumed that the members of the group would understand the irony but also that they would be aware of an "outside group" who would not.

Self-irony has been argued to be characteristic of women (Kinnunen 1998). It is a tool that can establish a position of non-authority (Nylund Skog 2002, 154), while laughter can also be a means of downplaying a difficult or painful experience (Marander-Eklund 2000, 153). Thus, in general, irony and humor can be used to direct attention away from oneself and present one's experience as "unimportant." Additionally, presenting experiences of violence in a humorous rather than serious manner could also be considered a narrative tool to make the audience more comfortable by offering release to the tension built up in the story. Such "caring work" could be connected to expectations placed on women not to create discomfort or unhappiness (Ahmed 2017), and hence the use of self-irony can be a means to narrate experiences while adhering to appropriate femininity. Conversely, humor can also be a useful tool for the narrator as it creates distance to the narrated event (Koskinen-Koivisto 2014, 66) and space for narrating traumatic experiences that would otherwise be untellable (D. M. Goldstein 2013, 54). The absence of humor and irony among the testimonies could indicate that such tools for tellability were not considered necessary in the campaign, not for the writers themselves nor to make their stories more palatable for the audience. Per this view, the testimonies would be perceived as challenging the expectations placed on the narrator to maintain the audience's comfort.

To summarize, the abstracts can create tension by contrasting what happened with what could have happened or by playing on the double meaning of things. Albeit very different, both examples presented in this section function to create tension using shared understandings in the group, regarding what teenage love is supposed to be and how appearances can be deceptive. Per extension, this contrast allows writers to convey

meaning beyond what is said and evaluate the experience without being explicit.

Positioning the experience

Other abstracts comment on the abundance of possible experiences to tell. Writers can highlight this abundance using statements such as "like, where should you begin." (DB 764) or "I have so many times been exposed to creeps and sleazes that I cannot possibly tell them all." (DB 779). These abstracts could be considered simply a means of presenting that the writers have many additional experiences that will not be told, thus firmly positioning themselves in the group. Highlighting an abundance of possible experiences to tell also emphasizes the multitude of the problem of sexual violence and hence addresses the central focus of the campaign and #MeToo in general. On the other hand, these abstracts present questions that all writers must have contemplated—where should you start, and what should you tell?

Questioning where you should begin is not simply a means to introduce a story, but Labov (2010; 2013) notes how the question determines how all stories begin, even when not written out. He argues that all stories start with a process of narrative preconstruction, in which the teller chooses where to start and what to include in her story. For Labov, the narrative preconstruction is tied to the inverse relationship between the most tellable event (here understood as something extraordinary enough to be told) and the most credible or hearable. In short, he suggests that to make the tellable event credible for the audience (or, in my terms, hearable), the narrators must start at a place in the story that is not in itself tellable but more credible, and narrate the events leading up to the tellable event. From this perspective, the answer to the question of where one should begin is the most hearable event (Labov 2013, 22).

However, this narrative preconstruction describes how a *specific* event (which assumedly has a clearer beginning) is to be structured, whereas the writers in *Dammen brister* are requested to present *any* experience and often have many to choose from, as noted in the examples above. The writers still need to choose a place in which to begin their story, a decision that can be presented in the abstracts.

> [I] have unfortunately many stories of nasty situations, comments, touching, and assaults, but what's been hardest for me is the man I had had sex with for a few months. (DB 741)

In this abstract, the writer paints a background of experiences of sexual violence in which the experience is placed. The writer clarifies that the

experience about to be told is not the only one that she has, but she singles it out as the one that has been the hardest for her. Thus, the abstract explains why this story has been selected in favor of the others.

Also interesting here is that the writer notes how this experience is the one that has been the hardest *for her*, which could be interpreted as a means of increasing tellability by avoiding comparison with others' experiences. In other words, the writer underlines how the story should not be compared with others' experiences but is selected because it is bad compared with her own prior experiences. Such positioning is hardly unjustified, as from the beginning of the #MeToo movement, critical voices tried to determine which stories deserved attention (Charleston 2017), and women have been noted to downplay their own experiences, as their gendered socialization may cause them to experience their abused as either deserved or not abuse at all (Alcoff 2018, 59). Discourse on rape determines what is assumed to be "real" rape, causing experiences not fitting this description to be less hearable. The writer here presents the story as about the man she has had sex with for a few months, thus introducing character positions inconsistent with the discursive description of rape that presents it as an act perpetrated by a stranger (cf. Ryan 2011). Not reflecting the discourse describing "real" rape could explain the writer's positioning of the experience as most challenging *for her.*

Another reason why a particular story can be singled out from the mass is that it includes a topic assumed to require attention:

> There is a lot I could write about, but what feels most taboo is to be sexually violated in a relationship. (DB 645)

Instead of focusing on what is hardest for her, the writer here chooses a topic she argues is the most taboo. In other words, she chose what she believed to be the *least* tellable event and, hence, something that would require attention. Again, the writer selects an experience and informs the audience of how she has made her choice. Thus, the abstract confirms what the story is about and why it is told, creating an interpretive frame for the reader. Emphasizing the subject as taboo also, implicitly or explicitly, presents the story as not simply about the writer's experience but as aiming to provide insight into a general problem. By aspiring to present the silenced experiences of marginalized groups, the story is aligned with the genre of testimony.

Having many experiences to choose from makes the question regarding where one should begin challenging—selecting a story to tell means deselecting others, which can appear inadequate if someone wishes to convey lived experience of violence. Declaring that one has many experiences might allow the writer to select one experience, as the reader then

knows that there are other experiences in the background. In this view, the presentation of an abundance of experiences in the abstracts can be a means of increasing tellability by disclosing a background to the story while also positioning it in relation to personal experience and discourse and securing the writer's position in the campaign.

Lowering expectations

Comparable to the challenge of knowing what to narrate or where to start is knowing *how* to narrate. The untellability of a story is only partly dependent on assumptions of what is appropriate and what is heard; it can also result from violent and traumatic experiences having caused the narrative to become incoherent, chaotic, or silenced (D. E. Goldstein 2012). Attempting to present a violent or traumatic story in writing can bring forth even further challenges. Goldstein (2012) notes that issues such as linearity, fragmentation, and disorder become more apparent when a narrative moves from verbal to written form. This means that verbally narrating a story might be easier than presenting it in writing.

The difficulty in sharing these experiences can be underlined in the abstracts.

> I'm no writer, and even though this is a thing I have written and talked about a few times, it is difficult to find the words because there are no right words to describe this. (DB 568)
>
> This is not easy to write about because I have only wanted to repress it. (DB 586)

These writers initiate their testimonies by noting the difficulty of narrating these experiences. This difficulty is not uncommon, as not finding the words to describe experiences or struggling with the wish to repress them has been noted to affect a victim's capacity to speak (Lawless 2001, 64; Rosen 2008). However, the stories that follow these abstracts *are* written, which urges me to question what purpose presenting such difficulty in the abstract serves.

In one sense, the abstracts prepare the reader for what kind of story is about to be told: a difficult and traumatic one. It is a story that escapes narration or one that the writer wishes to be forgotten, which creates expectations for the audience. In another sense, perhaps the abstracts could be a means for the writers to *decrease* the readers' expectations to ease their own nervousness. By warning the reader that what is about to be told may not be a "good" narrative, the writers lower the bar for the story, similar to how presenters can initiate a presentation by stating that they are nervous or that it is their first time presenting.

An extension to lowering the reader's expectations would be that the writers use such abstracts to create narrative space for themselves to describe what is considered unwriteable. Stating that something is difficult to write about allows them to rid themselves of expectations of presenting a "good" story. Although narrating traumatic experiences is difficult, this narration is often an essential part of the process of making meaning of the experience. Lawless (2001) argues that through the narration of violent experiences, women can begin to separate themselves from the violence, while the narration provides them with new avenues for understanding and identity formation (ibid., 123). The narration provides the means for people to reconstruct themselves (ibid.). As this narration might not be easy, accepting that the narrative might not be "good" could perhaps be a helpful first step in creating narratives of experiences for which the writer lacks words, opening the space for also presenting incoherent or chaotic narratives.

Proceeding from this, I suggest that these abstracts could be considered helpful tools for the writers to articulate their experiences rather than simply an introduction for the readers. Stating that one cannot easily articulate this experience becomes a means to claim space for yourself to at least try.

Reevaluation of experience

Discourse on rape does not only restrict tellability of such experiences but also how they are understood as possible by people who have suffered them. In the introduction, I presented how discourse forms our experiences by describing possible scenarios, which makes how and what we experience partly dependent on what we assume to be a possible experience. Being introduced to a new discursive framework, however, might transform how people view a past experience (cf. Shuman 2005, 16). Such transformation or realization of experience can be noted in the abstracts.

> Now I will share something that only half a handful of my closest friends know. Why? Because in connection with the #metoo campaign, I've realized that what happened to me is nothing to be ashamed of, nothing I need to keep secret. I remember the night like yesterday, despite it being over 5 years ago. It was not until during the past few years that I've understood what I've been exposed to, and how big an impact it has had on my life going forward. (DB 765)

Much is included in this abstract. The writer presents how few people know of the experience and why she has now decided to share it. It also

contains an evaluation of the experience and how it has affected the writer's life. What is central here are the two realizations that the writer shares: how she realizes having been exposed to something that has had a big impact on her life and how the experience is nothing she should be ashamed of. By presenting these realizations, the writer conveys how the story should be understood and indicates what the reader could "take away" from it. They underline how these kinds of experiences may not be recognized at the moment they occur but rather understood in hindsight and how one can recognize having been wronged and yet still feel shame. A shame she only later realizes she should not bear. Using this abstract, the writer prepares to challenge the discourse on rape that portrays it as something evident and easy to recognize, as well as the assumption that a victim of rape should be ashamed and silent.

These kinds of revelations of having been victimized or realizing that the shame is not theirs to bear are common among the testimonies, which is perhaps unsurprising. Shifting the shame from the victims to the perpetrators was a focal part of the aim of *Dammen brister*, and although the writer above realized how she had been exposed to violence before the campaign, feminist consciousness-raising campaigns have been presented as spaces in which women could transform their understanding of their experiences (Mardorossian 2002). Thus, by presenting the reevaluations, the writer also aligns with the genre of speaking out in feminist anti-rape campaigns.

Addressing the campaign

The last theme among the abstracts that will be discussed is one in which the writer explicitly addresses the campaign. These abstracts affect the interpretation of the stories and convey how the campaign as a narrative space was not simply offered to the members but also *co-created* by them and the writers sharing their testimonies. Researchers Mendes et al. (2019) emphasize how participating in digital feminist activism is not as easy as it is often assumed. Various factors such as confidence, technology, and social status can create barriers to sharing, and the researchers note that the stories shared are not merely flippant responses but are "carefully produced testimonials that were scaffolded after sleepless nights" (Mendes, Ringrose, and Keller 2018, 237). Therefore, *why* someone decides to participate in the campaign is an interesting question, and the answer could offer insight into how the story should be understood.

The decision on whether to share their stories was discussed in the abstracts.

> I have debated back and forth for days if I would write something here. I feel such shame for what I have experienced. (DB 451)

> I have never ever done anything like this. I never open up on social media, but this I consider to be extremely important. And I have been inspired and touched by all the brave women here. It also helps a little that I am basically as far away from Finland as one can be. (DB 850)

The first writer presents having debated her decision to share for days, presenting shame as a reason for hesitating. The second one presents a different barrier, that is, sharing personal stories on social media. The importance of the subject triumphed in her case, which was aided, paradoxically, by being part of a group and having distance from it. The bravery of the group members is presented as motivating her, indicating a sense of community in the group. Yet, the physical distance from the group also made sharing more accessible. Being aided by physical distance reflects how digital spaces are not perceived as somehow "different" from "real" spaces but how the different spheres of interaction are increasingly considered as one and the same (Powell and Henry 2017, 287). The digital space did not afford the writer space to distance her story from herself, but in this case, the geographic distance made it tellable.

The sense of community and seeing others disclose their experiences have been perceived as reasons for sharing personal experiences of sexual violence since before the #MeToo movement (e.g., Sigurvinsdóttir, Ásgeirsdóttir, and Arnalds 2020). Having rid themselves of the barrier established by shame is also described as a reason for sharing (ibid.), as is the view of sexual violence as an important topic to discuss (e.g., Loney-Howes 2020; Mendes, Ringrose, and Keller 2019). Emphasizing the importance of the subject explains why it is shared; by presenting the subject as important, the story is made important and tellable. This importance is elaborated on in another abstract:

> What a surge of emotions I have had these past two days. Finally–finally, we are talking about this. This feeling of sisterhood, empathy, courage, and strength is unbelievable. Even though it is extremely grievous to know how many we are, and what unbelievably horrible experiences we carry. Here is my testimony. (DB 607)

This abstract celebrates the broken silence and the feeling of sisterhood and courage while underlining the horribleness of others' experiences. The campaign is presented as answering a long-overdue need, which then becomes a background against which the story is to be understood. By

introducing these stories as important, the writers challenge the perception that rape is not a widespread problem, which has been noted as a dominant understanding in the Nordics, as the region is often regarded as having achieved gender equality (cf. Heinskou, Skilbrei, and Stefansen 2020). These stories are positioned as important—and thus tellable—by offering insight into a previously marginalized and silenced problem. As a result, these abstracts align the stories according to the genre of testimony.

Furthermore, these abstracts convey how the writers experienced being in the group. Feelings of sisterhood, empathy, and bravery are highlighted, and such exclamations not only underline the assumed community within the group but also function to recreate and reestablish it by relating to the other women in the campaign.

***

The purpose of the abstract is to claim the floor and indicate that a story is about to begin. In this first section of this chapter, I have presented several themes common among the abstracts and discussed how they work to present the story, create narrative space, challenge discourse, and establish an interpretive frame for the reader, thus signaling how the story is to be understood.

It has been noted how writers can use the abstracts to summarize the story, allowing them to create space in the campaign and claim the interpretation of their experience. The abstract can also create tension by hinting at what is to come, building expectations for the readers. Writers who struggle with knowing where to start or how to discuss a topic can use the abstract to create narrative space for themselves by presenting what story they have chosen and why or by lowering the audience's expectations. When introducing the story as a reevaluation of experience, the writers align themselves according to the campaign and help recreate genre structures in *Dammen brister*. Addressing the campaign can also be more explicit in the abstracts, often underlining the difficulty—yet importance—of participating in it and speaking from the margins.

This discussion is further elaborated on at the end of this chapter. First, I examine how writers present background information for the audience to make their stories understandable, and tellable.

Orientation

The second step in Labov's model is the orientation, in which the necessary background information regarding the characters in the story, time, and space is conveyed to the reader. Although presented as the second step, informative clauses can also be placed strategically throughout the

narrative (Labov 1972). By inserting information at different places in the narrative rather than presenting it all at the beginning, the narrative can be made easier to follow. However, the presentation of informative clauses later in the story can also be used as a narrative tool to shock the audience by suddenly adding information that changes the listeners' understanding of the story. The orientation is essential for making the story understandable, but it is also information chosen by the teller for the narrative to be interpreted *in the right way*. What is told and what is not told in a story depends on the meaning the narrator wants to convey (Palmenfelt 2017a, 45–56). Thus, despite appearing as simply factual, Labov argues that the orienting information is what mainly ascribes praise or blame for the narrated event (Labov 2010).

In the previous section on abstracts, it was noted how, according to Labov (2010; 2013), a story should begin at a place that is most hearable and move toward that which is tellable—the story's point. Labov suggests that the least tellable (here understood as the most ordinary and mundane) and most credible event is generally placed in the orientation. In this view, the orientation can be used to establish tellability by presenting a background that is hearable and which, per extension, increases the chance for the tellable event to be heard.

Narrating an experience of rape can require careful orientation to establish credibility/hearability. As Gilmore (2017, 5) shows, women's testimonies—especially when presenting instances of sexual violence—are subjected to practices of shaming and discrediting that preexist any specific case. Dominant discourse presents "ideal" victims that determine who can be raped and who cannot (Christie 2001), meaning that the hearability of a testimony depends on whether the witness is assumed as "worthy" and thus "credible" (Ekström 2002). This victim position is determined by how the narrator is perceived, but also by where the rape is said to have occurred (Nilsson 2019a) and the victim's actions before, during, and after the assault (Jokila and Niemi 2020). Additionally, the hearability of a testimony is also conditioned based on who is being accused, as some men are more easily understood as perpetrators than others (Waterhouse-Watson 2019). Resulting from this, establishing hearability in a story of rape can require a careful orientation and positioning according to dominant discourse that determines the interpretive framework according to which the stories are understood. However, it is essential to remember that the campaign constituted a narrative space that differed from others, such as legal ones, and this may have affected such orientation or the necessity of it.

In this section, I examine how writers orient their stories according to the narrative elements of *time, characters*, and *space* (cf. Bal 1985) when presenting experiences. How do narrators position themselves and other

characters in the story, as well as in time and space, to make their stories tellable and hearable?

Expectations of time

Time is relevant for stories in various ways. All stories occur in time and are often expected to adhere to a temporal structure (e.g., Labov 1972). In addition, people understand what they should do and what is expected of them through a cultural understanding of time (Arvidsson 2022, 67); a normative "life schedule" can be perceived as determining what should happen at specific points in life and not at others (Halberstam 2005); and time is a common tool for organizing a life narrative (Svensson 1997). Furthermore, precise references to time can also increase a story's credibility, a way of proving that the narrated event actually occurred (Marander-Eklund 2000, 131). In this subsection, I first examine how the testimonies are placed in time and what meaning is conveyed through such placement. Second, I consider how time can be used as a narrative tool for structuring the story.

The orientation often starts by placing the experience in time if it was not already done in the abstract. As not all testimonies include an abstract, the time placement can function to introduce the story. A story is generally placed in time by presenting the age of the writer at the time that the experience occurred; the year, or decade, in which the incident happened; or the time of the year, according to seasons such as summer or holidays such as New Year's Eve. The placements in time are often brief, offered without elaboration or reflection, but some writers underline what meaning they ascribe the time reference. I begin by going through these three different placements one by one.

In the section on abstracts, it was noted how tension could be built by contrasting the incidents to possible expectations regarding such time. In the experience discussed there, it was described as a time of being young and in love. However, simply presenting the age of the writer can convey expectations and meaning. In her analysis of the #MeToo campaign for the Church of Sweden, Gunilla Carstensen (2022) notes how many stories describe assaults from younger years or the start of the person's career. Carstensen suggests that as these are times in which a person takes her first steps of being socialized into a new community, it makes the person "extra sensitive and vulnerable" (ibid., 264). Many of the testimonies in *Dammen brister* similarly place the stories in younger years, and I agree with Caarsten that such placement conveys vulnerability, which underlines the person's position as a victim; but moreover, I would suggest that presenting the age also enhances the affective potential of the story by contradicting discursive expectations regarding such time.

Rape does not have a specific place in the normative life schedule, but certain groups, such as children, are expected to be shielded from all things sexual (Bartholdsson 2010). Social anthropologist Åsa Bartholdsson argues that childhood as a cultural construction presents a time of carefree play and safety within the family.[2] This discursive construction of childhood as a safe and carefree time becomes a background against which the testimony is contrasted, enhancing the affective potential of the story. In the same way, discursive understandings regarding teenage years, studying at university, or starting a career also create expectations that affect how the audience hears and understands the experience. Thus, presenting the writer's age at the time of the rape conveys meaning by contrasting the experience with certain discursive expectations.

In other testimonies, the writers present the year of the assault rather than their age. These time placements can convey meaning by relating to a historical understanding of the time or making the story hearable. One writer explains her parents' difficulty asking her about her experiences with a man they were suspicious about—and her own inability to tell them even though she knew what they were trying to ask her—with the argument that it was the 80s "and sexual assault was nothing you talked about" (DB 96). The time period is thus used to explain the inability to speak by arguing how it was (more) silenced during that time. Orienting the story in a specific year can also have the effect of making the story more credible, but such time placements are rare among the testimonies. Perhaps it was perceived as less interesting to the readers, less relevant, or because such information might risk an anonymized story being recognized.

Different times of the year also carry discursive expectations that affect how the stories are heard. Expectations on holidays such as Midsummer create a discursive background against which the story is contrasted, while traditional holidays are also connected to the Finland-Swedish culture (Mattsson 2011, 110). One writer describes the beginning of her midsummer: "We have a wonderful idyllic night with good food and sauna and laughter late into the night." (DB 119). This short description establishes a picture of the holiday that is then contrasted with the narrated experience. In other testimonies, the experience can simply be presented as having occurred during the holiday. In these cases, a shared cultural understanding of Midsummer can be assumed to represent the expectations with which the experience is compared. Per this view, orienting an experience in specific times of the year might change or enhance the story's meaning due to culturally created discursive expectations that are placed on these times.

2 Studying the representation of sexual abuse of children in the media, anthropologist Jenny Kitzinger (1997) further suggests that it is often precisely the childhood that is presented as having been abused. Thus, the concern is not only with the attacked child but the attack on childhood itself (ibid.).

Thus far in this subsection, the aim has been to convey how even though the time placements are generally brief, they affect how the stories are heard as they place the rape in relation to discursive expectations placed on time. The stories are still heard differently by different people, as these expectations vary depending on people's own knowledge and experience, even though certain cultural similarities can be assumed. I now proceed to consider how time can be used as a tool to structure the story, affecting how it unfolds and how it is understood.

The testimonies generally adhere to genre expectations of temporality (with some exceptions), but the testimonies often describe a long period of time, extending far beyond the rape and even into the present. By including the "aftermath" of the rape and narrating the effects of it still endured at the time of writing, the story becomes stretched out and even unfinished (this discussion is continued in chapter 7. The end). Using time, the writer can also present how the experience unfolded, making it more understandable. In these testimonies, time is used to structure the story, allowing the reader to follow how the experience evolves. The extract cited below is from a writer who presents a relationship that *she is in* at the time of writing, which is also a particularly emotive placement in time as it does not provide the reader with the satisfaction of resolution.

> We have been together for about a year when it hurts the first time. Without warning, I feel a burn when he thrusts inside me. It chafes all the time; it feels as if we create a graze wound together.
>
> We have been together for about a year and a half; it is a year since I lost my virginity. I have started to tense up before sex. It hurts every time. I suggest all positions I can come up with that don't include penetration. I lie on my back and look at the tip of his penis as it goes back and forth between my breasts. Back and forth until he ejaculates in my face.
>
> We always have sex with the lights off. That way, my tears aren't visible. I am the world champion in crying silently; my tears disappear without a trace just before his cheek reaches mine.
>
> We move away from home and create our own home together for a while before he disappears to the army and eventually to another city to study. During the weeks, I live my own life, work, study, and am active in student organizations. As the weekend approaches, a lump settles in my stomach. We haven't seen each other for a week or two; we have to have sex now that we have the opportunity. […]
>
> We have been together for three years. I have lost my ability to become aroused and wet. We solve the problem by first

> stimulating me by hand; enough dry rubbing leads to an orgasm and lubrication. Then it is possible for him to penetrate me. Otherwise, I'm too tense for it to be physically possible.
>
> Three and a half years have passed since we got together. It is early spring, and I wake up to him penetrating me. I wake up a number of times over the next few months. In the mornings, we joke that he's raped me in his sleep. He doesn't know what to do with all his sexuality, so he acts unconsciously in his sleep. I feel guilty; how can I do this to him?
>
> We have been together for almost five years. N-o, two letters in one syllable. A word that can be said in less than a second. Still, I have never gotten it out of my mouth. My brain monotonously chants no, no, no, no. My body screams it silently. Constant stress, nightmares, tantrums, crying, screaming, arguing, pain. He never helps me pronounce the word. Does he dare to ask? Does he see the huge graze wound we have created during our five years together? (DB 737)

In this orientation, the writer presents how her relationship develops over the course of five years, during which time sex becomes increasingly painful for her. She describes how she starts avoiding sex and how her boyfriend rapes her while she is sleeping, but neither of them brings the topic to discussion. Much is happening in this testimony, but what will be focused on here is how the writer orients in time, using it to structure her story.

The time stamps allow the reader to follow the situation as it grows increasingly inconceivable. The careful unfolding of the progression slows down the narrative, causing the endpoint to become more understandable. It conveys how the rapes were not happening suddenly but as occurring within a situational context that has been slowly established over the years.

Presenting the experience step by step also allows the writer to repeat how painful and difficult sex was, how it affected her physically and mentally, and his inactions and rapes. Although the story is structured according to time past, each paragraph adds a new layer to it while allowing the writer to repeat the "core" of it—the pain and the silence. By repeating the central point of the story, it becomes more emphasized for the audience.

As a result, the writer's orientation in time enhances the affective potential of the story while also making it more understandable by explaining how she came to be in her situation. In doing so, the writer offers a more complex view of rape in a relationship. When it comes to abuse in relationships, it can be easy from an outside perspective to view an act of violence as a specific event in time, and therefore, the victim's silence or

inaction might appear illogical. However, in this testimony, even though the writer herself expresses incredulity of both his and her own silence around the subject, the orientation in time gives the situation a background that increases the hearability of the story.

To summarize this section, I have presented how discursive understandings of time create expectations against which the stories of rape are contrasted and that inform and enhance their meaning. Additionally, writers can use time to structure the narrative, showing how experiences unfold over time and even extend into the present. This extension conveys how rape is not necessarily an event that can be delimited in time but an experience that can be stretched out, ongoing, and unfinished.

Victims and perpetrators

Ordinarily, for a personal story of rape to be heard, the teller needs to be recognized as a victim and the perpetrator as a perpetrator. Therefore, how the characters in the story are positioned according to discourse and in relation to one another can be crucial for a testimony to be viewed as credible and heard correctly.

In broad terms, the ideal victim is understood as someone who is innocent and vulnerable (Christie 2001; Edgren 2019; McKenzie-Mohr 2014), while the ideal perpetrator is someone who is perceived as a monster or pervert (Boshoff and Prinsloo 2015) or simply "other" in some way (Gottzén and Franzén 2020). These discursive constructions of victim/perpetrator affect people's understanding of rape and, per extension, the tellability of rape stories. Although *Dammen brister* was a tellable space that promised hearability and belief in the victims' testimonies, it does necessarily prevent writers from feeling a need to shield themselves against assumed discourse that could cause their stories to be misinterpreted. According to Bamberg (1997), narrators always position themselves against assumed discourses when narrating, and when narrating experiences that are subjected to as much disbelief and discrediting as rape, such positioning can be viewed as all the more focal. In this section, I analyze how the victims and perpetrators are presented in the orientation of the testimonies. How are they described, and how do the writers use the tellable space to challenge discourse describing real victims and real perpetrators?

Victim/perpetrator positions can be neatly underlined by presenting the age of the perpetrators.

> Summer 2000. I am 16 years old, and next week I will start high school. Me and my girlfriend celebrate the last days off and go home to my place, where I, for once, have an empty

> house. My girlfriend has happened to meet a slightly older guy some time earlier (he must have been like 23-24 years old), who now offers company at the party for us two girls, he'd gladly bring his friend along! (DB 67)

Central in this positioning of the characters is their age, or more specifically, the age difference between them. As noted in the previous subsection, age carries certain expectations and conveys vulnerability (cf. Carstensen 2022). The writer positions herself as a child, not yet even in high school and living with her parents. In contrast, the man who will turn out to be the perpetrator is presented as an adult. At this point, it can only be assumed that he is the same age as the other man, which is proven later in the testimony. The difference in age lays the groundwork for establishing the positions of victim and perpetrator: she is a child and innocent, and he is an adult and responsible.

His age and her position are underlined later in the text: "The other guy has shown interest in me all evening and made advances, he is 9 years older than I, and I thought that he was a little gross." (DB 67). In repeating the large age difference and including that she found him gross, the writer positions herself against other interpretations of the story. Not only is his position as an adult underlined, but she also clarifies that she had no interest in him. With that clarification, the narrator positions herself against discourse of rape that claims women engage in consensual sex that they subsequently regret and therefore refer to as rape. This discourse functions to accuse the victim of lying about being raped, essentially placing the blame on her (Peterson and Muehlenhard 2004). The risk of such discourse being used to dismiss a person's testimony is exceptionally high when the narrator presents having been under the influence of alcohol (Gunby, Carline, and Beynon 2013). Thus, by presenting her perception of him as gross, the writer shields herself against the experience being interpreted as consensual and allows her to maintain the victim position.

The testimony presented above continues by further positioning the perpetrator as Finland-Swedish and ends by presenting him according to a political position.

> I go to sleep way too intoxicated after having bolted down strong liquor that the guys had brought and that we had "borrowed" from my mum's liquor cabinet (which they went and politely bought back from Alko the following morning, as one does when one is well-mannered and Finland-Swedish!) […]
>
> He sits nowadays in a high position in local politics and was a very adult person when this happened. He was at my girlfriend's school two years after this happened. He participated in an election debate when he was running in the local elec-

> tion. She thought it was a little laughable when he had been sitting there in the panel and had opinions about how he worries about teenagers' alcohol use and drug abuse in general. (DB 67)

In this part, the perpetrator is presented according to other positions, such as that of the well-behaved Finland-Swedish man and a man in a political position who tries to take care of the alcohol abuse by adolescents. The orientation here allows the story to stretch past simply describing the writer's experience to challenge discourse describing both Finland-Swedes and the "real" perpetrators. Thus, the writer uses her experience to convey a wider cultural critique while also relating to the campaign's aim of showing how sexual harassment and assault also occur in Swedish Finland.

Precise victim/perpetrator positions may not have been necessary to be heard within the campaign, where women and girls were not questioned or blamed. Being able to convey such positions could still make stories more tellable for the writer, as the need to shield oneself against discourse on rape can be ingrained in the narration of such experiences. Per extension, being unable to construct clear victim/perpetrator positions could become an obstacle for writers and compel them to stay silent about the abuse. However, it is noticeable that the space afforded by *Dammen brister* allowed writers to present more complex victim/perpetrator positions.

> In high school, I dated one of my classmates. He was my first boyfriend. I had incredibly low self-confidence, I don't think any person before had shown any interest in me in a romantic way, so I was very flattered by all the attention I got from him. It was an incredibly destructive relationship, and I would never in my life accept things like that now, but as I said, I was very naïve and valued myself about as much as a pile of garbage. He was big, closer to two meters tall, and pretty strong. (DB 253)

In this orientation, the writer positions herself in space and time and as having low self-confidence, never receiving much attention. She also emphasizes that she, in the present, would not accept the kind of treatment she received in the past. Her boyfriend is placed in a dominant position by his power of being able to give her what she needs because of her low self-confidence, that is, attention, but the perpetrator position is also underlined by referencing his size and strength. This presentation establishes the foundation for the positions of victim and perpetrator, but the way the writer relates to her former self suggests that she assumes her experience as incredulous and thus requires more explanation. Being the

same age and in a relationship, the writer must rely on different positionings than in the previous example.

Marander-Eklund (2000, 195) notes that people narrating personal experiences can be critical of themselves as they recreate the story in hindsight and view their capacity for agency and control differently. In other words, looking back, narrators can question their own actions, making positioning more important. Depending on who the writer views as the audience, this positioning might be an attempt to make the story more hearable, but it could also be necessary for the writer to recreate her experience in a way that makes sense to herself. If she is critical of her own actions (which can be assumed as she underlines how she would not accept being treated this way in the present time), then by creating these positions, the writer is able to reconstruct the story in a way that allows her to empathize with—rather than blame—her former self.

The writer's low self-confidence and lack of attention place her in a vulnerable position. According to a heterosexual logic, being perceived as sexually desirable is closely connected to being validated as a woman (Gunnarsson 2020, 40). Because the writer received the validation she needed from her ex, it made her more vulnerable to his abuse. Notably, this vulnerability does not mean the writer does not have agency but rather conveys how vulnerability and agency should not be perceived as mutually exclusive, as vulnerability is dependent on context (cf. Jokila and Niemi 2020).

The writer continues describing how her ex argued for his right to have sex whenever he wanted to because they were in a relationship and how she often submitted to such demands simply to avoid the pressure and because it was "easier to agree than to respect my own body and will" (DB 253). Hence, her boyfriend is presented as being prone to coercing sex, feeling entitled to her body, and disrespecting her will and boundaries.

These victim/perpetrator positions create a background for the audience, according to which the subsequent rape should be understood:

> He was disappointed, dissatisfied, angry. He really wanted to have sex, he needed it, I had not upheld my part of the deal. I cried, I didn't want to. […]
>
> He pressured and pressured me, whined. I never expressed any consent, but he started to take off his pants and said that it would be over quickly since he had not had sex for a long time. I lay dead still, the tears flowing as I realized that I would not get out of the situation. (DB 253)

Here, the writer presents what happened when she did not submit to his pressure. The writer describes ceasing to resist when realizing that she would not be able to escape the situation, a reaction made understand-

able due to the orienting background and character positionings. This background also explains how she came to be in a relationship in which sex was considered a requirement in the first place. The writer could have found such an incident untellable or not meeting the requirements of rape (she never names the event as rape), but starting in the orientation with a more credible scenario—being young and with bad self-esteem in her first relationship with a big, strong man who gives her lots of attention—makes the experience hearable.

This kind of careful self-positioning is common among the testimonies. Particularly when it comes to abusive relationships, but also in general when the writers seem to be critical of or questioning their own actions. Perhaps a more elaborate self-positioning appears necessary when one's actions do not adhere to a commonsense idea of what one "should do" in cases of rape. In the example above, the writer answers the question, "Why did you not just leave?" already in the orientation. Despite the fact that such positioning may not have been necessary within the campaign, a representation of the experience that describes the positions of victim and perpetrator can also be beneficial for the writers themselves. Positioning themselves as victims rather than to blame might allow writers to reconstruct their own understanding of the experiences, essentially, as not their fault. In other words, such recreation allows the writers to shift the blame to the perpetrators.

However, even though the writer above establishes an empathetic position for herself and even notes on how what he did was criminal later on in the testimony, she ends by stating: "I am so bitter with him and so disappointed in myself." (DB 253). This disappointment she presents, I argue, indicates that shifting the blame to the perpetrator is not necessarily easily done or a perception that is easily maintained, which could be explained by the discourse of blaming the victim for the rape being dominant and ingrained in our understanding of rape. In addition, philosopher Susan Brison (2022, 13) suggests that blaming oneself can be preferred by victims of rape because being able to recognize wrongdoing that led to the rape informs them of how to act to avoid attack in the future. Thus, blaming oneself can be an attempt to feel in control.

To conclude, dominant positions of victim and perpetrator can be crucial for a story of rape to be heard correctly. Although it was rarely explicit, these character positions could be recreated among the testimonies, perhaps increasing the tellability or hearability of the stories. Nonetheless, the space also afforded complex positions of victim/perpetrator to be presented, challenging discourse describing the dominant understanding of victims/perpetrators and highlighting aspects of vulnerability and agency within heterosexual relationships. Being able to recreate one's story to po-

sition one's former self as a victim, from an empathic point of view, could be beneficial for writers struggling with feelings of shame and self-blame.

Safe and unsafe places

The place in which a rape is said to have occurred carries significant meaning in testimonies of rape, as discourse determines who is allowed to be in which places and constructs certain places as inherently "safe" or "unsafe" (Nilsson 2019a). When existing in the world as a woman, you are supposed to know the difference between safe and unsafe places and protect your body by not moving in unsafe places (Cahill, 2000).

Consequently, the place where rape happens is an aspect that can be used to delegate blame. Ethnologist Gabriella Nilsson (2019a) uses the term *moral geography* of sexual violence to describe how specific locations become charged with moral connotations that determine who should be allowed in the place and who should not. As a result of such discourse, a victim moving in the "wrong place" can be shouldered with at least some of the blame for the assault. To be recognized as a victim, a woman needs to stay in her proper place—her home, or at least be aimed toward it (ibid.; cf. Christie 2001). Specifically, it is *her* home she needs to be in. Going to the home of a man, especially one she just met, makes her less recognizable as a victim (Nilsson 2019a). Conversely, however, rape that is said to have occurred in a woman's home is also given less legitimacy, as it is not considered "real rape," and because a woman is perceived as less vulnerable when being in her own home, as opposed to being in a strange place, which overlooks the connection between place and vulnerability (Andersson and Edgren 2018).

Thus, mentioning the place in a story of rape comes with certain discursive assumptions according to which writers may need to position themselves. For a discussion of place in the testimonies, I use a differentiation between the inherent quality of a *place* and how this is constructed as a safe or unsafe *space* by the writers. For this, I follow the thoughts of French culture theorist Michel de Certeaus summarized as "space is a practiced place" (1984, 117), which describes how physical "places" are turned into culturally meaningful "spaces," according to how they are used and presented. In accordance with this view, a space perceived as safe or unsafe is assumed as not inherent to the physical locality but constructed by discourse. In this subsection, I examine how writers position the experiences in place, specifically according to discourse describing what spaces are safe and unsafe. How is place described in the testimonies, and how can these be presented as safe or unsafe spaces?

Alcohol has a paradoxical position in stories of rape because it is given different meanings depending on whether the discussion is on women's or

men's actions and responsibilities (Nilsson and Lövkrona 2020, 150–51). For women, being under the influence of alcohol is often used to blame her for the rape by arguing that she did not take responsibility for her safety (e.g., Gunby, Carline, and Beynon 2013). Whereas for men, being under the influence of alcohol can be understood as a mitigating circumstance (Jeffner 1998), essentially arguing that men cannot be held responsible for their actions if they were drunk at the time. As a result, places that indicate alcohol consumption can be considered "unsafe" for women, according to discourse, not only because alcohol is perceived as dangerous for women but also because men—under the influence of alcohol—are presented as possibly dangerous (and not responsible). Narrators often orient their stories in places such as bars or parties without much explicit reflection on them. However, if we look at some examples, there is a subtle notification:

> I'm 19 years old and at a festival with my friends. (DB 44)
>
> It is the summer of 2015, and we are a group of friends who will spend the night and part at a rented cabin. (DB 368)
>
> It was New Year's Eve, I celebrated with a group of friends. (DB 438)

The writers present being at a party *with friends.* Now, such a notification could be considered an obvious part of a story, and I do not mean to suggest that it implies that the writers attempt to position themselves against the discourse of "deserving it" for being at a party. Placing a story in space is a basic part of the orientation, and Mendes and her colleagues (2019, 55) note how, in digital feminist activism, such is often done by presenting generalized locations such as a party or a friend's house. Still, I want to highlight how the notification of being surrounded by friends creates a safe space out of an (unsafe) place. The place is made into a safe space by presenting it as being filled with friends.

These examples may appear over-analyzed here, but I argue they present a good basis for discussion regarding how spaces are written as safe. Other testimonies elaborate on how a space is created as safe.

> New Year's Eve, I don't remember the year. I am at a pre-party with some friends. Me and two guy friends decide to go to a bar in the neighboring town. When we get there, my friends decide that they cannot be bothered to come anyway. I get mad because I wanted to keep partying since we had come all the way there, and it was my birthday, so I go into the bar alone. I don't know anyone there, but I recognize some people and go up to them. We party until the clock is approaching two-thirty, and I call a taxi to get home. I got the answer

> that there is a taxi queue until five in the morning. I didn't know what to do, so I asked a guy who is a police officer in the group I partied with all evening if he knew anyone who was going toward my hometown and could give me a ride home. He said no but that I could sleep at his place, on the couch. I thought that maybe I dare to trust him since he is a police officer, and I went home with him. When I get there, I lay down on the couch and fell asleep pretty quickly. I woke up after a while from him having his fingers inside me. (DB 261)

In this orientation, the writer carefully describes the events preceding the assault in a way that allows her to constantly recreate the space she occupies as "safe" while explaining how she came to be in it. The writer reasons both for why she was at the bar and for going home with the police officer by presenting how she was not able to act "correctly." She was supposed to be at the bar with her friends, but they left her. She then made it into a safe space by surrounding herself with a group of acquaintances (hence, not alone). She tried to act "properly" and return to her own home, but this was made impossible due to the lack of taxi cars and or other rides available. The acquaintance, then, by being a police officer—who assumedly would not commit crimes—was understood as safe, which explains why she agreed to sleep on his couch. Thus, the writer repeatedly shields herself from the possible critique of engaging in risky behavior by presenting the spaces as safe and why she acted the way she did. In other words, she is positioning herself according to discourse that could be used to blame her.

The moral geography of sexual violence determines certain spaces as "unsafe" for women and can be used to blame victims for their victimization by arguing that they did not take the appropriate precautions to secure their safety. Going home with a man, especially without the intent of having sexual intercourse, can be used to blame the victim (Finch and Munro 2006). As noted, the narrator above shields herself against such accusations by carefully presenting why she argued the space to be safe. This kind of explicit positioning in place is rare in my material, perhaps due to the audience of *Dammen brister* not being expected to blame the writers, who in turn did not feel the need to "excuse" their actions.

In other testimonies, the writers can simply mention going home/taking someone home because they are in love, dating, or helping out a friend. These are presented as commonplace scenarios, indicated by how they are described briefly and in passing. As a result, these testimonies demonstrate the importance of considering trust when determining cases of rape (Jokila and Niemi 2020). Trusting the perpetrator means that victims do not perceive certain spaces as unsafe, which challenges discourse blaming the victim for "exposing herself" to rape.

However, it can be questioned whether setting the experiences in places such as a bar or a party function to challenge or recreate them as inherently *un*safe. Sometimes, even when narrators try to challenge a certain discourse, they may inadvertently recreate it (cf. Paal 2010, 285; Shuman 2005). Presenting a rape as taking place during a party or after having gone home with a man could technically represent these spaces as unsafe. Conversely, by presenting these experiences *as rape,* regardless of the space in which it occurs, the testimonies still challenge discourse describing these rapes as "not real" or as being the victims' fault, allowing for the reinterpretation of what constitutes rape.

To conclude, positioning in place can be crucial when narrating rape, as discourse on space is used to delegate blame for the assault. The writers in *Dammen brister* rarely explicitly argue for why they moved in a specific place, which might be credited to the context of the campaign rendering such positioning unnecessary. However, the lack of positioning also implies how occupying these places is not perceived as something out of the ordinary, and a discourse of trust informs why certain spaces or people are perceived as safe.

Summary: the beginning

In this chapter, I have discussed how the initiating steps in Labov's model for a complete narrative—abstract and orientation—are used by writers to claim the floor, create narrative space, and establish an interpretive framework for the readers that informs them of how the story is to be understood. Thus, the beginning can be viewed as confirming tellability: presenting why the story should be heard and how. By naming the event, evaluating it, and giving background information about the characters and the setting, the writers in *Dammen brister* "set the scene" for the reader and ensure that their stories are heard correctly.

The abstracts can be used to claim the floor by presenting that one has an experience—or many—and by relating to the campaign's aim and the subject's importance. By positioning oneself as part of the group of "people with experiences," the writer's right to speak is affirmed. In naming the event, the writer could also claim ownership of the story or the interpretation of the experience, whereas placing the story in relation to other possible stories can give it a background that eases the narration by offering a place to start. Such placement can also be used to connect one's own experience to a wider problem, relating to the genre of testimony as offering insight into marginalized and silenced issues. Per this view, the abstracts can be used to claim the right to narrate, challenging assumptions regarding who is allowed to speak and in which situations

and spaces rape is allowed to be spoken about. If women are socialized to avoid drawing attention to themselves, making themselves the center of attention, and subjecting their performance to evaluation and critique, being given narrative space to perform stories of rape does not automatically rid them of a self-conscious gaze. If, as Manne (2019) suggests, women narrating stories of rape—regardless of whether it is perceived as truth—can be accused of self-aggrandization and dramatization, then claiming the right to speak might have been perceived as a necessity by the writers.

The orientation further establishes the interpretive framework for the story. By placing the experience in time, the narrated rape is contrasted with expectations regarding such time. The orientation can also be understood as structured according to Labov's (2010) notion of the inverse relationship between credibility and reportability—or, in my terms, hearability and tellability—where the story is narrated from the most hearable to the most tellable event. Narrating experiences of rape can require careful orientation to be heard correctly, as women's speech, particularly regarding sexual violence, is subjected to practices of shaming and discrediting (Gilmore 2017). Although *Dammen brister* can be perceived as a space of increased tellability, it might not have eliminated all constrictions of stories of rape established by genre and discourse. Depending on who the writers perceived as their audience, they might have felt the need to position themselves according to discourse determining "real" rape and "real" victims and perpetrators to ensure hearability.

However, *Dammen brister* opened for the presentation of more complex experiences. From the beginning of their stories, writers can challenge what is assumed to be "real" rape. For example, they can present more complex victim/perpetrator positions, calling into question what is considered to be a vulnerable position. Vulnerability and agency are often presented as dichotomous, where a person cannot be both vulnerable and have agency, which ignores how vulnerability is dependent on context. These complex victim/perpetrator positions also convey how discourse on femininity and heterosexuality can cause girls and women to become more vulnerable to abuse.

Through representing complexity, the orientation prepares the (re) creation of the story as one in which the told incident is not the writer's fault, or establishes it as a counter-story, a story told from the margins that presents silenced experiences. The writers can convey what they want the reader to "take away" from the story and present it as not simply about their own experiences but as providing insight into a more general problem, aligning the text according to the genre of testimony.

Lastly, the construction of a "we" is noticeable already at the beginning of the testimonies. This suggests that the campaign was assumed to be an interpretive community within which it was easier to narrate (cf. Plummer

1995). As a result, we start noticing how the narrative space in *Dammen brister* can be assumed as not only offered to the writers but also something that was interactively created by the participants in the group.

6. The middle: complicating action

According to my categorization, the middle part of the story presents the third step in Labov's model: the complicating action. The complicating action is the most fundamental part of the story, as it tells us what eventually happened. It recapitulates the sequence of events preceding the climax—the point where the built-up suspense is resolved (Johnstone 2016). Thus, the complicating action describes the experience that is the reason why the story is told, clarifying the point of it. In a story of rape, it could be assumed that the rape act would constitute the point of it, meaning that it is what would be described in the complicating action. Phrased differently, I presume that the complicating action is expected by the genre of personal experience narratives to present the rape and the events preceding the rape. Although this assumption will be challenged, it serves as a point of departure for this chapter.

The narration of the rape act is also affected by discourse on rape that describes what is assumed to be "real" rape, how rape happens, how a person should react to it, etc. In the previous chapter, it was noted how writers positioned themselves according to discourse determining ideal victims and perpetrators (cf. Christie 2001), which correlates with the idea of "real" rape that can be understood as "a sudden and physically violent attack on an unsuspecting woman, usually by a stranger." (Ryan 2011, 776). Discursive understanding of the "real" rape describes what "typically occurs" during a rape (Peterson and Muehlenhard 2004), causing stories that do not "fit" this description to risk becoming unhearable and hence untellable (Loney-Howes 2020, 61). For example, rapes perpetrated by acquaintances or in relationships are often perceived as "less real" and negotiated based on the situation in which the rape occurred (Nilsson and Lövkrona 2020, 151).

In telling stories of rape, women can try to preemptively counter discourse that could be used to blame them by accounting for their actions in a way that explains why they were appropriate at the time (MacLeod 2016). In other words, when narrating rape, people can attempt to position themselves according to discourse to be heard correctly. As has been previously argued, this positioning might have been considered less necessary within *Dammen brister,* where the narrative space also allowed the writers to present more ambiguous experiences of rape, challenging discourse on rape and sex.

The aim of this chapter is to explore how the complicated action is narrated to describe the rape act. The main points of focus are on how

the writers both conform to and challenge discourse describing "real" rape, as well as genre expectations regarding what is supposed to be the point, or at least included, in a story of rape. How is the violent event presented, and how does such presentation adhere to or challenge discourse determining "real" rape and structural expectations of genre? What is the point of the story, and how is it communicated to the audience? Also questioned is the necessity to describe the rape at all.

The sudden attack

As mentioned above, "real" rape is often perceived as a sudden and unsuspected attack perpetrated by a stranger (Ryan 2011). The "suddenness" of the attack appears to refer to the suddenness of the perpetrator's appearance; he surprises the victim by jumping at her in the street or a park. These kinds of experiences are presented in my material, albeit rarely.

From the complicating actions described in the testimonies, however, it can be noted that an attack can be sudden and unsuspected, even though the mere presence of the man is not, in itself, sudden. In other words, a woman can be no less unsuspecting when assaulted by an acquaintance, friend, boyfriend, or relative: a person they are knowingly in the presence of and who does not appear out of the blue. In this section, I examine how rape can be presented as sudden in these situations and how this presentation relates to discursive understandings of rape.

In the following quote, the writer clearly emphasizes why she did not expect to be raped:

> I traveled to another city in Finland to say hello to my friend, who I, after we had moved away from each other, only met a couple of times a year. He was one of my closest friends. One of those you don't see for half a year, but when you meet, it's as if nothing has happened. This time was the same. Obviously, we had to celebrate that we once again got to meet, and we went out on the town to grab a couple of drinks. Hours later, after a ridiculously fun night, we came home to his apartment, a little more intoxicated than we probably thought we would be on a weeknight. Not even blinking at the fact that we would sleep in the same bed; it was exactly as when I had been there previous times. We have laughed many times at the fact that nothing would ever happen between us. Still, I lie there and feel how his hands are making their way under my pajamas. Paralyzed. Pretend to sleep, and he'll probably stop. I turn over on my belly, and he won't reach. Is he actually going to lick me? Is this really happening. (DB 388)

The writer here carefully and repeatedly underlines why she did not expect the man to rape her. She describes the perpetrator as one of her closest friends, with whom they had joked about never doing anything sexual and having shared a bed many times before. In doing so, the narrator positions herself against discourse that otherwise could be used to blame her, such as the heterosexual discourse that determines going home with a man means one should expect to engage in sexual intercourse (Finch and Munro 2006). The narrator does not challenge such discourse per se, as she instead negotiates how she should not be blamed despite sleeping in the same bed as him; however, the story highlights the limitations of the discourse by offering a more complex experience. By positioning the perpetrator as her platonic friend and arguing for the normality of them spending the night in the same bed, the writer presents a different form of "sudden attack." An attack that is sudden because it is unsuspected.

Researchers of law Helena Jokila and Johanna Niemi (2020) argue that *trust* should be considered in court when determining cases of rape, as it can constitute a crucial aspect for understanding why a person voluntarily enters someone's apartment and the victim's behavior during and/or after an assault. The importance of considering trust is clearly exemplified here since the relationship between the victim and perpetrator is described as close, which indicates a certain level of trust. This trust not only explains why she went into the apartment but also makes the rape sudden and unexpected. Essentially, this challenges the notion of "real" rape not by criticizing the idea of it happening suddenly but by reinterpreting what is perceived as "sudden."

In the example above, the writer carefully presents why the assault was unexpected, whereas in other testimonies, the assault can appear unexpectedly to the reader:

> I was 19 years old and at a festival with my friends. My exboyfriend was also there, he was part of the gang. His girlfriend had stayed home. We all partied together and had fun, at some point I noticed that the ex gave me a lot of attention. One night he thought that he would come and sleep in the tent I shared with a friend. The friend fell asleep quickly, and after that, he opened my sleeping bag and raped me. I lay there quietly to not wake my friend. (DB 44)

In this testimony, the writer presents background information for the rape by placing the story in time and space and introducing the characters. It is a short testimony in general, but the rape still stands out as a very sudden escalation of events. The only thing the reader finds out about the sequence of events leading up to the rape is that he gave her attention and

decided to come and sleep in their tent. These sequences do not convey the situation as *escalating*, as would be expected of the complicating action of a story and perhaps of a story of rape.

The testimony presented above is very short, but the sudden escalation in the story from seemingly describing a situation to jumping to rape is something I have noted repeatedly among the testimonies. A reason why the complicating action does not appear to be escalating could be that the situation, as experienced by the writer, did not appear to be escalating. Perhaps, from the point of view of the writer, sleeping at a party, in the same apartment as their ex-boyfriend, or offering a couch to a friend who does not have a place to sleep are not viewed as an escalation of events but simply something that *is.* Therefore, the assault that then transpires is very sudden.

The fact that assault can be sudden for the victim regardless of the events preceding it is important, as women can be ascribed blame for not eluding a situation earlier but instead allowing it to escalate. Sharon Marcus (1992) suggests that victims follow a "rape script" that allows the perpetrator to place her in the position of victim. For example, victims do not resist enough (or early enough) out of politeness because they simultaneously try to adhere to proper feminine behavior (ibid.). However, this script presumes that women are aware that such an escalation is occurring; but hanging out with friends, at a bar, or even going home with a man may not be perceived by the woman as an escalation of events: neither as an escalation toward having sex nor being raped. In hindsight, the narration of the chain of events can be perceived as heading to an "endpoint" of rape, but I would argue that it is unreasonable to assume that person knows that they are in a rape story, following such a script. The script is distinguished after the assault, at which point such escalation seems clear, but it was not necessarily clear at the time the situation was unfolding. Being familiar with such a script can still urge the writers to position themselves clearly: explaining their actions, why they did not recognize the man as a perpetrator, or why they went to a certain place.

To summarize, the complicating action in the testimonies can challenge what is assumed to be "real" rape, as described by discourse, by offering complexity to what is perceived as "sudden."[1] These descriptions demonstrate the importance of considering trust as a contextualizing factor for determining rape, as it problematizes notions of agency and voluntariness. By not describing the events preceding the rape as escalating, the story

1 Interestingly, the newly introduced Finnish law on rape is phrased to include situations in which the plaintiff has was unable to express their will due to the situation occurring suddenly. Considered sudden, however, are the situations in which no verbal or non-verbal communication had taken place prior to the incident, for example, when intercourse is initiated in crowds or in relation to a massage, sauna, or swimming (Alaattinoğlu, Kainulainen, and Niemi 2021).

contradicts the genre of personal experience narratives that might expect such escalation from the complicating action. More importantly, the lack of escalation in the stories also challenges discourse describing the events that precede rape, as these are often perceived *as escalating.* Yet the rape scripts that describe such "escalation" of events are applied to victims' stories *after* the rape, which ignores how a situation might not have been perceived as escalating at the time it occurred. Recognizing the unreasonableness of expecting victims to be aware that a situation is leading to rape is focal for reinterpreting how rape happens and who is at fault.

The second example presented in this section does not offer much information regarding the rape itself and how it transpired, which may have contributed to it appearing more sudden. However, what is expected from such a description, and why would it be necessary?

Physical (re)actions

Identifying what is absent in a narrative, Goldstein notes (2009), is not different from determining what is present: it is about moving through corpora of texts, noticing patterns in an initial corpus, and comparing it to another to notice absences. Thus, a reason for considering something as "lacking" in some stories is if it is present in others. In this section, I examine some examples in which the rape act is presented to consider how it is described and what is included in this description; and hence, to determine what could be expected from the complicating action in a story of rape. The discussion is centered around two overlapping themes: firstly, the description of the victim's body and the perpetrators' actions, and secondly, the presentation of the victim's actions and resistance.

The term rape can apply to a wide variety of experiences, which may cause the reader to be curious about exactly what transpired when reading a personal narrative of rape. If the readers lack similar experiences of their own, this description might be even more vital in order for the unfolding of the event to be intelligible. Hence, a presentation of the act(s) could presumably be expected by the audience, and this is offered by some testimonies.

> There is a party, and we are a group of friends at a friend's house. I'm in the bathroom putting on make-up when he comes in and closes the door after himself. We talk for a while, and suddenly, he kisses me. "Don't you have a girlfriend?" I ask, "She won't know anything because you will not tell her," he answers. I start laughing in surprise at the completely absurd situation; we are friends, after all. But the laughter gets stuck in my throat when in the next sentence, he utters the

> words "suck me off." "I don't want to," I answer, still not sure if he is serious or joking. At the same moment, he unbuttons his pants. I get so scared I don't know where to go, and just stand there. He grabs my hair tightly and forces me down.
>
> There I kneel, eyes firmly closed, and heard my unknowing friends laugh outside, while he silently moaning moved his sex organ back and forth in my mouth. (DB 33)

In this complicating action, the writer presents a detailed description of the rape and how it transpired. The writer uses a variety of narrative tools to move the story forward and convey meaning, which also, in a sense, allows her to distance herself from the narrative. The focus here will be on the writer's use of quoted speech, metaphoric-, and bodily language in describing the unfolding of the event, which makes the readers experience the story through their own bodies.

Marander-Eklund (2002) notes how quoted speech can underline the most dramatic part of a story while functioning as a hook in the writer's memory. In the example above, the writer's use of quoted speech underlines the absurdity of the situation while clearly describing how the events unfolded. The quoted speech also lends the story legitimacy by placing the words in the mouth of the perpetrator and the writer's past self, giving the writer a more "objective" position.

Subsequently, the writer describes the perpetrator's actions and her reactions, focusing on their bodies. Lars-Christer Hydén (2013) stresses the importance of the body in writing/reading narratives, as he argues that stories are understood and experienced *through* the body. Using bodily language, the writer here paints a picture of her kneeling, eyes shut, as the perpetrator moves his sex organ back and forth in her mouth. This kind of description and use of bodily language informs the readers of the escalation of the event, but it also invites them to experience the story in and through their own bodies (cf. ibid.).

The description of the events preceding the rape is further emphasized with the use of metaphors, which can ease the reader's understanding of the emotions and physical sensations experienced by the writer. In her study on narrating the experience of cancer, Paal (2009) describes how metaphoric language can be useful for expressing emotions. When attempting to describe the chaotic experiences of shock and transformation that follow a cancer diagnosis, metaphors can represent the emotions in a more coherent form, allowing the readers to "understand, picture and feel the lived physical sensations of cancer sufferers" (ibid., 49). The writer above uses the expression of her laughter getting stuck in her throat to describe how her initial disbelief in her friend's sincerity changes, a metaphor the writer assumes the audience is able to understand. In describing her fear, the writer presents becomes so scared that she "did not know

where to go," which explains why she remained in the bathroom but also conveys a feeling of being scared stiff. By describing the events using these metaphors, the writer translates the experience into something the readers can relate to, again allowing them to feel the writer's physical and emotional sensation in their own bodies even if they do not have a comparable experience to draw from.

Considered differently, folklorist Carolina Ekrem (2017) suggests that the use of metaphors or sayings can be a means of avoiding engaging too personally in a narrative while still being heard (Ekrem 2017, 658). Ekrem focuses on how metaphors can allow people to distance themselves from an utterance by presenting it as said by someone else (similarly to quotes speech), evoking the authority of a traditional expression. However, I would further suggest that such distance also allows narrators to convey emotions without necessarily being too personal. In other words, a narrator can rely on generic expressions that convey the meaning of the narrative to the reader without her having to be too explicit herself. Thus, the flipside to Paal's suggestion of metaphors being useful for describing difficult experiences is that writers do not have to express emotions in their own words. That way, the narrators can avoid being too personal, which could increase the tellability of the story.

For empathetic listeners who want to understand the narrated experience, the kind of detailed description offered above that allows the readers to follow the unfolding of the events and experience it through their own bodies might be necessary. Journalist Irena Požar (2022, 33) also notes that in news media, women are expected to offer detailed descriptions of pain and fear for the story to be found "interesting." According to this view, depictions of the rape would be expected by the readers, and subsequently, testimonies that do not offer these descriptions are perceived as somehow falling short. Without such a description, the complicating action might appear incomplete or lacking important parts. However, the necessity of providing such details can surely be questioned—who benefits from this kind of "understanding" of the event? It may be useful for invoking empathy, which is generally considered to be something positive, but as Shuman points out, being empathized with rarely helps the person who suffers (Shuman 2005, 5).

Besides describing the rape act, the writer could be expected to narrate her own actions, as the "logical" response to rape is assumed to be to *resist* it. In studying Finnish police reports of rape, Päivi Honkatukia (2001) notes that the victims often present their attempts to resist the assault, perhaps as a result of questioning by the police or to challenge discourse presenting the rape as the victim's own fault. This presentation might be unsurprising, as prior to the year 2023, Finnish legislation relied on the use of force to determine whether an act counts as rape. In addition,

despite there being no legal requirement for the victim to resist a rape, when deciding on whether the victim was in a helpless state and "unable to defend himself or herself or to formulate or express her will," the victim and her abilities have often been placed at the center of whether something is rape (Alaattinoğlu, Kainulainen, and Niemi 2021). In other words, victims needed to present resistance for the crime to be recognized as rape.

The understanding of resistance as the logical response to rape, however, is argued to be based on the norms and experiences of heterosexual, non-disabled men (Smart 1992), whereas not resisting can be a logical response for people affected by trauma, or gendered norms about being nice, etc. (Smith 2019). Indeed, there are many reasons for not wanting to or being able to resist rape, which can be underlined in the testimonies.

> I had been at a club with a friend, we left with some Finland-Swedish men probably twice our age [16]. In his grossly expensive apartment, one of the men treats us to vodka drinks and funny stories, but we tire of it quite fast. When the man's friend has left, me and my friend find a bed to sleep in. An hour or so later, I wake up to he who invited us thrusting himself inside me. I panic and try to get him to stop, but I am both drunk and in shock, so I don't get anywhere. I become silent and let it happen, all to end the pain as fast as possible. (DB 570)

The narrator here presents resisting, why she failed, and why she stopped trying. Surely, ceasing to resist in order for the pain to end faster can be understood as the "logical" response in such a vulnerable situation. As Alcoff (2018) notes, victims cannot know the consequences of their actions ahead of time, and choosing to submit rather than fight constitutes a rational response aimed at minimizing damage. The writer wanted the pain to stop and could not have known if resisting would instead make it last longer or even cause additional pain and violence. Thus, the writer's argument for ceasing to resist conveys the complexity involved in resisting rape.

However, the writer also draws upon an understanding of physical incapacity in an inebriated state and the immobility that can affect a person in shock. The response of "frozen fright" that renders the victim stiff and unable to resist (Möller, Söndergaard, and Helström 2017) is increasingly accepted and understood. Hence, the writer introduces three arguments for why she was unable to avert the rape—wanting to cease the pain, being drunk, and being in shock—which makes the story adhere to discursive expectations of narrating resistance.

The complexity of resisting rape is perhaps becoming more widespread, and particularly in *Dammen brister*, narrating resistance might not have been necessary. Still, many writers do describe resistance or explain why they did not resist, urging me to question to what extent the complicating action is expected to describe resistance. If a writer simply tells of being raped, with no reference to resistance or why such was impossible, does the complicating action appear to be "lacking?" In other words, to what extent is resistance a genre requirement in stories of rape, and how does it affect the tellability and hearability of the stories?

Boundary-crossing

Narrators that position themselves according to a discourse of resistance—regardless of whether they present having resisted or not—inadvertently recreate such discourse and its relevance in stories of rape. However, the narrative space afforded by *Dammen brister* also allowed writers to present complexity when it comes to resisting, including how it can be executed and how it can be met by the other party. As a result, the testimonies challenge ideas regarding what constitutes resistance, as well as its necessity and usefulness.

Within the discursive construction of gender and heterosexuality, a woman's will is almost always open to interpretation (Gavey 2019). Her assumed passivity presents her as naturally boundaryless (Andersson 2001), and discourse describing the man's conquering of a woman's resistance as a normal part of the "sexual game" establishes the notion of seduction and rape as difficult to distinguish (Nilsson 2018). Consequently, rape can be understood as an "unfortunate misunderstanding" of the situation on the perpetrator's part, and the blame is placed on the victim for not clearly enough stating her will (cf. Bay-Cheng 2015). Margareta Hydén (2001) notes that when considering resistance in cases of rape, the question is not whether the victim resisted but if she resisted *in the right way*. And the right way is determined by the result: if she is raped, it means she did not resist correctly or enough. To understand victims' actions in cases of rape, Hydén argues, the perception of what constitutes resistance must be expanded. In this section, I examine how resistance is presented in the complicating action within a process of repeated renegotiation of the writer's boundaries.

Among the testimonies, detailed complicating actions often describe a continuous shift between resistance and (partial) submission. The writers present resistance, but when this resistance is ignored, they shift their boundaries to comply to some extent, drawing up a new boundary. Through repeated renegotiation of this boundary, it is pushed further and

further away from the initial one, and finally, the writer finds herself in a situation from which they cannot escape.

> I had been out at the pub with my friends, all my friends had left with someone, and we had split up the way you easily do when you're out. I felt it was time to go home, and I walked over the walking street toward the taxi. Then I bumped into a half-acquaintance who I had only met a few times before. He said that he wanted us to go home together, I said I don't feel like it (Swe: orkar inte[2]). It was an easy-going atmosphere nonetheless, and I started to walk toward the taxi line, he followed me and talked about this and that. I stood in line, and he said, "should we go to your place or mine?" I answered that my parents are home, and I can't be bothered (Swe: orkar inte, see previous footnote) to go to his place.
>
> Well, it becomes my turn to jump in a taxi which I do. And he jumps in after me. I tell the driver my address and ask at the same time what his address is so the taxi will continue to his place when they have dropped me off. He laughs and says, "nooo I will get off at the same address as her," to which I laugh and say no, that you will certainly not do; all my siblings and my parents are home, I will not take any guy there then.
>
> We come up to my yard, and the taxi driver asks if I want to pay what's on the meter so far or if the guy takes it all later. I say that I'll pay for my part, to which the guy says he will get off here too and that he'll pay the full amount.
>
> I say no, you will not. If you get out, then you get to walk home because you're not coming in. He laughs and pays. We get out, and I walk toward the door. Stop on the stoop from him standing behind me, smirking. I feel how uncomfortable I get and am worried someone in the family will hear us and wake up. I told him that he's not coming in. Then he says, but we're just going to sleep; we don't need to have sex.
>
> By this time, I was fucking tired of him and thought only how embarrassing it would be tomorrow when he goes home, and we have to go through the hall and maybe see my parents. I sigh and say okay but no sex. We sneak up to the second floor, and immediately as we come inside, he starts to grope and kiss me. I say no again, we're not having sex; my parents are in the room below. He says, "but if we just have oral sex

2 The Swedish word "orka" is difficult to translate, as there is no equivalent in English. It can mean not having energy but also simply not wanting to or not being able to. It is often used when expressing that one simply does not want to *bother oneself* with doing something. For example, when the writer says she *orkar inte* go to his place, it means she cannot be bothered to go.

> very quietly?" I get angry and say no and lie down in bed feeling so disgusted. What does he do, then? Goes down on me and starts licking. I feel so bad and uncomfortable and am SO scared that my parents or siblings would hear something. I tell him to stop and eventually agree to sex just so he would fall asleep and the nightmare will be over. Worst sex of my life, and the shame in the morning when my parents asked, "was it someone you're in love with who slept here last night? Have you met in town?"
>
> For fuck's sake.[3] (DB 778)

The writer of this testimony presents repeated resistance to the man's attempts to spend the night with her. However, this resistance is ignored by her acquaintance, who continuously crosses the boundaries she has established, forcing her to renegotiate them until she is pushed to a point at which she sees no other escape than to submit. The testimony is narrated according to a discourse of resistance by presenting the many ways in which she resisted (repeatedly saying no) and why she failed in the end (fear of waking her family/making him stop). By presenting the continuous renegotiation of her boundaries caused by the perpetrator's refusal to acknowledge them, the writer complexifies the idea of what constitutes resistance to rape and conveys how easily it can be ignored.

As mentioned, cases of rape can be reinterpreted as an unfortunate misunderstanding. This misunderstanding has partly been blamed on women's lack of "refusal skills," that is, their inability to clearly state nonconsent, and thus, the problem of rape would be fixed if women simply learned to say no (Beres 2010; C. Kitzinger and Frith 1999; cf. Marcus, 1992). However, using conversation analysis, researchers Celia Kitzinger and Hannah Fritz (1999) present how not only is saying "no" not common in any interaction—as such is instead inferred by using pauses, palliatives, or weak agreements—but also that people generally have no issues with understanding these conversational cues as refusals. Other research on consent similarly shows that both men and women generally have no difficulties determining either rejection or acceptance of sexual initiatives (Beres 2010; Gunnarsson 2020). Thus, urging someone to "just say no" ignores both how people generally offer refusals and the many other ways women do so, even in sexual situations.

Furthermore, from the example above, it is also clear that a person can plainly and repeatedly refuse a man, and still be raped. This refusal

3 The Swedish word "fyfan" that is used here is also difficult to translate. Swedish cursing often involves variations of "satan," here, "-fan," and this could be understood as English's "fuck" which is easy to place anywhere in a sentence. However, the prefix "fy-" before signals disgust in a way that does not translate. Putting the prefix fy- on any curse word makes it more about disgust than anger.

shows how women can resist the "rape script" presented by Marcus (1992)—which assumes that women place themselves in vulnerable positions by going along with the perpetrator to adhere to expectations of femininity—clearly state their will, and even physically resist, only to have this resistance completely ignored. Despite, in the end, "agreeing" to intercourse, it cannot be argued that the writer of the testimony above was following a feminine script of courtesy and kindness, at least not in relation to *him*, but arguably to her parents and siblings. Conversely, she was straightforward from the beginning by saying no, which she repeatedly stated, only to finally submit to intercourse *to avoid* (another type of) rape.

Thus, not only is refusal often communicated implicitly via cues that the recipient generally understands, but women can be very explicit in their refusals and still have this resistance ignored. I have only cited one example here, but similar descriptions are common among the testimonies. Writers present repeated rejections, but these boundaries are renegotiated as the perpetrators argue things such as "we don't need to have sex" or "I promise I won't touch you," making the writer shift her boundary—only to have it again challenged and renegotiated. By carefully describing the situation of continuous boundary-crossing, the writers convey a different view of rape: not as resulting from a sudden or violent attack, nor from misunderstood politeness, but of an ongoing ignoring and griding of a person's boundaries that pushes the victim to a point from which she sees no other escape.

Consequently, by presenting this process of boundary-crossing and renegotiating, the writers offer a more complex view of what constitutes rape and resistance. Even if the discourse of resistance may be recreated in these testimonies, they simultaneously expand on the perception of what constitutes resistance and how the perpetrator might meet it. This way, these descriptions of boundary-crossing challenge the idea that rape can be avoided if women were more self-assertive and able to refuse a man's sexual advances clearly.

Different points

A working assumption in this chapter has been that the rape would constitute the point of the story, and therefore the complication action should build toward and describe the rape act. For Labov (1972, 370–371), the story's point is connected to its tellability, which he finds as inherent to the reiterated event—whether it is interesting, impressive, or unusual enough to be told (ibid.). However, other researchers have pointed out that almost anything can be tellable within the right context, and the "point"

of the story may not be found in the event but in the experience—how it is interpreted and understood by the narrator (Patterson 2013; Young 1987). Katherine Galloway Young (1987, 53–55) highlights a distinction between the *point of the story* and the point of *telling* the story. A story can have a point relevant to the interactive situation where it is shared by building on others' stories and experiences and creating shared interpretations and understandings (Langellier and Peterson 1992). Thus, the "point" of the story might not lie in the event but in the interpretation of the experience made by the narrator or how it fits the situation of telling. Per extension, what is perceived as the point affects what is understood as the complicating action in stories of rape, which allows us to challenge the expectations that are placed on such stories concerning the narration of the rape act. In this section, I consider how the complicating action can convey a point besides the rape itself and how this might counter the genre of rape stories.

If the point of the story is something other than rape, the presented assault can become part of the orientation of the story rather than the complicating action. The aftermath of sexual violence can sometimes be experienced as worse than the assault itself due to trauma caused by the experience (Brison 2022, xvi) or how the victims are received when disclosing the experience to others (Mendes, Ringrose, and Keller 2019), etc. Negative reactions and consequences of disclosing experiences of rape are often referred to as a "second assault," which can include the victim being disbelieved or blamed for the rape (Ahrens 2006) but also subjected to harassment and social exclusion (Gottzén and Franzén 2020).

Writers wanting to highlight such issues is therefore not surprising. One writer explicitly states how the consequences of her rape were worse than the event itself. To show the distinction between the rape and the complicating action, I cite the testimony in its entirety.

> In my, this specific, case, it was not the assault itself that was the worst. I don't know if this is relevant to the discussion, but I try telling it anyway.
>
> He knew my entire backstory, which includes sexual assaults since childhood, and all the complex problems that entail. It was he who completely on his own said that he would help me become healthy and whole, and for half a year, he acted accordingly – until he decided to break me one night. On the 14th of February, on Valentine's Day, it happened. I had violent anxiety before bedtime after we had spoken for hours about what had happened to me before, which caused me—in addition to strong sleep medication that he knew knocked me out completely—to not have a chance to defend myself.

> Even though this incident, assault-wise, is far from the worst I have experienced, it was, without a doubt, the absolutely worst thing I have ever gone through. But the worst is that it was not that night, or even the betrayal, that was the worst thing – it was everything that came afterward.
>
> When I decided to end all contact with them both, the wife—who was my best friend, who knew what had happened and had sat cradling me as I, in crying panic, didn't want to sleep in the bed where it happened—became furious with me and accused me for leaving her when she and her family had done so much for me.
>
> I didn't tell many people about this. I told a few, and the majority of them urged me to keep quiet because the Christian school (where I went and he taught) could not handle it coming out. They said things such as "it's not as bad as you make it seem," "you should never have been so close to a married man," "you shouldn't have taken sleeping pills," "think of the wife—she just wants to put all of this behind her!" and "you're lucky they still want you in their house!"
>
> After many years I finally gathered the courage to make a report to the police because I was worried about him continuing to work in a place with many young individuals and in a position that made many dependent on him. Even though I didn't expect a miracle, I was not prepared for the entire Christian community, of which we were both members, to turn their back on me. People from the congregation have called me a whore, they have accused me openly on Facebook of having placed myself in the situation and for lying about this, and I have received threats regarding what would happen if I ever came back to society. That person, in collaboration with others, has even spread rumors of how I am deceitful and that no one should trust me, so in addition to all my friends from that community leaving me, I even receive accusations and hate from all corners of the country, as the Christian organization is quite widespread.
>
> I have no social life anymore because I'm scared of people and what they will do if they find out about this. So normally, I don't dare to speak of what's happened, although my diagnoses regarding PTSD are so strong that most people notice them. I've lost all my friends and been threatened with death if I return to the organization. Everything just so a school with its model personnel would not be dirtied. (DB 721)

In this testimony, the writer presents a rape (while also hinting at earlier assaults), describing when and how it happened. However, the rape act is

not presented as the point of the story but is rather part of the orientation. It constitutes the necessary background information for the complication action, in which the writer describes how she was urged to stay quiet but eventually reported the rape, leading to severe consequences. This way, the writer challenges the position of the assault in a story of rape, as well as in a person's life in general.

The writer initiates her testimony by stating uncertainty regarding its relevance to the discussion due to focusing on the aftermath of rape, which implies an assumption of how rape *should* be the point of the story. She is also careful to emphasize how such focus is the result of her own experience, and she is not attempting to make any claims for others. This could be understood as a way of negotiating tellability of the story due to the writer's belief that it might not fit the genre, as the rape is not the complicating action or the point of the story. However, stories presenting possible consequences of rape are important as they convey the complexity and danger of speaking about rape while also challenging discourse that determines rape as "fate worse than death." Discourse on rape represents the act as traumatizing; however, as noted above, the "second assault" can be experienced as worse than the rape. As a result, stories describing the second assault complexifies the problem of rape, conveying how it is not simply a problem of rapists.

The testimony above clearly emphasizes the second assault as worse than the rape that caused it, committing most of her testimony to describe it. However, even in testimonies in which the rape is presented more clearly as the complicating action, its position and importance in the narrative can be questioned.

> During my teens, a total of 7 years, I was in a relationship with a guy 4 years older, with a few breaks now and again. In the beginning, all was fine, as it usually is. But as time passed, the relationship became more and more destructive on many levels, alcohol, jealousy, sex, etc. The whole thing culminated totally after we had decided to go our separate ways, still living together in the same apartment because it felt okay at the time, for real. All was fine. He slept on the couch, and I in the bedroom. A Monday morning before I'd leave for work, I woke up to him raping me. He held me so hard that I couldn't get away. Afterward, I rushed into the bathroom and locked the door behind me, outside he's asking why I'm hiding there, why am I scared? Yeah, wonder why?
>
> The hardest part now afterward with this whole story is the loneliness, to not feel that I dare speak of what happened because I feel it has affected so many other things later in my life. And because it is such a small town, I see him from time

> to time in his car, and every time I freeze to ice and have to fight against the surging anxiety. I have not yet, after 8 years, seen him outside of the car in closer proximity, I dread that day. Just the thought gives me anxiety. (DB 258)

In the first paragraph, the writer orients in time and space, positions the characters, and presents the sequence of events that constitute the rape. This sequence of events could be considered as the complicating action, with the second paragraph describing the resolution to the event. Still, the writer's underlining of the hardest part, in hindsight, being the loneliness and inability to speak, makes it relevant to question what we consider to be the complicating action. If the complicating action is supposed to describe what the story is "about," and the problem identified by the writer is something other than the rape, is the rape still the complicating action?

In studying biographies by incarcerated women, Karlsson (2013) notes that the complicating action generally is not about the committed crime, as could be assumed, but rather about overcoming hardship and struggle. Karlsson relates this to a kind of "self-help" style in the genre of neo-confessional biographies (cf. Gilmore 2010), which assumes that the reader should "gain something" from the book. Thus, by focusing on the consequences and overcoming them rather than the crime committed, the biography writers convey what they want the readers to "take away" from the book (Karlsson 2013). The motivation for focusing on something other than the rape can differ for the writers in *Dammen brister,* at least considering the subject discussed here, but presenting something other than the rape as the "point" of the story might similarly convey what (else) the writers want readers to take away from the story. Since the problem of sexual violence is already clearly emphasized with the campaign in general, narrators could want to acknowledge different problems they argue need to be addressed. In the case of the example above, this would include the difficulty of speaking about these experiences and the loneliness this untellability can bring.

The examination here shows how delineating the complicating action and the point of the story can be useful when considering stories of rape. By straying from the idea of the rape act as the core, the "aboutness" of the story, we can recognize how stories of rape tell us about more than simply rape. The story does not (necessarily) end after the rape, and the loneliness and silence are not simply resolutions but different problems and an additional point of focus for the participants and readers of the campaign.

Thus, by presenting other points in the stories, the writers challenge discourse describing the rape event as the most difficult or traumatic part and highlight how the perpetrators of rape are not the only ones causing harm. Additionally, emphasizing a point besides the rape challenges the possible genre expectations of describing the rape act at all. If the rape

is not the point of the story, it would not need to be described. The genre expectations regarding describing the rape can be even more clearly contested in testimonies that lack a complicating action altogether.

Lacking complicating action

The ineffability of traumatic experiences can obstruct the victim's ability to narrate them. Lawless (2001, 64) notes that in stories of violence, there can be a point where the narrative breaks down, where words cannot suffice to present the pain and violence. At this point, the narrative may become erratic and incoherent, and to resist failure, it concedes to silence. Furthermore, Lawless notes that through the narration of violence, it can be inflicted upon the body anew, and as the teller is objectified by her own pain, the perpetrator's power over her is again acknowledged (ibid.). According to this view, it could be argued that the rape act would be the most difficult part to narrate in a story of rape, and per extension, excluding the act would increase its tellability for the writers. In this section, I examine testimonies in which the complicating action is left out and how this affects the stories and the meanings conveyed.

Few testimonies carefully describe the act itself, but certain testimonies more clearly avoid such narration. The personal experience narrative discussed here includes an orientation and the start of a complicating action but cuts short of describing the actual incident.

> I was drunk on my 18th birthday, at the bar with a friend who was also in such bad shape that they were thrown out. I wandered around for a while, and in the next moment, I was at a hotel with he who bought my drink (and mixed in a little something). I remember what happened clearly, and there is no question about that. (DB 568)

The writer presents being in a hotel room, drugged, with the man who had drugged her, and *something* happens. However, what happened, the readers must interpret for themselves. Considering the information given, I have assumed rape to be implied in this testimony; since the writer describes being drugged and taken to a hotel, and the story is shared within the campaign. Such reading might require a shared understanding with the writer, which the writer could have expected from the campaign. In other words, by simply implying that a rape has occurred, the writer assumes the group to be an interpretive community that would understand the story regardless of whether it describes the rape; or, at least, the story is understood as tellable despite this "lack."

This testimony also claims ownership of the story, entitlement to it, and the interpretation of it. The writer states that what happened was clear and unquestionable, firmly claiming the right to the interpretation of it while challenging possible misinterpretations of her as lacking memory of the event. Additionally, by not narrating the event, the writer also makes it impossible for people to interpret the story differently and to retell it. Evading the complicating action could hence be perceived as a means to increase tellability by shielding writers from having their experience reinterpreted and questioned by the readers. Per extension, this would indicate that experiences of rape are more tellable when writers are allowed to deviate from genre.

Another way of omitting to present the incident itself is by focusing more on the effects of the rape. In that way, the writer can convey the meaning of the rape without describing the act itself. Contrary to the previous section, where it was noted that what happened after the rape could be perceived as the complicating action, the rape here is assumed as the "point" of the story, but it is described only in the aftermath of the rape.

> I knew who he was, and when I met him at the bar, I was glad and thought it was nice that he gave me attention. I was 18 years old. He asked me to go home with him, which I did… and then everything is a blur. I remember that I didn't dare to say no… how much it hurt and how rough he was, how he spoke, and I was so scared and cried without him noticing. To this day, I have marks by him on my genitals that make the shame wash over me sometimes. Even though I know he acted wrongly. Afterward, when I went to the toilet, I noticed the blood on my thighs; I was so swollen between my legs I could barely pee. To walk and sit hurt for weeks afterward. The bed was bloody… the sloping roof was bloody. A bloodbath, quite simply, and I did not dare to say no. Afterward, he ignored me and sat and played tv-games until I left. I joked it off with my friends… but it has left marks, and it took a long time before I realized the seriousness of it all. To meet him now and again is so incredibly hard… the fear and shame. Worst is how he left it after himself… how he hurt me, and I know that it shows. (DB 410)

The writer focuses on the repercussions of the event rather than describing them. Her own actions and feelings are described, but we do not find out why she did not dare to say no or what he, in fact, did. Perhaps the writer assumes that the audience within the campaign understands the difficulty and dangers of saying no, or perhaps the details are something she does not recall or want to recall. Regardless, the complicating action is something the readers must interpret for themselves, according to their

own understanding of rape and sex. The writer instead focuses on presenting her shame and the physical repercussions of the rape, only to then circle back and describe the scene of the rape and his actions afterward, repeating and underlining the physical harm done to her body.

Most of what the reader finds out about the rape is through the writer's description of her body. She notes twice on the marks on her genitals as the reason for her shame and as "the worst part." Her pain, the blood between her legs, on the bed and ceiling presents the violence in the incident. Thus, although the rape is not described much, the readers are invited to experience the story through their bodies (cf. Hydén 2013). The physical ailments also give the testimony legitimacy: blood, pain, and permanent marks close the incident to interpretation. Physical signs of violence and resistance are usually needed to establish something as rape in legal practice (Jokila 2010). Hence, presenting physical harm can be a means of proving that what occurred was rape. Physical harm may also be less easily dismissed by readers, and her "voluntary" participation cannot be used against her in a bloodbath. The testimony concurs with dominant ideas of "real" rape by presenting blood and violence, and as a result, it can easily be categorized as rape.

Conversely, however, the narrator also conveys how this incident has been interpreted as "just sex." The perpetrator is presented as seemingly oblivious to what he has done, and she herself had managed to "joke off" the incident with her friends. This presentation challenges discourse determining rape as something easily distinguishable and conveys how there can be much ambiguity regarding what rape is and what is "just sex." The presentation of the event as a "bloodbath" also highlights the width of the category of "just sex," bringing questions regarding what is assumed to be a "normal" part of intercourse.

To summarize, avoiding narrating the violent event can be caused by the ineffability of the subject; however, a writer could also have different reasons for omitting this description, including to maintain ownership of the story or because it was considered unnecessary in the context of the campaign. The interpretive community assumed in the campaign allowed writers to exclude the complicating action, with the expectation of the story still being understood or at least tellable. The interpretation made by the audience, however, might differ, as people need to rely on their own understanding of rape and sex. They are not told what happened in the hotel room or under the sloping ceiling, and hence, how they interpret the stories depends on their own knowledge and experiences.

From a Labovian point of view, these testimonies could be considered "incomplete" by not describing the complicating action. However, they also illustrate how stories can still convey meaning and emotions without such descriptions, which calls into question the necessity of providing an

account of the act itself for a narrative of rape. What purpose does such a description have, and for whom? And to what extent could an "unfinished" narrative of rape be useful for our understanding of the experience and process of narration? If the rape act is the most challenging part to narrate, perhaps being allowed to avoid such narration in *Dammen brister* resulted in these stories becoming more tellable.

Summary: the middle

In this chapter, I have discussed how the most central part of the story—the complicating action—is presented in the testimonies to convey the point of the story. Starting from the assumption of rape being the point and discourse determining what "real" rape is and how victims should react to it, I have noted how the testimonies both adhere to and deviate from genre and discourse in the complicating action. By describing a multitude of different experiences, the complicating actions complexify both the understanding of what constitutes rape and how such experiences should be narrated while also recreating discourse on rape.

Discursive description of what constitutes "real" rape can be challenged in complication actions that describe the unfolding of events preceding rape, particularly in situations of acquaintance rape or rape in intimate relationships. Situations and relationships of trust can make rape unexpected, meaning that not only attacks by strangers can be perceived as "sudden." Writers might also attempt to position themselves according to discourse that could be used to blame them, for example, by presenting why they acted in certain ways. This positioning can be necessary due to the notion of a "rape script" that assumes women go along with the perpetrators because of niceness and feminine expectations, thus placing themselves in the role of the victim, or because of the general precautions that women are expected to heed in order to secure their safety. The rape script and necessary precautions, however, are recognized only *after* the rape, at which time the result is given. In hindsight, certain sequences of events can more easily be viewed as leading to a specific outcome, but such is not necessarily obvious as the event is unfolding. In order to de-escalate or deflect a situation, you need to be aware that there is a situation to deflect, and expressing pre-emptive distrust, especially toward acquaintances, can be difficult (Alcoff 2018, 8).

By relating to a discourse of resistance, the complication action might recreate it and its relevance in describing rape; but the testimonies also complexified what could be understood as resistance, why resistance is not always possible, and why not resisting might be the more "logical" reaction. It is easy to claim that a person should resist rape, but such

resistance could easily cause more violence, pain, or even death. The understanding of the complexity surrounding resistance has perhaps broadened, but expectations of presenting resistance might still restrict tellability, silencing victims who are unable to narrate resistance. The complicating actions also present how victims can clearly resist and offer repeated refusal, only to have this ignored and negotiated. A writer can present clearly refusing the perpetrator's seduction attempts, but by re-negotiating her boundaries to adhere to his wishes to some extent—only to have the new boundary challenged again and again—she can be forced into a situation from which she no longer finds an escape. These descriptions of boundary-crossing convey how rape does not necessarily occur at a sudden instance in time, or due to the victim's inability to state her will, but as the result of a process of ignoring and grinding of a person's boundaries.

In highlighting other "points" than rape, writers can convey different problems that are connected to the experience of rape. For example, the point can be to challenge the idea of rape as the most traumatic event or convey how other people contribute to worsening it. Underlining the negative consequences of people's reactions to rape is important, as it forces people to recognize their part in the problem of both reestablishing discourse on rape and harming those who have been victimized. As a result, this could prevent people from assuming that rape is an issue of "other people," that is, the perpetrators. However, such problems should not be allowed to pull focus from the most focal problem at hand—men raping women—because, as Nilsson (2019b) notes, what is recognized as "the problem" affects the actions that are taken against it. If "the problem" is not viewed as "men raping women," actions will not be taken to stop men from raping women.

The necessity of describing the rape act has been questioned in this chapter. A lack of escalation in the complicating action or focusing on a different point of the story challenges the expectations of these stories I have assumed to be posed by genre. The narrative space allowed the writers not to present a complicating action, perhaps increasing the tellability of these stories. It is easier to tell if you can choose what parts you are comfortable sharing, and not sharing the rape act can allow the writers to maintain ownership of their stories. It also conveys how the campaign was perceived as an interpretive community where the writer's story would be understood (or at least accepted) regardless of such narration.

In presenting a detailed description of the event, the writer can invite the reader to experience the story through their own bodies. Metaphors can make these experiences clearer by translating the experience into something that the readers can relate to even if they themselves lack experiences of rape. Therefore, metaphors can be used to convey emotions

that are difficult or chaotic or perhaps too personal to describe in words. Describing the event can be helpful for the readers' understanding of the event; however, such understanding and ability to empathize with the victims rarely helps them, leading me to argue that making the experience understandable for the audience should not be considered a priority for people narrating their experience of rape.

7. The end

The purpose of the end is to wrap up the story and signal to the audience that it is over, bringing them back to the situation of telling. The built-up tension is expected to find release as the end informs the reader of what finally happened (Johnstone 2016). The end has been described as a crucial component of a story: "because it is only here that we can appreciate where all the preceding events have been leading" (Andrews 2010, 153). In the end, the point of the story can also be reiterated or underlined, clarifying the writer's perception of the experience to convey why it is told and how it should be heard.

In this chapter, I examine how the final steps in Labov's model—resolution and coda—are presented in testimonies in *Dammen brister.* The resolution is meant to describe how the story ended, while a stylistic coda can be used to underline the point of it. Examined here is how writers end their personal experience narratives of rape. What requirements are placed on the end by the genre of personal experience narratives, and how does discourse inform expectations of how a story of rape should end? And how do these expectations affect the tellability and hearability of stories of rape?

Resolution

The resolution constitutes the fifth step in Labov's model, but he does not elaborate much on what should be included in it or its purpose. In his initial work from 1972, he notes how the result could be simply the "termination of that series of events" (Labov 1972, 363). Later, he states that although a story could simply end after the most tellable event—the climax of the story—it can also provide a "final resolution of the situation created by the event" (Labov 2013, 31). Thus, Labov places little expectations on the resolutions to tie up the story.

However, according to philosopher Tzvetan Todorov (1977), the resolution of a story is meant to restore balance. Todorov presents the unfolding of a narrative through the dynamic relationship between balance (equilibrium) and unbalance (disequilibrium). For Todorov, an "ideal" narrative begins with a stable situation disturbed by some power or force, causing a state of disequilibrium. Subsequently, through an action or force in the opposite direction, equilibrium is re-installed. The "second equilibrium" is never the same as the first but still represents a state of balance (Todorov 1997, 111). This pattern of equilibrium—disequilibrium—equilibrium re-instated is easily compared with the narrative components of beginning, middle, and end, and folk-

lorist Ulf Palmenfelt (2017a) also compares the second equilibrium with Labov's step of resolution (ibid., 43).

The expectation of the resolution presenting a state of balance can be compared to research on illness narratives, which suggests the "restitution narrative" to be the narrative structure preferred by readers. Arthur Frank (1995) presents the restitution story as a story of recovery, of having overcome the illness and healed. The resolution of a story is most central for conveying such restitution, as it presents what eventually happened. Frank argues that without a resolution, a story can appear incomplete or even chaotic, challenging assumptions of a "proper" story and even a proper *life*, as certain events are expected to follow others (Frank 1995, 97). Therefore, stories without a proper resolution can be uncomfortable for the audience, which might also contradict discursive expectations of femininity (Ahmed 2017).

Thus, I assume that the genre of personal narrating expects a resolution that not only describes how the rape act ended but also reconstructs balance by presenting restitution. Such genre structures affect stories of rape, but these stories are further constrained by discourse describing the results of rape, including what is assumed to be normative actions and reactions to it. In this section, I examine the resolutions presented in the personal experience narratives to consider how these "tie the knot" of the story and in which ways they adhere to or deviate from expectations by genre and discourse. How can resolutions restore balance in the story? What discourses affect these resolutions, and how do writers position themselves according to such discourse? How these expectations are challenged in *Dammen brister* will also be questioned, as well as what it informs us about the tellability of stories of rape.

The section is divided into three subsections that focus on different resolutions. First, I consider how shame is presented as a resolution to rape and what is said with such shame. Second, I examine how rape can have negative effects on the victims and how a shared understanding of such effects can be both beneficial and potentially problematic. And third, resolutions that present having overcome and healed are explored to consider also what is expected from a resolution to rape and what is not.

Shame

The call published with the campaign proclaims, "[w]e want to place the responsibility and the shame where they belong—with the perpetrators" (Emtö et al. 2018, 7). The implication here is that currently, the responsibility and shame are where they do not belong, with the victims. The rape discourses that have been discussed in the previous two chapters—determining what is real rape and who is a real victim—not only dismiss

incidents as essentially "not rape," but they also suggest how incidents that do not fit the narrow understanding of "real" rape is the victim's fault, at least partly.

Blaming the victim for rape is a common occurrence with a long history (Brownmiller 1975; Edwards 2011), and I have previously noted how this blaming creates the foundation for shame as it establishes an "ideal" against which a victim can compare herself (Wanström 2020; cf. Cahill 2001, 121). In this study, I follow Ahmed's (2004, 107) notion of shame as the negative judgment of the self in contrast with cultural expectations. In other words, I assume that by distributing blame, discourse on rape conveys an ideal—the person who does not "get herself raped"—against whom victims of rape can compare themselves negatively, resulting in shame.

Thus, shame can be said to follow blame, and per extension, the feminist project to shift the blame from the victims to the perpetrators also addresses the problem of shame. The practice of blaming the victim has been challenged by feminist activism and research in the past decades, and as noted above, also constituted an aim of *Dammen brister*. Still, roughly one-third of the testimonies in my material mention shame or self-blame, albeit in different ways. Most writers present feeling or having felt shame, but shame can also be questioned and challenged, and some writers declare having left it behind them. This could indicate how, similarly to resistance, discourse on shame in connection to rape is dominant enough to urge the writers to position themselves according to it, regardless of whether they feel or have felt shame. In this section, I examine how shame is presented as a resolution to rape and the meaning conveyed through such a description.

I initiate by citing the resolution to a testimony in which the shame is clearly described and explained. Although the quote only describes what happened after the rape, it constitutes roughly half of the testimony, making it a significant part of the story.

> I didn't dare to tell anyone besides my closest friends. I was so extremely ashamed. It's not even possible to describe that shame. I still, already then, called myself a feminist and knew that what had happened was wrong, but still, I blamed myself for "letting it happen." I didn't report it to the police. I was too afraid, I wasn't strong enough. The Finland-Swedish aspect was a big factor for me. What if he was some family acquaintance's son, someone's older brother's friend, and so on. And I was afraid that the police would receive me in a judgmental way and think just the worst things about me that I was myself thinking then (oh, you'd been drinking, so you stayed alone with two men you had met the same night, so you didn't

> do any physical resistance, and so on). I, who had always been "so good," had been stupid and let this happen, I thought then, I was ashamed and thought of what a disappointment I was. So, I tried to repress what had happened. It didn't work. Woke up in cold sweat during the nights, got flashbacks to the situation, doubted myself, and in the end, got panic attacks and anxiety. Only with the help of therapy have I been able to process what happened. (DB 309)

The writer's negative judgment of herself is clearly underlined in this testimony. She describes how she felt ashamed and blamed herself for "letting it happen," which caused her not to report the rape to the police and only tell her closest friends. The impact of the Finland-Swedish community is underlined, but she does not elaborate on why that affected her decision not to report the rape. Perhaps she feared the report could be traced back to her if the perpetrator was "some family acquaintance's son, someone's older brother's friend" (DB 309). It could have meant that more people would find out about the rape, perhaps blame her, or protect the perpetrator. Ahmed (2004) notes that shame is intensified when being perceived by others, especially when others perceive it *as* shame (ibid., 103). As a result, shame brings the impulse for people to hide their shame. The writer avoiding the negative perception of her shame is underlined in her reasoning for not reporting the rape, noting how she feared that the police would blame her, too. The small community of Swedish Finland, where "everyone knows everyone," similarly brings the possibility of negative judgment, as it disrupts the possibility of hiding.

To some extent, the writer even seems to express shame for *feeling* shame since she is a feminist (and hence should not feel shame for being victimized). Such shame also indicates how feminist discourse can convey an ideal against which a victim can judge herself negatively. Failing to live up to an assumed feminist standard could perhaps also cause women to remain silent, to hide their shame.

Although the resolution above describes the results of the rape in much detail, it does little to restore balance. Instead, it inflates the disequilibrium presented in the complicating action. Only the last sentence hints that balance has been restored, as the writer presents having been able to process the incident in therapy. However, compared to the negative consequences presented, such restoration is brief and not nearly as detailed. Thus, the extensive presentation of shame ends the story in an unbalanced place, challenging the expectations of the genre of personal experience narratives. This deviation from the expected structure conveys how *Dammen brister* was a tellable space that also allowed writers *not* to tell. In other words, writers did not need to adhere to expectations of presenting balance and restitution but could leave the testimony uncomfortable.

This testimony was selected as an example precisely due to the writer's elaboration and detail. In other testimonies, writers can present shame and silence as the only resolution to their stories, but without mentioning *why* they felt shame and what is meant by such shame. For example, in a testimony cited earlier, the only result presented for the reader is that "the next day I was ashamed, and he ignored me the rest of the festival" (DB 44). Testimonies that otherwise are long and detailed might end with a simple declaration of feeling shame. The fact that shame can be inserted into a story without elaboration and stand as the only resolution to the story makes me question what exactly is said with such shame.

That shame can be merely mentioned indicates how it is assumed to be an obvious outcome of rape. If shame is expected to follow rape, according to discourse, it would mean that writers do not need to explain it but can assume the reader to understand it, nonetheless. Presenting shame thus allows a writer to leave much unsaid. The writers do not need to go into details regarding the shame if they expect a shared understanding of it and its connection to experiences of sexual violence within the interpretive community of *Dammen brister*.

Proceeding from this, I want to consider how shame can be regarded as an *empty signifier* (Laclau 2005). Ethnologist Jenny Gunnarsson Payne (2006) presents the term empty signifier as referring to words that have no connection to a specific meaning, making them "empty." However, this does not mean they are empty of content, but their "emptiness" makes them serve as sites for inscribing various meanings that have no connection (ibid., 113). The common denominator is instead articulated using the empty signifier, and as such, it allows people to connect against a "cause" despite having different aims and values. Following this, I suggest that shame can be perceived as an empty signifier that allows people to connect despite differences between their experiences, creating a sense of community in the group. In other words, the group members could connect through a shared feeling of shame, even though individual understandings of it might vary. Consequently, the empty signifier can challenge the individualizing effects of shame.

How people hear the resolutions that simply present feeling shame is dependent on the reader's interpretation of it. What is articulated with the empty signifier could foremost be understood as the *feeling* of shame, but in testimonies elaborating on the shame, it can also be connected to the writers' (in)actions after the rape. The testimony cited above describes different effects of shame, such as staying silent, not reporting, and trying to repress, which exemplifies what could be conveyed with the empty signifier. Writers often present whether they told anyone about the rape or if they reported it, but others simply state feeling shame and nothing else. I would suggest that shame's connection to silence means that the empty

signifier can indicate non-telling and non-reporting. If shame is assumed to be silencing, then presenting shame as the resolution to rape implies that the writer did not at least report the incident to the police and why they did not do it. In other words, offering shame as the resolution to rape might allow the writer to both present and explain staying silent.

In summary, it is noticeable how the tellable space of *Dammen brister* allowed writers to deviate from the structural requirements of genre that expect stories to offer restitution and balance in their stories. Instead of creating comfort for the audience, the story could end in an unbalanced state. Additionally, shame can perhaps be perceived as an empty signifier that creates unification in the group. People could connect through a shared understanding of shame, unifying them against a common cause. What is meant and heard from the empty signifier depends on the knowledge and experience of the reader, but considering shame's intrinsic connection to silence, I find it plausible that the empty signifier not only conveys a feeling but also brings the assumptions of the writer having stayed silent or at least not reported the rape. Not having to explain possible (in)action or describe intimate feelings of shame—as such can be implied with the empty signifier—might have increased tellability of the experience.

Negative effects

Besides blaming the victim for rape, discourse on rape has also denied the negative impacts of it, presenting it as "no big deal" for women (Gavey and Schmidt 2011). This assumption was challenged by feminists at the early stages of the anti-rape movement, as they started casting light on the severe effects of men's sexual violence toward women (e.g., Brownmiller 1975). The subject was subsequently introduced into the psychiatric field, which defined the "rape trauma syndrome" (Burgess and Holmstrom 1974) that established rape as traumatic. The medical field gave the discourse narrative authority (McKenzie-Mohr 2014), and over the past few decades, the idea of rape as traumatic has become widespread both in the psychological field of research as well as in society in general (Gavey and Schmidt 2011). As a result, the assumption that rape causes negative psychological repercussions for victims of rape is increasingly hearable and widespread. In this section, I examine resolutions that describe the negative (psychological) effects of rape to consider how such effects are presented, to what extent they are perceived as appropriate resolutions according to genre, and how they might affect or be affected by discourse on rape.

In contrast with shame, the term trauma is rarely used among the testimonies (which is why I also avoid the term here), but writers often

describe suffering negative effects from their rape. Similarly to shame, these effects are often presented briefly, without much elaboration.

> I haven't seen him for almost eight years, but I Google him sometimes. I want to know where he is so that I can avoid him. Just like so many other women avoid their rapists, a disgusting word for a disgusting act. I was lucky, I managed to thread water through my depression, anxiety, panic, and PTSD (almost a royal flush of backwash) and somehow learned to become an almost functioning adult. But this is the first time I speak of this in detail, because this happens often, and I would not want to underline precisely how often. But unfortunately, it happens. Women know. (DB 543)

In this resolution, the writer explicitly presents trauma, as PTSD stands for post-traumatic stress disorder. However, what I want to focus on here is how the writer presents having suffered a variety of negative effects and also expects the reader to be able to understand such effects. The brevity of the description makes the negative effects appear as common knowledge within the group, again indicating how the campaign might have been perceived as an interpretive community. The writer even explicitly relates her experience to others' using phrases such as "just like so many other women" and "women know." Additionally, by presenting herself as "lucky" for having been able to thread water through the aftermath of the rape, the writer positions herself in contrast with an imagined other, who assumedly had not been able to thread water but instead drowned.

The writer positions herself according to a discourse of trauma by presenting the severe negative effects of the rape. Still, in noting how she eventually was able to become an "almost functioning adult," the resolution also conveys equilibrium, reinstating a sense of balance in the story. The story can thus be perceived as in line with the genre of personal experience narrative that expects restitution.

Resolutions that present negative effects often describe these as having long-term impacts, stretching out the narrative to include time long past the rape itself. The resolutions can be very brief and describe disliking sex, men, or having negative feelings toward their own bodies and sexual selves, etc. Moreover, these negative feelings are not necessarily placed in the past.

> This experience has left its marks, such as I rarely trust men, and my body puts out thorns as soon as anyone comes close to me. Self-hate was an everyday dish for me, but today I know better. (DB 729)

This writer presents the effects she suffers from the rape at the time of writing. As a result, the narrated experience extends into the present, even though the writer notes having moved past the feeling of hatred toward herself.

When the effects of rape are not described as having ended, the testimony conveys a sense of continuity: this is an ongoing story. Susan Brison (2022) thoroughly underlines how the experience of rape does not necessarily "end" after the act itself, as recovering from the trauma caused by it might be a long process. This means that a story of rape might easily be ongoing in the situation of telling, and therefore unable to present restitution. The continuity of the experience can also be underlined in testimonies that present the effects of it as causing further abuse, for example, in the form of alcohol or self-abuse (DB 452) or self-destructive behavior (DB 253). Frank (1995) would perhaps consider these stories as "improper" due to their lack of restitution, which brings the question of to what extent "ongoing" experiences of rape are tellable.

The resolution can also be excluded from the story altogether. A writer who was raped in her room on campus describes what happened after. The quote starts from where she finished describing the rape.

> He stopped, pulled up his boxers, and rolled away with his back toward me. I walked down to a shopping center close by and bought two packs of cigarettes, even though I only smoked a little at parties. I stood and smoked like a chimney outside campus while I was mentally and physically broken. I was in terrible pain, and I felt as if I was torn somehow. He later claimed that he did not remember what had happened, and I let it pass. I broke down in school and started doing worse on tests. I got to speak to a psychologist who talked about "life is like a roller-coaster…," and it felt like a joke. No one understood that something worse had happened, despite major changes in behavior and heavy smoker in a day. It took a long time before I could even sit on a bicycle. It tore open anew for weeks, and even to this day, I have physical complications from the incident. (DB 154)

The testimony ends there. The writer presents severe negative effects following the rape; being "mentally and physically broken," in terrible pain, torn open, and still suffering physical complications. However, the story does not reinstate equilibrium, making it appear as lacking a proper resolution. What happened after? Was she able to heal, or is it only time that has given her distance from the event? Besides physical complications at the time of writing, the story is anchored in past time, and the reader is not informed whether there is a resolution later in time. These kinds of

descriptions of the negative effects are not satisfying resolutions for the reader, as they do not offer restitution (cf. Frank 1995).

Proceeding from the expectations of a story presented by Frank and Todorov, it could be argued that the testimonies lacking a resolution are not proper stories. Still, the failure to reinstate equilibrium is not uncommon among the testimonies. One obvious cause for the narrators not to provide a resolution is that there is none to tell. Another reason could be that the writers simply do not want to present a resolution, or at least not one according to expectations posed by genre (as conveying balance or restitution) or discourse. Being allowed to narrate these kinds of "improper stories" that are ongoing and uncomfortable could have increased tellability within *Dammen brister*.

Discourse informs expectations regarding how an experience of rape is to be resolved. Some of these I discuss more in the following section, but here, the focus will be on the trauma discourse. A shared understanding of rape as having negative consequences makes such stories tellable and hearable. However, the trauma discourse has been criticized in recent research, as trauma is increasingly viewed as the self-evident result of rape (e.g., Edgren 2016; Gavey and Schmidt 2011). Rather than rape *possibly* being traumatizing, it is assumed that rape *is* traumatizing, which can make it difficult for victims to express *not* being traumatized. A victim of rape claiming not to be traumatized can be accused of not telling the truth or being in denial (Gavey and Schmidt 2011). Such conclusions circumscribe people's understanding of their own experiences, deny their agency, and position the victims as psychologically broken (McKenzie-Mohr 2014). The focus on trauma has also been argued to individualize the problem of rape, presenting the problem as stemming from inside the individual, thus allowing people to ignore the unequal structures of power that facilitate sexual violence (Mardorossian 2002). Additionally, if trauma is viewed as self-evident by the criminal justice system, failure to convey signs of trauma can also cause victims' testimonies to be disbelieved and dismissed (Murray 2012).

Testimonies in my material do not explicitly challenge the trauma discourse, but nor do all present negative effects (although people who have not suffered negative effects of their rape might have been less inclined to participate in the campaign). It is possible the writers simply left out such details—but claiming not having suffered any negative effects might also have been perceived as untellable in the space as it does not adhere to the trauma discourse. On the other hand, not having suffered negative effects of rape could also have been considered irrelevant or disturbing to the attempt to create a shared experience in the group. If the sense of community in the group is built on the shared experiences of sexual violence and the perception of it as a problem, then the question of whether the writer

personally has suffered negative consequences from her experience can be perceived as irrelevant. Thus, writers not explicitly challenging the trauma discourse might not only stem from such experiences being untellable, but simply beside the point.

As with trauma, ethnologist Anna Johansson presents how the identification of "one that feels bad" forces a person into a psychiatric discourse that locates the problem as stemming from within the individual. In contrast, however, she notes that in discussions on internet forums, the participants could instead be linked through the denotation of "feeling bad," causing the differences between the individual experiences to become unmade, allowing for unification within the group (ibid., 126). Johansson argues that such unification allowed the participants to challenge the individualized position and connect their experience to a broader cultural context, bringing new questions and interpretations (ibid.). Perhaps a shared understanding of rape as possibly having negative effects could similarly function to connect people, allowing them to challenge the role afforded them by the trauma discourse that otherwise serves to individualize the problem and present them as "broken." Sharing these negative effects might allow people to come to terms with them, to realize that they are common, and perhaps to reinterpret them. Reflecting on her own participation in survivor's support groups, Alcoff notes how "[s]haring with others like me, as opposed to a therapist, made it possible for me to begin to believe that my long-term after-effects were common, normal even, and understandable." (Alcoff 2018, 179). As discourse on rape has presented it as "no big deal" or claimed that women overreact to rape (Bohner et al. 2009), simply recognizing the validity of one's reaction might be difficult. Therefore, connecting with other people who have had similar experiences might be helpful for understanding your own.

The intention here is not to challenge the critique aimed toward the trauma discourse. The shared interpretations of suffering negatively can be a problem for those who do not experience such effects and could cause them to question their experiences. Recognizing that rape does not necessarily result in trauma is particularly focal for addressing the "gray area" between rape and sex, that is, experiences that do not fall neatly into either category (cf. Gavey 2019), as these can be difficult for victims to understand even without expectations of being traumatized. Stories of experiences from the gray area can thus be instrumental in countering the trauma discourse by showing how negative sexual experiences do not have to lead to trauma (Karlsson 2019b). *Dammen brister* addressed this gray area by being open to all kinds of experiences ranging from harassment to assault, and as mentioned, writers rarely used the word trauma. Yet, they could still present negative effects, which makes me question the usefulness of discussing negative effects simply without the label of "trauma."

If, as Shuman (2005) notes, tellability is partly determined based on whether the writer is comfortable with the category afforded their experience, then the category of trauma—or rather, if trauma is stuck to the category of rape—might make stories untellable if the writers do not perceive their experience as traumatic. In *Dammen brister,* however, people could not only narrate experiences that were *not* traumatic but also narrate negative feelings without them being perceived *as trauma.* Being able to present negative effects without labeling them as trauma could allow the participants in the group to discuss these effects and connect them to others' experiences as well as a broader cultural context.

To summarize, writers present negative consequences in the resolutions in a way that conveys a shared understanding of the possible effects of rape. Discussing negative effects can be beneficial for people who have been victimized, as it allows them to recognize how these are common and valid reactions, and connecting to others who have similar experiences challenges the individualized position conveyed by discourse of trauma and shame. As a result, the effects experienced can be reinterpreted as not stemming from the individuals themselves but rather understood in relation to a broader cultural context, in this case, a society in which gender inequality and sexual violence are supported and normalized.

The descriptions of negative effects can stretch out the narrative to include a long period of time, indicating that it is still an ongoing or unresolved story. Such presentations challenge the resolution's function to reinstate equilibrium, and the readers are left without a satisfying end. As presenting a resolution or restitution might not be possible or wished for by the writer, being able to exclude this part of the narrative might have contributed to making the story tellable. The writers in *Dammen brister* did not need to adhere to requirements of making people feel comfortable or their stories palatable for others but were instead allowed to leave the resolution untold (or uncomfortable).

The good and the bad

Psychologists Nicola Gavey and Johanna Schmidt (2011) note that the trauma discourse not only describes the presumed impact of rape but also provides expectations regarding what should happen after, emphasizing *healing*. According to the participants in their study, victims of rape need to deal with the rape in some way, to work through it, in order to be able to heal from it. Such anticipations align with the expectations of the audience, as "restitution" implies overcoming or healing. As a result, being able to provide a "happy end" might increase a story's tellability. "Ending on a positive note" might be a more suitable turn of phrase, as a story of rape is hardly presumed to provide a *happy* end, yet there may be an expectation

that the narrator would provide a positive resolution at the time of telling. In this section, I examine how resolutions comply with the expectations of healing and providing restitution to the narrative. In addition, when considering what "should" be presented in the resolution, I will also discuss what is perhaps not expected to be the resolution to a story of rape.

As Todorov (1977) notes, the second equilibrium is not identical to the first but still presents balance. Testimonies that offer a positive resolution tend to emphasize overcoming the negative effects and underline the good aspects of their lives. One writer ends her testimony by stating:

> I stopped living for many years, some sort of depression, probably. BUT
>
> Now I can say that I live again. I laugh and have the world's best live-in partner, I live life[1]. And now I know what real sex is.
>
> I've forgiven you, I don't want to live in bitterness and hate. But I never forget.. never.
>
> I am good enough. (DB 326)

This quote touches on multiple themes that are common among the positive resolutions: highlighting the change from bad to good but still remembering the bad; presenting currently having a good partner and enjoying sex; and—if interpreted quite broadly—presenting the experience as not being the writer's fault (because she is good enough).

Highlighting the good but remembering the bad is typical among the testimonies in *Dammen brister* that provide a resolution. It is not always as developed as in the example above, but a general notification of being in a good place but still remembering or suffering consequences is common. The "goodness" of the present situation is often described in terms of having a good partner and enjoying sex, particularly in stories that have described abusive relationships. This description gives the story a satisfying resolution and restitution—it all worked out in the end! While also adhering to the trauma discourse that notes how traces of the trauma will always remain (Gavey and Schmidt 2011).

The resolution above also positions the narrator according to expectations of femininity and heterosexuality. The writer does not mention the gender of her partner, which is why I assume it to be a man, as heterosexuality is perceived as the norm, meaning that the writer presents living in a heterosexual relationship and engaging in sex. Liz Kelly (1988) notes how the focus of rehabilitation of victims of rape is to get them readjusted to "normal" heterosexuality. In emphasizing the need for victims to "heal"

1 Swe.: "Jag lever livet"

from the rape, a return to "normal" can be assumed. Thus, being in a heterosexual relationship could be understood as an ideal resolution to an experience of rape, according to discourse that determines such as the "normal" and ideal state.

Certainly, the writer being in a relationship and enjoying sex can be perceived as something positive. However, if such is expected from a resolution of rape stories, it could affect the tellability of these experiences. If women are expected to offer a positive resolution of having overcome their experience, healed, and again being in a (hetero)sexual relationship, it might limit those who cannot present such a resolution. In other words, being unable to provide a positive resolution might cause the experience to become untellable for the writer. *Dammen brister* allowing writers *not* to give a resolution could thus have increased tellability of these experiences.

Another aspect of healing noted in the quote above and which could be expected by discourse is *forgiveness.* In common understandings of self-care and healing, forgiveness is often emphasized, and refusal of such presented as harmful to the person victimized (Chandra and Erlingsdóttir 2020a). However, forgiveness is very rare among the testimonies. Writers generally do not present having forgiven their perpetrators; in fact, it is a subject not even discussed. A couple of testimonies discuss the need to forgive oneself, while two others state how they have *not* forgiven because the perpetrator did not accept responsibility for the act. Apart from the example above, there is one testimony that states she might forgive him in the future.

Literary theorist Ebba Witt-Brattström (2019) notes the absence of vengeance in the literature describing women's experiences of rape (ibid., 161). She argues that letting something like that go would be unimaginable for men, but for women, it is safest to simply shoulder the shame and try to forgive the perpetrator (ibid., 164). Such forgiveness discourse is reflected in the testimony above as the writer states how she forgave him because she did not want to live in bitterness and hate. Anger, especially for women, is considered a bad thing (Chemaly 2018). It has been presented as "abnormal" for women, something that girls learn from a young age is ugly and unfeminine (Niemelä 1991). Thus, women need to let go of their anger—to forgive. However, anger is not necessarily bad; in fact, it can protect us from injustice (Chemaly 2018).

Journalist Soraya Chemaly (2018) notes that women are discouraged from feeling and expressing anger and that this constitutes a conscious method to refrain women from challenging patriarchal structures. Similarly, Giti Chandra and Irma Erlingsdóttir (2020a) suggest that the discourse of forgiveness is imbricated with patriarchal demands on women to accept the crimes committed on them without complaint instead of

striving for justice. Hence, the encouragement for women to forgive their perpetrators—to let go of their anger—can be understood as a means to maintain dominant structures. This means that contrary to the popular concept of forgiving for the victim's benefit, the harming party can be the one that benefits, on both a collective and individual level. One writer notes how "he always apologized the day after, and I always forgave him, even though it beat me up psychologically" (DB 908). Thus, it is not simply the dominant patriarchal discourses that are left unchallenged if women are not allowed to express anger; limiting women's space for anger can also make them vulnerable to abuse.

The absence of forgiveness among the testimonies indicates that perhaps such discursive expectations were not heeded by the writers in *Dammen brister.* However, there were also very few writers who claimed they had *not* forgiven and few who explicitly expressed anger. Contrary to the critical voices expressing concerns about #MeToo expressing hate toward men,[2] the testimonies rarely do. The writers generally focus on their own negative feelings, shame, and silence. The writers can emphasize where they argue the blame *should* lie, but they rarely express anger or hate. But there are a few exceptions:

> Today I hate basically all men I don't know, but also many that I know. I hate them for what they can do to me without consequences. I hate them for what they have done to me, how they destroyed. I hate how scared I get from meeting the men who have done shit to me on the town or at some party. Because I still meet several of them sometimes. Even though I've moved far away, I'm scared. All this leaves marks; for me, the marks and fear are still there more than 10 years later and will probably always be there. (DB 123)

The writer presents how her experiences have resulted in her hating men and implicitly argues why such hate is justified by elaborating on why she hates them. This resolution would perhaps not be tellable outside of *Dammen brister* because of the hate and negativity. It has been argued that men are not used to being referred to as a group and thus react negatively to it (Holmberg 2003; Manne 2019). Gabriella Nilsson and Inger Lövkrona (2020, 299) note how hate toward men is perceived as illegitimate; not even those who have experienced violence from men are allowed to hate men in general. Thus, it is not necessarily the expression of hate that could be perceived as "wrong" in the testimony but aiming it toward men as a group. I do not know whether the testimony quoted above was submitted anonymously, and I cannot, therefore, know if the writer felt comfortable

2 This accusation was not much (publicly) expressed in Finland. However, journalist Geo Stenius (2017) expressed concerns about the sense of "lynching" in the campaign.

expressing hate in the Facebook group (or in general) or if they felt shielded by anonymity.

In expressing hate, the writer challenges the feminine position that expects her to forgive; but to what extent can it also be presumed as challenging the genre of narrating rape? Phrased differently, how tellable is a story of hate? As a resolution, the quote above does not offer much restitution—being afraid ten years later is not a state of equilibrium. As such, it is similar to resolutions presenting shame and suffering negative consequences; however, I find it questionable whether "I hate men" could be offered as a resolution to a story of rape as easily and uncommented as "I felt ashamed." Shame is a ubiquitous feature of femininity, at least in the Western world (Mann 2018), whereas anger is masculine and not readily available for women (Chemaly 2018). Shame and trauma might not be preferred resolutions to a story of rape, but at least the narrator then stays within the bounds of a feminine role.

However, as feminism is often dismissed as simply "man-hating," distancing feminist activism from such discourse might be motivated. Angry women can be presented as illogical and "hysterical," which is then used as an argument to ignore what they say (Ahmed 2017, 35) (although a woman risks being presented as angry, illogical, and hysterical by simply speaking at all); and in general accusations of "man-hating" can be used to undermine feminists' political demands by making the speakers lose credibility (Holmberg 2003, 57). Still, it can be questioned how restricting expressions of hate and anger might limit women's capacity to challenge injustice, especially considering how woman-hating is not policed in the same manner (ibid., 58).

In this subsection, I have aimed to convey that while genre requires the stories to present restitution, discourse determines *how* this restitution is to be accomplished and subsequently narrated. Discourse creates expectations regarding how victims of rape should overcome their experiences, rid themselves of negative feelings, and return to a heterosexual feminine role. Not only can these expectations restrict tellability for people with experience, who might be unable to present such a resolution, but they also deflect people from striving for justice and change by turning them to focus on themselves.

***

To summarize the section on resolution, I circle back to the restitution imperative—the expectation for a story to offer a positive resolution. For Frank (1995), the opposite of restitution is chaos, and he presents the chaos narrative as one that never imagines things to improve; thus, lacking a proper resolution causes a story to appear chaotic. Frank argues that chaotic stories cause discomfort and anxiety in the listener because

the lack of a resolution conveys how "easily any of us could be sucked under," which is something "modern society" does not want to acknowledge (ibid., 95). Additionally, Avril Thorne and Kate C. McLean (2003) suggest that narratives describing vulnerability are more often rejected by the audience, as stories describing tough and empathetic positions place less burden on them because the narrator "seemed to have resolved the crisis more successfully." (ibid., 183). Hence, the requirement for a resolution is to create comfort for the listener, which is also an imperative inherent to the feminine role. In their stories, women may themselves feel compelled to turn things into a "happy end" (cf. Marander-Eklund 2000, 200), and, thus, if unable to do so, they may instead choose to stay silent. Additionally, if women are expected to recover from the rape, failing to do so can make them appear as unideal victims.

The intention here is not to claim that offering a positive resolution is something negative or that positive resolutions are *only* presented because writers feel forced by genre and discourse. Lawless (2001) underlines the importance of victims being able to reconstruct their stories in a way that is more beneficial for them, and thus recreating themselves as having overcome might be helpful for writers to reestablish a positive sense of self. Still, as an *expectation* assumed by the readers, the inability to narrate a positive resolution or restore balance might cause stories to become untellable. The narrative space provided by *Dammen brister,* however, made such expectations less restrictive and allowed people to narrate unsatisfying resolutions or exclude them completely.

Instead of offering a resolution, the writer could focus on the result of the incident or cut short of describing an end altogether. These writers might simply not have wanted to share these details in that space. Still, it could be just as likely that they shared some parts because they did not need to share others: that the story became more tellable when not having to provide a resolution, or at least one that adhered to expectations described by genre (as restoring balance), or by discourse (conveying trauma, having healed, or forgiven). Thus, diverting from these expectations perhaps made the experiences more tellable.

Lastly, I want to question to what extent not easing the discomfort and anxiety in the listener could be perceived as a narrative tool to create an emotional response. Perhaps discomfort is useful when a narrator wishes to create an impact, as comfort might allow the audience to disregard the stories—forget them, and move on. Folklorist Sallie Anna Steiner (2019) uses the term "productive discomfort" to argue that discomfort is a key step in growth. "When discomfort moves us toward something, when we use it as a vehicle, as a way forward, discomfort can be productive" (Steiner 2019, 118). Ahmed's (2017) "feminist killjoy" comes to mind here: a character that spreads discomfort by pointing out, for example,

sexism and racism. Creating comfort might not be perceived as the focal function of stories of rape in general, but even if such discomfort is exacerbated by the narrator excluding certain parts of the story, it should perhaps not be considered a problem but rather a helpful tool to push people towards change.

Coda

The sixth and final step in Labov's model is the coda. A coda is not necessary for a story to be considered complete, but much like the abstract, it is a narrative tool that can be used to improve the story. The coda signals to the listeners that the story is over, bringing them back to the situation of telling. Moreover, it can also be used to make a general observation, underlining the point of the story to ensure hearability. The coda can thus clarify why a story is told and how it should be heard.

Similarly to the abstracts, the codas allow the writers to position themselves more clearly within the campaign as well as the wider #MeToo movement. Although they can function to evaluate the experience, for example, by presenting how the writer is still disgusted with the perpetrator (DB 95), scared of him (DB 179), or angry (DB 623), what I mean to focus on here is instead how the writers use the coda to connect their story to the campaign and underline the point of it.

The purpose of the campaign was to raise awareness of the problem of sexual violence, break the silence around the subject, and shift the blame to the perpetrators (Emtö et al. 2018, 6–7). As such, the campaign aligns with a generalized idea of these kinds of campaigns. Nyman (2022) notes that the participants quickly grasped the aim and task of the campaign, partly due to the feminist engagement in #MeToo in our neighboring country, Sweden. Nyman argues that this reflects the transnational aspect of feminist practice, which describes how feminists in different nations influence and are influenced by each other. Additionally, as Loney-Howes et al. (2022) point out, #MeToo itself relied on a pattern presented by prior campaigns that provided the participants with an interpretive framework for understanding and engaging in these campaigns. The themes of raising awareness, breaking the silence, and shifting the blame were noticeable in the abstracts to the testimonies but are more clearly underlined in the codas, allowing the writers to position their story within the campaign and underline the point of it. Departing from these themes, I examine in this section how writers use the codas to emphasize the meaning conveyed in their testimonies and what importance they assign to the campaign.

Raising awareness regarding the topic of sexual violence was a fundamental aim of the campaign, and this is reflected in the codas.

> Myself, I have yammered about my traumatic experiences in therapy many years ago, but it still feels difficult to write this. I hadn't planned on writing down my story only to sign the call. But now I do it anyway if I thereby, in some way, might contribute to girls and women being able to avoid falling victim to pedophiles and exploiters. (DB 761)

In this coda, the writer underlines how she is not writing for her own sake—as she has talked about this before—but for the sake of others. Helping others and contributing to change are hence presented as what motivated the writer to share her experience. The idea that people need to narrate experiences of injustice for the work against it is inherent to the genre of testimony and a cornerstone of feminist consciousness-raising campaigns and many other types of activism (Serisier 2018). Therefore, it is not surprising that a wish to contribute to change is presented as having motivated people to share their experiences, and through this presentation, the writers align their stories according to a genre of testimony and feminist speak-outs. This alignment can increase the tellability of the story by conveying why it is told, but it also positions the writer within the campaign, reproducing a sense of solidarity.

Additionally, positioning the story as being told for the sake of others might make it more tellable in general. Thorne and McLean (2003) argue that the audience prefers stories in which the writer emphasizes care and concern for the feelings of others rather than ones conveying vulnerability. Placing others' needs before one's own is also expected from the feminine position (cf. Gavey 2019), which means that this positioning allows the writer to adhere to such expectations. However, it is notable that Thorne and McLean describe the vulnerable position as emphasizing "one's own fear, sadness and/or helplessness in the face of traumatic events." (ibid., 175), which reflects a negative understanding of vulnerability and victimhood as connected to passivity (cf. Mardorossian 2014). Emphasizing concern for others could thus be perceived as a way of positioning oneself as an active subject rather than a passive victim, which can be a preferred position for those who have been victimized.

A wish to protect others and bring change through their stories was also offered as motivation by narrators presenting why they now chose to share a story that they had never previously shared (at least not with many people). Writers state how they want to create a better world for their sisters or daughters, and this motivates them to break their own silence on the experiences. In turn, seeing others share their stories prompted people to present their own:

> Difficult to tell since acquaintances are in the group. But because others have dared to do so, I do it too. And also I think about how IT IS NOT MY FAULT!! (DB 597)

As the coda here notes, writers were motivated to share by others doing the same. Being motivated by others sharing is something that has been underlined in research on #MeToo and feminist digital campaigns in general (Sigurvinsdóttir, Ásgeirsdóttir, and Arnalds 2020). Following studies on revolutions, Cass R. Sunstein (2020) presents how people have different "thresholds" for speaking out or rebelling. She notes that people require different levels of support before they dare to speak their minds; some need none, while others need more. Hearing others speak might provide such support, but it also depends on *who* is speaking or doing *what* (ibid.). Thus, the members were not only motivated by a wish for change and raising awareness, but seeing others speak made it easier to narrate their own experiences, which indicates how *Dammen brister* was not automatically a tellable space but interactively created as such by admins and the members of the group.

The writer above also notes that the incident is not her fault; in other words, she is not to blame. The topic of blame and shame is often presented as why writers have been silent about their experiences, which was noted previously in this chapter. The connection between shame and silence makes speech a means to redistribute this blame and shame to others:

> It became a longer text than I had planned because when the words finally started flowing, they did not want to stop. And why would we even try to stop them? Let them pour, and let them wash the shame to where it belongs. (DB 605)

With this coda, the writer implies how shame has hindered her speech, but she now aims at shifting this shame to the perpetrators. This speech is added to that of the other participants, as the writer refers to a "we" who should not stop it. Per extension, the writer appears not to be referring to her individual shame but a collective one. "We" should not stop the words but instead let our speech wash the shame to where it belongs. Shame as an empty signifier can be distinguished here, as it is presented as a shared experience around which women can unite and collectively reinterpret and redistribute. The empty signifier might increase the affective potential of the coda, as it allows women to interpret their own understanding of shame into it while feeling a sense of community with the group. The metaphoric language describing the flowing water reflects the force the campaign is understood to have while also stylistically referencing the name of the campaign—*the Dam is Bursting.* Thus, the coda

conveys meaning by establishing a "we" connected to a shared feeling of shame and aiming this union against a common enemy: shame and silence.

Thus, breaking the silence is connected to shifting the shame to the perpetrators, but it can also be taken further: to create change.

> Because when something horrible happens, we women do what our first instinct tells us to do. Protect ourselves. With all means necessary. We close down, blame ourselves. Hide away the bad. But with this call, all that's over with. No more. The charade is over because we cannot keep it up anymore. We shall not bend to the perpetrators' will any longer. Because we listen to each other and take each other seriously. Together we are strong. (DB 425)

> They took me. I did not get away. But I am not scared anymore because we will never again be silent. And they will never again get away. (DB 278)

These codas connect speaking to creating change while also presenting such speech and change as a collective project. The first one speaks only of a generalized experience of women, presenting how women react by "closing down," taking on the blame as a means to protect themselves, but "we" will not do it any longer because "we" listen and together "we" are strong. The second one starts with personal experience and then connects it to a unified group: "she" is not scared anymore because "we" will not be silent. These codas underline the potential for producing change that speaking is assumed to have while recreating the sense—and necessity—of unity within the group. Change is presented as a collective project and something that can be realized with collective effort.

While some codas celebrate change brought by the campaign, others rather demand such change.

> It breaks my heart to read my sisters' stories, and it breaks my heart that even I have one to share. We need change; we demand change. (DB 801)

The combination of sadness and gazing forward is typical among the *Dammen brister* testimonies. In contrast with the codas presented above that celebrated change, these codas demand change to be implemented. Although not necessarily in contradiction—as one can acknowledge that an important change has happened yet still recognize that further change is needed—I would argue that it affects the meaning or impact of the testimony depending on which aspect is emphasized. Claiming that irreversible change has been made is a celebration; it conveys feelings of accomplishment, a victory. Conversely, demanding change is a call for action.

The fact that women *could* share their stories in *Dammen brister* does not answer *why* they would, and I argue this is a question often overlooked in discussions on #MeToo and the silence around sexual violence in general. Why would you share such intimate and personal stories from your life? The codas offer reasons such as hoping for change, helping others, or simply participating in the movement. This aligns the stories according to a genre of testimony or speaking out that is developed within feminist activism, as well as recreates a sense of community in the group.

Summary: the end

In this chapter, I have discussed how the last two steps of Labov's model—the resolution and the coda—are used to tie up the story, underline its point, and convey meaning. Proceeding from genre, I have assumed that the end of a story should not simply present how the event ended but also offer the reader a satisfying *restitution* that reinstates balance, or equilibrium. Furthermore, discourse on rape describes the expected resolutions to such an experience, as well as how it should be handled by the person victimized.

Shame is often presented as a resolution to rape among the testimonies. This is perhaps unsurprising, considering the intrinsic connection between rape and shame that I have suggested stems from the process of blaming the victim for the rape (Wanström 2020; cf. Cahill 2001, 121). Shame might even be expected by discourse to follow rape, which is indicated by how briefly shame can be presented as the resolution to the story. The fact that writers could often present feeling shame without any elaboration or as the only resolution to the story indicates how the campaign was viewed as an interpretive community that would share and understand such shame. Proceeding from this, I have further suggested that shame can be perceived as an empty signifier, a common denominator for the inscription of various meanings that allow people to connect despite having different experiences or understandings of shame.

Presenting shame as a resolution to rape can challenge the genre of personal experience narratives, as it does not necessarily restore balance to the story. In some testimonies, the writers present having rid themselves of shame—or having *overcome* the shame—in which cases the balance is restored. By narrating such "overcoming," however, the position of shame in stories of rape is reestablished, and as a result, the overcoming of shame might risk becoming part of an expected process necessary for healing from rape. In other words, shame, similar to trauma, risk becoming perceived as an obvious outcome of rape and something victims need to deal with in order to "heal" from the rape.

The discourse describing rape as traumatic was introduced to challenge the notion of rape as "no big deal." As such, it can be beneficial for victims and allow them to understand their reactions and the effects they suffer from their experiences. Still, the discourse has been challenged in feminist research for presenting trauma as the *obvious* outcome of rape, which can be used to silence and dismiss victims who claim otherwise. In *Dammen brister,* however, writers rarely spoke of trauma, but instead of suffering negative effects of the rape that were also presented without much elaboration, again conveying an assumed shared understanding. Being allowed to share negative effects of rape with others has been noted as beneficial for victims (e.g., Alcoff 2018), and combined with the broad scope of the campaign (including experiences ranging from harassment to assault), the campaign made it possible to share a range of negative effects without the label of trauma. Experiences can be uncomfortable and have negative effects without necessarily being understood as traumatic, and being able to discuss these could be perceived as helpful for people interpreting and reinterpreting their experiences. My point is that the label of trauma, similar to the label of rape, might obstruct, rather than help, victims coming to terms with or discussing their experiences. By being able to discuss these negative effects, regardless of how the effects or the sexual experience is categorized, the writers could also challenge the individualization of the problem created by a psychiatric discourse of trauma and the interpretations of the experiences offered by this discourse; thus, challenging and complexifying the discussion on trauma and the aftermath of rape.

Similarly to shame, a resolution presenting negative effects is not necessarily satisfactory for the reader in that they do not always present equilibrium. What could be expected from a resolution to rape is rather that the victim has been able to heal and has moved on from the rape, bringing assumptions of adhering to normative heterosexuality and forgiving the perpetrator. I have suggested that the expectations of having healed and reached a "happy end" in a story of rape might cause stories to become untellable if the writer cannot provide such a positive resolution. In other words, being unable to adhere to discourse determining how one should have moved on and genre expectations presenting restitution might cause women to remain silent.

Proceeding from this, I have suggested that rape stories' tellability might be increased if the writer is allowed to deviate from genre expectations of restitution. Andrews (2010) argues that the narrative structure of stories that includes a specific "end" might require the experience to be transformed into something it is not—finished and in the past. Narrating an experience that is perceived as ongoing or unfinished can be difficult because the narrative structure of a beginning and end might not

sufficiently reflect the experience. Therefore, not having to provide a resolution, or an end in general, can increase tellability.

It can also be questioned who benefits from a story presenting restitution. It could be perceived as necessary for the victim to be able to recreate her story in a way that represents a positive self-view (Lawless 2001), but as incomplete narratives create discomfort, I think the restitution requirement is rather beneficial for the readers. The writers in *Dammen brister* were comfortable leaving the reader in an unbalanced or chaotic state, which conveys the campaign as a tellable space and could perhaps be helpful as a narrative tool—urging people to change by not offering the satisfaction of release.

In the codas, the meanings ascribed to the campaign were underlined as the writers motivated their reasons for sharing their stories. The themes of raising awareness, breaking the silence, and creating change were presented, which align with a general understanding of feminist anti-rape campaigns and indicate how the participants were aware of how to navigate the space and what to expect from it. In the codas, the narrators often speak of a "we" that is causing change, implying a sense of shared experiences and community in the group. Consequently, the codas functioned to reestablish such a community while also positioning the writers as part of it.

Part I: Conclusion

The purpose of this first part of the analysis has been to examine how experiences of rape are narrated by departing from a model of personal experience narratives that represents an expected structure for the testimonies. Rather than considering such structure to be required for a personal experience narrative, the model was meant to represent a *possible* structure that would illuminate what was included in the stories and what was left out.

The analysis indicates both how the narrative model presented by William Labov (1972) can be useful for approaching mono-linear personal experience narratives and how such a model can be restrictive and place difficult requirements on narratives of rape. The writers in *Dammen brister*, however, did not appear entirely constrained by such narrative requirements. This is particularly noticeable in how the writers could exclude certain focal aspects of the story—such as the complicating action or resolution—and, in general, leave much to be interpreted by the audience, which also conveys a sense of community in the group. In this chapter, I summarize the conclusions drawn in each chapter. These conclusions are meant to form a basis for understanding the narration of rape in the campaign, which the next part subsequently builds on.

In chapter 5. The beginning, I discussed how the writers created narrative space for themselves in the abstracts and orientations, establishing an interpretive framework for the listeners and informing them of how the story is to be understood. As a result, the beginning both "set the scene" for the story and confirmed the tellability of it. Although the space of *Dammen brister* was meant to be open and accepting of all voices and experiences, it is noticeable that it might not have completely evaded the need for writers to position themselves according to certain discourse that could be used to discredit either their experience or their claim to narrate it. Still, the space was claimed, and it is also clear how it allowed writers to present complex positions and experiences. Specifically, ideas regarding who is an ideal victim are challenged among the orientations that describe more complex positions and perceptions of vulnerability. The writers also claimed interpretation and entitlement to their experiences, while reproducing a shared "we" in the group. In establishing a "we," the writers presented the campaign as an interpretive community, which essentially allowed them to both speak for the group (by being part of it) while also giving them space *not* to narrate, as it could be assumed the reader would "hear" the story, nonetheless.

In chapter 6. The middle, I examined what is presented in the complicating action and how it is presented. In a story of rape, the rape can be assumed to be the point of the story and should therefore be reiterated in

the complicating action. However, not only is rape not necessarily the point of the story, but the writers also challenged the necessity of narrating the rape at all, countering the genre of personal experience narratives and perhaps narratives of rape. Instead of describing the rape, it can be simply hinted at, or the focus placed on other parts of the story. This conveys how the experience of rape can be presented in different ways, and in questioning what constitutes the complication action, it is possible to distinguish different problems with rape. The affordance provided by the narrative space of *Dammen brister* meant that writers could exclude the parts they did not wish to share, which might have made these stories more tellable while also requiring the readers to interpret more for themselves.

In the final chapter 7. The end, I examined how the end of the story works to "tie the knot" of it, providing the reader with a resolution and using a stylistic coda to underline its meaning. Proceeding from genre, I assumed that a story should provide the reader with a satisfaction restitution, reintroducing balance by informing them of what eventually happened and of having overcome the incident. However, readers of the *Dammen brister* testimonies could often be left without a satisfying restitution, as the writers end by describing shame or suffering negative effects of the experience. This leaves the reader in an uncomfortable state, which conveys the affordance of genre and how *Dammen brister* was a tellable space in which the writers did not have to adhere to discourse that expected them to provide comfort and "move on" from their experience. Writers that presented feeling good in the present often added still "remembering the bad" while otherwise aligning according to a more comfortable discourse of restitution. In the codas, the necessity of a feminist community for speaking of rape is underlined, as well as the importance of such speech to generate change. Similarly to the abstracts, the codas convey why the writers chose to share their testimonies and how they perceived the campaign.

Part II: Genre variations

Labov's model has been useful for discussing different parts of the testimonies, considering what is included and left out, and how the various parts are presented creatively by the writers to convey meaning. However, it has also been noted that Labov's model might be limited when examining stories of rape, as rape stands out as an experience not easily placed into a temporal and causal narrative with a clear beginning, a middle, and an end. As the purpose of this thesis is to consider *how* women narrate stories of rape, I want also to examine the variety of narrative genres and styles that are present among the testimonies. The writers were given space to decide not only *what* to narrate but also *how* to narrate it, making the testimonies vary widely in structure, length, and detail. By examining how the testimonies move between different genres and styles, I can gain deeper insight into the tellable space of *Dammen brister,* participants' interaction within it, and how they interpret, reinterpret, and challenge both structural expectations of genre and discourse of rape, sex, and gender.

Although narratives have been expected to adhere to certain structures and coherence, narrative research has underlined how this does not reflect the reality of all narratives (e.g., Hyvärinen et al. 2010). Diverting from the focus on event narratives and narratives as adhering to a rigid structure allows me to consider different means by which experience can be recreated and narrated. As has been mentioned, many testimonies in *Dammen brister* do not fit into a rigid idea of personal experience narratives. These testimonies can include multiple experiences, multiple narratives, or no narratives at all. Thus, in this second part, I examine testimonies that adhere less to an assumed structure to examine other ways of structuring narratives of rape to convey meaning.

The analysis is categorized according to testimonies that tell little, ones that tell a lot, and ones in which the teller (more explicitly) presents her "self." The aim of this approach is to be able to consider the broad variety of styles and genres noticeable among the testimonies, hence allowing me to examine the width of the tellable space that *Dammen brister* provided.

As the testimonies in this section often involve multiple experiences, including ones that are not rape, the term sexual violence is often used in this part of the analysis. Sexual violence is here understood as including "any physical, visual or sexual act that is experienced by a human being, at the time or later, as a threat, invasion or assault, that has the effect of hurting her or degrading her and/or deprives her of her ability to control sexual contact" (Sunnari, Kangasvuo, and Heikkinen 2003, 11).

8. Telling a little

In the first part of the analysis, I repeatedly argued that certain parts of a story of sexual violence might be difficult to narrate. There, I noted how writers could skip some parts in favor of others, challenging the idea of what should be part of the story. In this chapter, I delve more deeply into this discussion, considering different ways in which narrators can present their experiences while telling only a little.

As mentioned in the introduction to this part of the analysis, the requirement of coherence in stories has been challenged in narrative research (Hyvärinen et al. 2010). The focus on "complete" stories, an approach that can be partly traced to Labov's model, has led to researchers prioritizing the kind of "big stories" that adhere to this temporal progression of events that includes a beginning, middle, and end (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008). Countering this focus on big stories, sociolinguist Alexandra Georgakopoulou (2006) has introduced the term "small stories" to refer to various underrepresented and non-prototypical narratives. The term refers to both smallness in size, as these are often shorter stories, but as an umbrella term, "small story" also includes non- or multi-linear stories of past events, stories of ongoing events, shared events, stories of the mundane and ordinary, but also allusions to (previous) stories, deferrals to tell, and refusals to tell (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008; Georgakopoulou 2015). A focus on small stories does not deny the importance of "big stories" but challenges the rigid narrative structure, showing how stories can be messy, develop in interaction, and lack a clear beginning, middle, and end.

Furthermore, small story research underlines the story's point as co-constructed between the teller and the audience (Georgakopoulou 2015), which challenges Labov's assumption of the point and tellability as inherent to the event. Per this view, the point can also be in the *telling* of the story (Young 1987) because it fits the situation of telling and creates a shared reality (Langellier and Peterson 1992). The context of telling becomes essential here, as the situation and audience determine what can be told, how it can be told, and how it is heard. This context also allows (small) stories to lack a specific length, structure, or climax because someone familiar with the genre can predict where the story is about to go (Kalčik 1975). Conversational telling is rarely temporal but can move back and forth, violating orderly development because the narrator can assume the audience is able to fill in the details (Johnstone 2016). This expectation reflects the idea that the story is "completed" in the minds of the readers rather than by the

writer, which also opens the possibility for many different interpretations (Sadler 2018). Additionally, when writers draw on a shared narrative world to support or legitimize their version of the events, the narration is less about creating a "self" and more aimed toward creating a shared experience (Georgakopoulou 2006). In other words, the "I" moves toward becoming a "we."

Thus, the outset of this chapter is that meaning can be conveyed through various kinds of small stories that fall outside a rigid idea of a complete narrative. These are often dependent on the situation in which the stories are presented, as they are co-constructed with the audience, and stories' tellability and hearability are determined by the audience's ability to interpret them correctly. Consequently, the narrators can also contribute to recreating community and a shared perception of reality.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine how rape can be narrated sparingly and what meaning is conveyed through small narratives. How can such testimonies be structured, and how do they convey meaning? How can these narrative styles be understood, and what do they say about the tellability of rape within the campaign? Also considered is how expectations of genre and discursive understandings of rape, gender, and heterosexuality are present and operational in these testimonies.

Reports

One of the first features I noticed when reading through the testimonies was how some writers did not appear to tell a story but simply offered a report of the events. A report can be understood as a representation of an experience or an event with little or no explicit evaluative information (Polanyj 1985, 12–13). It is used to summarize or present the "facts;" in other words, to simply provide information (Fludernik 1996, 52). In contrast with "story," for which the evaluation is considered the most important part, reports do not include an explicit evaluation and have limited information about the event and its results in general. Because of these absences, the readers are often left to interpret much for themselves, meaning people use their knowledge and experience to fill in the blanks and apply meaning to the report (Arvidsson 1999, 24).

In this section, I examine how experiences of rape can be narrated in the form of a report. In other words, I examine how the style and structure of the reporting genre can be present among the testimonies and how, or what, meaning is communicated. What is questioned is how writers report on experiences of rape rather than narrate them. How are these reports structured, and how do they convey meaning? And what does such structure inform us about the narration of rape in *Dammen brister*?

What initially made me attentive to the genre structure of the report in the material was how some writers used a very short tone when presenting their experiences. These writers state what transpired in short sentences that offer no elaboration or (explicit) evaluation of the experience.

> Was at a party with a friend. He needed to speak with someone. We went down to the beach to talk without being bothered. He'd always been a kind and harmless guy. Suddenly he wanted to have sex. I wasn't the least bit interested and said no. He whined and begged and finally used raw force. I didn't resist out of sheer shock. That's how I lost my virginity. That was many years ago. Heard last year that he raped another. He is today a reasonably successful man in the public eye. (DB 5)

This testimony is cited in its entirety. Although one could argue that it contains the required clauses for a story (cf. Labov 1972), the writer does not include an explicit evaluation of the event, which is why I consider this to be a report. The writer's tone is short, and she presents a minimalist description of the event. A line of causality can be found in this description, but the gaps between the different sequences are sometimes wide. As a result, the readers themselves must connect the different parts in a meaningful way.

Generally, with a report, much of the power of interpretation is afforded to the listener (Arvidsson 1999, 24). By not evaluating the event to clarify the story's point, the readers can interpret the reported events as they see fit. That is not to say that the story does not have a point, but that it is not as obvious, and multiple points can be read from a report. In other words, rather than reports *not* having a point, the genre makes a range of points and interpretations possible. For example, the story presented above could be about how she was raped, how her friend betrayed her, or how she lost her virginity. However, even though the testimony does not offer an *explicit* evaluation, the story and characters are positioned according to discourse on rape, perpetrators, and victims, conveying a certain understanding to the reader. The writer presents why she went with the perpetrator (he was a friend, and he needed to speak in private) and how she said no but could not physically resist because of shock, thus positioning herself according to discourse that could be used to blame her (see more chapters 5 and 6). The incident is also presented as rape by her friend's use of "raw force" (force being the requirement for determining rape according to the Finnish Criminal Code at the time of writing), and the writer later notes hearing how her friend had "raped another," which implies she views the experience as rape. In turn, the perpetrator is presented as her friend, an inoffensive person, now a successful man in the public eye, which also

challenges assumptions regarding who is a real rapist (see more chapter 5).

Indeed, much can be conveyed in a short report, but it also depends on the reader's interpretation. Recognizing the points in the story, interpreting the character positions, etc., might require at least an emphatic reader if not one with knowledge of the subject. *Dammen brister* was perhaps more accommodating than other spaces for sharing reports, as it could be assumed as an interpretive community in which readers would be able to connect the various parts in a meaningful and "correct" way. In other words, the writers were able to simply report their experiences because they could expect the readers to make similar interpretations as themselves.

The short tone generally means that the reports are less detailed, as in the example above. Besides relying on the readers to interpret the events, the shortness of tone also makes these reports hard-hitting.

> Party. Got drugged and raped in a forest. Passed out. Got lucky and woke up, but with my lower body bare in the snow. I could've frozen to death. Was ashamed and thought everything was my fault. (DB 635)

The writer here similarly presents a bare-boned description of the event, with little information regarding how it unfolded. In this example, I want to highlight how a lack of detail does not mean that a writer is evasive in her description. Instead, the severity of the event is sufficiently described by the short sentences, underlined by the fact that she could have died had she not "luckily" woken up. Ending the description of the experience by bringing shame into the mix adds yet another aspect to the story. The writer's potential death can be assumed as hinting at an evaluation, as Johnstone (2016) argues that an evaluation can be embedded in a narrative by comparing what happened with what did not happen or what could have happened. Thus, the severity of the rape is conveyed through this comparison, even though it is not explicit. My point is that despite being brief—or perhaps because of such brevity—the reports might have strong affective potential, as they summarize harsh experiences in a very short text.

Offering a report instead of a story conveys an *unwillingness* to tell (Polanyj 1985, 13). Perhaps, then, the short tone, not providing an explicit evaluation, and leaving the interpretation to the readers might indicate such unwillingness. However, why present a story you do not want to narrate?

Charlotte Linde (1993, 69) notes that minimal narratives seem to be presented by reluctant narrators when they are *obliged* to tell something painful or unpleasant. Instead of refusing to tell, they present it in

a short and limited form (ibid.). Ilana Rosen (2008, 9) similarly suggests that telling partial accounts might be a means of compromising between the perceived *duty to tell* and the urge to remain silent. The discourse around rape is imbued by a "responsibility of speaking." Enforced by the idea that it is primarily through speech that sexual violence can be challenged—speaking out becomes a duty. Thus, perhaps offering a report of the incident could be understood as a compromise between an unwillingness to tell and the perceived need for stories of rape to be told. If they feel obliged to present these painful and unpleasant memories, reporting might be a more available genre that allows the writers to balance between telling and not telling.

Another way of considering reports could be that the writers had speech but not the means to present it, what anthropologist Veena Das (2007) has referred to as having a *voice*. Das (2007) suggests that in times of terror, a shared language has to be built, but without conventions on how such language can be founded:

> A possible vicissitude of such fatal moments is that one could become voiceless–not in the sense that one does not have words–but that these words become frozen, numb, without life. Thus there were men and women who spoke, and if asked, they told stories about the violence they had seen or endured on their bodies. My thought was that perhaps they had speech but not voice. Sometimes these were words imbued with a spectral quality, or they might have been uttered by a person with whom I was in a face-to-face encounter, and yet I felt they were animated by some other voice (Das, 2007, 8)

The subject of Das's study is different from mine, focusing on survivors of riots that broke out after the Partition in India in 1947 and the assassination of a prime minister in 1984. However, similarly to how these survivors need to find a new language to describe this terror, the same might be required from victims of rape—and the lack of language to describe experiences of rape has been underlined in feminist research on rape (e.g., Alcoff 2018). This suggestion of voicelessness complicates the notion of tellability by showing how experiences could be tellable and hearable, but the writer lacks the language to describe it—making the testimonies appear "frozen, numb, without life." (Das 2007, 8). The reporting genre might be more accessible as it allows the narrators to simply reiterate the "facts" of the event.

In summary, even though the reporting testimonies often are brief and lack a clear evaluation of the experiences, they still convey meaning through what is presented and how it is presented. However, much of this

interpretation is left to the readers and dependent on their discursive understanding of rape, sex, and gender. The writers perhaps assume that readers in *Dammen brister* would be able to fill in such gaps, again indicating that it was perceived as an interpretive community. This style could indicate an unwillingness to narrate or an inability to do so, yet it should also be noted that the group placed no requirement on the stories, and hence, it is possible that some writers simply did not want to elaborate on their stories.

Fragmented stories

While focusing on testimonies that offer short descriptions of the events, I noticed that such brevity does not necessarily mean they are not evaluative. Conversely, some testimonies seemed to focus on the evaluation while presenting little regarding how the experience played out. I refer to these as fragmented stories, as they offer fragments of stories that describe the experience without offering much information about the event itself. Thus, these testimonies focus more on conveying emotions rather than reporting the sequence of events.

"Fragmented stories" is sometimes used synonymously with "broken narratives" to refer to narrators struggling to find words and communicate meaning (Brockmeier and Hyden 2008). "Broken narratives" can be viewed as an open and indefinite concept that includes problematic, precarious, or otherwise damaged narratives that are told by people who have struggles telling due to, for instance, injury, disability, dementia, pain, or trauma (ibid., 10). This is not the understanding of fragmented stories applied here. Instead, my understanding of fragmented stories is more aimed toward a specific style of narrating in which the writer offers bits and pieces of stories with wide gaps between them.

A fragment refers to a piece or part that has been broken off from something, a part that is detached or incomplete (*Merriam-Webster*, 2022, "Fragment" n.d.). Thus, a fragment is not simply a piece but a part of something bigger. Such fragments can convey meaning without presenting the entire narrative, but how it is understood is highly dependent on the reader. The testimonies I refer to as fragmented present short descriptive sequences that give the reader a sense of the unfolding of the experience while only offering short snippets of it. Thus, I examine in this section how testimonies can communicate meaning while offering little information about the experience and how it played out. How can experiences be presented in fragments, and how does such fragmented narrating convey meaning? How can this fragmented narration be understood, and what insight does it offer into the tellability of rape?

It is crucial to note that a story is always a selection of parts of an experience that can never be reproduced in its entirety. However, the presented sequences of events are expected to be connected, which in fragmented stories is not very explicit. As a result, the process of piecing together the different fragments is mainly left to the reader.

> I was 18 years old. We were partying with my friends. We were very drunk. We had a lot of fun. It got late, and I texted my parents that I was staying the night at my friend's. Several of us slept over.
>
> I was super drunk and felt I needed to lie down. I went and lay down on the couch, and my friend came and lay down next to me. I remember how he started to grope and how he panted in the [my] ear. I said no over and over again. I don't want to.
>
> The next thing I remember is that he is panting over me and has a chokehold on me. It hurts. I close my eyes and think, "I hope this is over soon." I wake up the next morning. He tries to get in contact for months. He says he's in love. He doesn't seem to understand. I ignore that he exists. I ignore that it happened. Because if I think about it, I think it's my fault. I was drunk.
>
> I cannot say his name, I cannot think of his face. I cannot think of the sound of his voice.
>
> I am furious. (DB 623)

The writer presents an orientation that places the story in time and space and explains how she came to be on the couch. This description is short and concise, simply presenting the events preceding what I have assumed to be a rape. The description of what happened is more clearly fragmented. She does not describe what happens, but it is something the reader is to interpret from him "panting over" her, holding her in a chokehold, her saying no, and subsequently trying to ignore that "it" happened. The result is described by her shame and his apparent ignorance of what he has done. At first, this testimony appears as more of a report than a story, but it does include a clear evaluation. The writer notes how she ignores that he exists and cannot say his name or even think of him, as she is furious. However, this is all presented in small fragments that the readers must piece together themselves, and the short, repetitive sentences cause the story not to "flow."

This kind of fragmented narrating is not uncommon when presenting parts of a testimony; however, this example stands out as the testimony is written in its entirety in this style. Despite the short sentences not providing much information about the event, I argue that they still effectively

convey emotions. The use of short paragraphs and sentences functions to underline what is said, and the information provided paints a picture of the experience that can be completed in the minds of the readers. However, *how* it is pieced together depends on the readers' discursive understanding of rape, sex, and gender.

The last two paragraphs of the testimony present a different interpretation of the meaning conveyed using short sentences and fragments: anger. The writer starts by saying how she cannot think of the man, ending by stating that she is angry. Before the last sentence, one could imagine many reasons why she did not want to think of him, especially as the writer moments before expressed feeling ashamed. Her anger is then unexpected; it shifts the story from her possible trauma and shame to her anger.

I have suggested that anger is not an appropriate feeling for women to convey, perhaps explaining the absence of anger and hate among the testimonies (see more in chapter 6.). Thus, it could be questioned whether not providing a detailed and elaborate story can be perceived as a form of refusal to narrate, a protest: showing anger by, in a sense, staying silent. Shortly presented testimonies could then be imagined as told through clenched teeth, sparing only some details and biting off the sentence where the narrator sees fit.

Fragmented narrating in the testimonies could also indicate that the experience is difficult to tell. For example, I have noted that abusive relationships appear difficult to narrate because of incomprehensibility and length. Instead of presenting a linear narrative, the writer can present various fragments of the experience using a combination of general examples, quotes, and sometimes more detailed examples.

> My ex-boyfriend was extremely jealous. I could forget male friends completely (because I "had probably fucked them all"), he often brought up how many I had slept with, called me a whore, and was convinced that I was unfaithful every time I went out.
>
> But only "as a joke," of course.
>
> When I was sexually exploited during the time we were together by a male acquaintance, he got angry and blamed it all on me. "You must have done something to make him believe that you wanted it," and "why didn't you just leave?" was what I got to hear. The more I tried to explain, the stupider I felt, and in the end, it was I who begged and pleaded for forgiveness. He was disgusted and refused to kiss me. He turned away his head to demonstrate how easily I could've done the same.

> He used to say that he didn't deserve me and that he was scared that I'd leave him. That was how he got away with everything. He was only unfaithful because of his need for validation. He only lied because he was scared that I would end it.
>
> After two years, my self-confidence was at the bottom. I was stupid, I was shallow, I was uninteresting, I was nothing more than my looks, I over-reacted, I was overthinking. (DB 759)

The writer presents various experiences with her ex-boyfriend without describing more explicitly how the situations played out. In the first paragraph, the examples of what he had said to her appear incomprehensible, but it becomes more apparent how he can justify speaking to her in such a way in the second paragraph, which explains that he claimed it to be a "joke." The writer might assume that the readers are familiar with how humor can be used to veil critique that is meant literally but that the joke-teller does not want to state explicitly (cf. Holmes 2000). The veil is efficient because an attempt to challenge the expression can be disregarded by claiming that the recipient lacks a sense of humor (Billig 2005). The quotation marks indicate that the writer interpreted him literally.

The writer continues with a more elaborate example of her ex-boyfriend's reaction to her being sexually exploited. Still, the reader is left with very little information about the event of telling her boyfriend, for example, about what happened before and after. The readers only receive his and, subsequently, her reactions, but this short fragment conveys the sensation of him blaming her and her inability to make him understand. The incident of sexual exploitation is not presented at all; instead, we only get the "second assault." Perhaps she did not want to present that experience, or maybe she wanted to restrict her testimony to describing only her experience with her ex. As was argued in a previous testimony, abuse within a relationship is considered particularly taboo.

The last two paragraphs describe in very general terms his arguments and how he got away with "everything" with them. The information the writer has presented up until this point seems incredulous, but when framed in this short explanation of his claimed insecurity and her dwindling sense of self, it becomes more understandable. Again, it is not a detailed description, but it conveys feelings the reader is assumed to be able to relate to, which can partly be supported by the popularization of the therapeutic discourse on the "cycle of violence" (Lawless 2001). The cycle of violence presents how domestic violence is rarely carried out continuously but as part of a cycle that also includes kindness and loving behavior (Walker 2009) (and excuses and explanations), which draws the woman back into the abuse.[1] The testimony relates to such discourse on

1 The phrase "cycle of violence" is also used to describe how abuse can continue across

abusive relationships, causing it to become more understandable. If the reader is familiar with such discourse or the difficulty of abusive relationships in general, short fragments of the experience can be sufficient for conveying meaning and emotions.

The short fragments presented also stand as explanations or indications of all the stories that are not told. Frank (1995) argues that some of the discomfort caused by the stories that he refers to as chaos narratives—stories that are incomplete or unfinished—is due to their suggestion that there are *more* stories that are not told. Chaos narratives indicate a bottomless depth of the story by not providing a clear beginning or end (ibid.). Similarly, this kind of fragmented narrating can be uncomfortable and have affective potential precisely because of its shortness and lack of detail, as it prevents the reader from grasping its actual "size." The fragment does not reveal the size of the "whole" from which it has been broken off.

The readers of the story above are not given a beginning or an end. We do not find out what eventually happened. The quote above constitutes most of the testimony, apart from the last paragraph. However, instead of receiving a result or resolution, the writer ends her testimony by stating:

> This is not the first post about this person. He has a harmful perception of reality, and his ability to manipulate is almost fascinating. He has been confronted but takes no responsibility. The worst part is that he actually does not realize that he is doing something wrong and is just now about to do it again. (DB 759)

Thus, the discomfort of the testimony is further increased by technically offering fragments of *additional* stories as well as *potential* stories. The continuity of the story I discussed in chapter 7, as stemming from a lack of resolution, is exacerbated in this resolution that introduces an additional experience waiting to happen to an unknown, and perhaps unaware, character.

In this section, I have focused on how offering fragments of stories that are not explicitly connected—as opposed to a narrative flow in which sequences more clearly follow one another and are connected—can sufficiently convey meaning and emotions, as the stories are assumed to be "completed" in the minds of the readers. This style of narration expects much from the reader in terms of piecing together and interpreting the various fragments and, therefore, requires a shared discursive understanding if it is to be interpreted "correctly." However, such fragmented

---

generations, e.g., how someone who has been subjected to abuse in childhood in turn abuses their own children. Here, however, I rely on the cycle of abuse presented by Leonore E. Walker in her work The Battered Woman Syndrome (2009), first printed in 1979.

narrating might enhance the story's affective potential precisely because it allows for a wide range of possible interpretations, and by not presenting the "whole" story, it is difficult for the readers to imagine the full scope of the experience.

The testimonies described here offer multiple fragment*s* of a story, but testimonies can also offer a single fragment; I refer to these as story signifiers.

Story signifiers

I have introduced the term story signifier to refer to instances in which a writer mentions an experience but does not describe it. The writer presents having an experience, often names it, but does not narrate the story she mentions.

The term "story signifier" is one I carried with me from the American Folklore Society 2018 Annual Meeting in Buffalo, New York. In a paper on #MeToo, the presenter suggested that "me too" was a story because by stating or writing "me too," you, in her view, share a story. This notion was challenged by a participant in the audience, who argued that using the term story in this sense would be to define it too broadly. Instead, she suggested that the phrase or hashtag signifies that there is a story somewhere "back there," but that is not told. Thus, the hashtag "me too" is essentially a story signifier; however, the signifiers I have noted from the testimonies are more specific than the general statement "me too," but what they have in common is that they simply mention the existence of a story without telling it.

Story signifiers could be compared to what Susan Kalčik (1975) refers to as a kernel story, which describes brief references to subjects, an event, or dialogue from a longer story. However, Kalčik presents the kernel story as a potential story that is started perhaps at the "wrong" place, that is, not at the beginning but instead at the most important or the most relevant part. As such, the kernel story is a fragment of a story—*a request to tell*—that can be developed into a story within the conversational setting by comments and questions by participants, who, in turn, can support the story or conversation with another kernel story (ibid.). The kernel story can be understood as a conversational tool to move the discussion forward and weave together a shared reality (Langellier and Peterson 1992).

Thus, there is a significant difference between the kernel story told in a conversation and the story signifier told in *Dammen brister*, as the latter is not meant to be turned into a story but to signal the existence of an experience. In a conversational setting, stating that you have been raped might signal that you have a story that you could or want to

tell, but even though *Dammen brister* can be considered a conversation, I would argue that the space does not open for such conversational cues as people post the entire story at once. Undoubtedly, discussions could have followed in the comments, but considering the genre of testimony and the number of posts, writers hardly expected to have a conversation around their specific post. The testimonies and story signifiers worked to weave the conversation in *Dammen brister* forward as a whole, but the signified stories were not presented.

In this section, I examine these story signifiers to consider how they fit into this conversation and what meaning is conveyed through this signifying of experiences. Why do writers simply announce that they have an experience to tell but not present it? How do these signifiers convey meaning, and what do they say about the narrative space of *Dammen brister*?

Story signifiers can be presented in different parts of a testimony. In discussing abstracts in the previous part of the analysis, I noted how writers could introduce their testimonies by highlighting the abundance of experiences they could tell, and similar could be done in the codas. Such abstracts/codas could be understood as story signifiers by noting how additional stories exist without being told. Some of these also include a list of the stories that are not told:

> When metoo started, I thought that if I'd tell about all the assaults I've been subjected to (by Finnish men), it'd end up being a thick book. All from when my stepfather started to grope me when I was 5 years old to being raped by a close friend's father when I was 17 years old to all the groping, insulting, comments, rape attempts, dirty phone calls during the night, peeping toms, stalkers, etc. It feels as if I've never done anything but punch myself loose from grabbing hands all my life. (DB 312)

This writer starts by underlining the number of assaults she has experienced, subsequently mentioning two of these and listing the other kinds of assaults she has been subjected to. This quote presents a typical way of throwing a signifier of a rape story into a short recounting of experiences without going into any details. I have discussed how these abstracts recounting experiences can function to highlight the multitude of experiences and allow the writers to position themselves within the group—as someone with experience and, thus, in solidarity with the group. The campaign makes this kind of non-telling possible, both because of the lack of requirements placed on the stories and because of the interpretive community that was assumed to understand (or accept) the stories regardless.

Additionally, perhaps the space even made narration appear *unnecessary*, as sexual violence was assumed to be a shared experience in the group. In discussing homosexuals' "coming out" stories, Plummer (1995) notes how, as the story grew more common, it could be described more briefly. Thus, non-telling could imply that the writers do not perceive their experience as uncommon, making it "unnecessary" to be told. Instead of narrating, then, the writers can provide a list of signifiers:

> The teacher in high school who chased me and lifted me up even though I didn't want to
>
> The teacher in vocational school who wanted to buy drinks and grab ass.
>
> …
>
> All the times you have woken up with something in you that you haven't consented to.
>
> All the times men have taken liberties in bed without checking if I wanted to.
>
> The rapes.
>
> The two guys who, at different times, filmed me without permission because they would "jerk off to it later."
>
> All the groping at bars, on the street
>
> All the derogatory comments about my appearance and my weight.
>
> All the times I have been way too drunk, and men have taken advantage of it. (DB 341)

The writer here presents different signifiers that sometimes refer to specific incidents, sometimes to recurring incidents, and at times also to general incidents by using the general "you" instead of the first-person "I." The short presentation implies that these experiences are "obvious" and understandable for all, which is why they do not require being told. Such implications can be emotive, as they convey how sexual violence is a common part of a woman's life.

The context of the campaign is significant here, as it allows the non-telling and perhaps even makes narration appear unnecessary. The interpretive community means these stories do not need to be described, and in turn, such non-telling reestablishes the sense of "we" in the group—we with experience, we that understand these stories. A shared understanding is also why people can mention in passing waking up to being raped (e.g., DB 341), or "nag-sex" (e.g., DB 626), or other kinds of

experiences of rape, as these are presumed to be familiar enough not to have to be told. As one writer puts it:

> This text could, in detail, be about when I, as a 15-year-old virgin, got drugged at a house party and assaulted. He was interrupted by his girlfriend, but I got to live with being labeled as a whore who had lured him to unfaithfulness. It could also be about the rape a couple of years later, carried out by my then-boyfriend as revenge because I was about to leave him for another relationship. Afterward, I sat comforting him. It could also be about the guy who, in his anger, started to pull on my wrists because I had acted as if I had promised to go home with him to have sex.
>
> It's nice not to have to write them. You've read all of this, you already know. And you believe me. (DB 924)

These experiences are described to the extent that I would not call them story signifiers. Still, the way that the writer argues in the end about not needing to write because "we" already know the stories supports my suggestion that a reason for not presenting a story is because the reader is assumed to understand regardless. However, by making such assumptions, the writer contradicts the genre of testimony and instead follows a conversational structure aiming to co-create a shared reality with the women within *Dammen brister.* An implication of this would be that there might be a contradiction between a testimony's purpose to provide information regarding the silenced problem of sexual violence and the practice of sharing experiences as a means of creating solidarity within a group.

Story signifiers particularly stand out in testimonies that also include more apparent narratives describing other stories. The story signifiers are then slipped into a longer text without further descriptions.

> "Where should I start?" I remember when I was in 4th grade, and a guy who I was friends with who went to the same school two grades above me wanted to sleep with me, but I didn't want to. I got called a whore by all boys in the 6th grade for an entire year until they went to high school. And he was supposed to be my friend. I remember one time when we played marbles in the schoolyard, and I won often and a lot because I was simply good at it. One guy in 6th grade didn't think it was okay that I was better than him, so he pushed me up against a tree and strangled me, and threatened me. I've been pushed down, pushed up, disgusted, whined at for sex, stood and tried to rub off the shame because I didn't want to have sex but was forced to anyway. Been groped innumerable times, ... (DB 303)

The writer presents instances of abuse in school and then merely lists various assaults and rapes. What makes a writer decide to present some stories and not others? The writer initiates her testimony by questioning where she should begin. In the section on abstract, I argued that initiating a story that way can be a means of increasing tellability and creating space by presenting to the reader a background of sexual violence from which the story is derived. The writer here could also have meant the question more literally and decided to focus on her first experience, only to then determine it to be enough and merely list the rest. Alternatively, perhaps the experiences from childhood seemed more necessary to present, as these might not be expected to be had at such a young age (cf. Bartholdsson 2010). In other words, these experiences could have been perceived as not included among the shared experiences in the group and hence require narration. What I mean to highlight here is that there can be many different reasons why some experiences are shared while not others, but my material is too limited to offer definite conclusions.

The presented stories could also have been more tellable for the writer and, therefore, easier to narrate. Certain experiences could be easier to recount in their entirety, while others can only be mentioned. This limitation on tellability is made explicit by another writer.

> I'm 16 years old when I'm raped by three guys around my age. I cannot bother[2] to even try to describe anything about the incident because then I'll have a panic attack. (DB 419)

This writer presents a story signifier and then explains why she does not narrate the story. This quote indicates how story signifiers could be a means of *avoiding* narrating the event. The genre of testimony may have expected writers to share a story, but as has been noted, writers within *Dammen brister* were creative with how they chose to narrate. Thus, story signifiers represent the extent to which people could decide how to narrate their experience in the campaign, including not narrating at all.

Narrating experiences of rape is often considered necessary for victims to re-create their stories and begin to distance themselves from the violence (Lawless 2001). However, simply *naming* the event as rape has been suggested as an essential step for victims (cf. Alcoff 2018). Perhaps there is an emotional benefit for a victim to simply mention such an experience, even though they do not want to narrate it.

These signifiers could also produce an emotional response, creating discomfort by not telling, which is a subject I noted in chapter 6.

---

2 The Swedish word "orka" is used here; see translators note page 94. In this context, it could also be understood as "not having the energy to" describe the incidents.

> As an 18-19-year-old in my relationship at the time, I got physically and psychologically abused, even raped many times (both vaginally and anally). I believed him that I was not worth any better.
>
> After a certain incident, it went to trial, and he got fined.
>
> Thought for a long time that everything was my fault, that I got what I deserved.
>
> Even to this day, I feel sick from even thinking about him, panic if I see him.
>
> Not to mention all the other hurt he caused me… (DB 550)

In this testimony, the writer uses story signifiers to present physical and emotional abuse and rape, ending the testimony by also signifying additional hurt that he caused. Of course, there are many other ways in which a person can be hurt (e.g., economically and socially). Still, as much abuse is already described, mentioning *additional* abuse does take the reader aback. Consequently, the signifier, similar to the fragmented stories I discussed in the previous section, becomes uncomfortable to the reader because it hints at additional stories that are not told.

The fact that the writer's case was brought to trial, but all he received was a fine, hints at another function of the story signifiers: preserving the ownership of the story. One can only assume how the writer's rapes were interpreted and reinterpreted in court and most likely defined as "not rapes," considering the simple fine. Perhaps the writer was concerned that the reader in *Dammen brister* would make similar conclusions and thus chose not to narrate the experience(s). In contrast with the reports, with which I argued the writer might assume the reader to make "correct" interpretations, perhaps the narrators of signifiers decided to avoid such interpretations completely by not presenting the story at all. If you do not tell the story, people cannot reinterpret, retell, or recontextualize it, but it stays in the writer's ownership (cf. Shuman 2005). Non-telling would hence be a means of avoiding having one's story sensationalized and exploited (cf. Alcoff and Gray 1993).

Furthermore, not narrating the story also protects anonymity, both the writer's own and that of the perpetrator. One writer states in the introduction how she does not want to go public with some of her narrated experiences (three from a list of nine were henceforth deleted) because "Swedish Finland is too small and identifiable for that." (DB 387). These experiences are not mentioned at all and, thus, not signifiers; however, the writer's reasoning for not including them makes an important argument for not narrating. As stated, Swedish Finland is small, and especially if the stories are more specific, it is not impossible to imagine that someone could recognize themselves or the writer, and speaking about rape can

have negative consequences for the teller. Anonymity was also one of the group's rules, and perhaps the writer knew that such a requirement would not be met.

At the beginning of this section, I questioned why writers would merely signify that an experience exists without narrating it. I am not able to answer this question, but I have suggested how the narration may not have been perceived as necessary; it was not required by the campaign, and the reader could perhaps be assumed to understand or accept it regardless, which conveys the violence as a shared experience in the group. Such an assumption can produce affect, as it indicates how sexual violence is perceived as an obvious part of a woman's life. Thus, the story signifiers also relate to the aim of the campaign. Resulting from this, the story signifiers both indicate and recreate a shared sense of "we" in the group, which has been noted as essential for these kinds of digital feminist campaigns (e.g., Ganetz et al. 2022a).

Certain experiences could perhaps also be untellable for the writer and thus left out, as the interpretive community made this kind of non-narration possible. Being allowed to acknowledge having an experience can still be beneficial for the writer, explaining why such signifiers are presented and conveying the importance of the narrative space in *Dammen brister.* Not presenting the story also allows the writer to maintain ownership of the experience and their own, or the perpetrators', anonymity, implying how tellability is constrained by how the writers imagine their story to be received by the audience.

In a sense, story signifiers could be understood as a means of not narrating or narrating silence. The signifiers allow writers to convey having an experience and contribute to the aim of the campaign—showing how these are common and shared experiences—without presenting their own. In comparison with the kernel story presented by Kalčik, the story signifier does not necessarily function to move the conversation forward but is instead a means to participate in the conversation and recreate this shared reality while essentially staying silent.

Generally speaking

Thus far in this chapter, I have repeatedly noted how understanding the brief or undetailed narratives rely on the reader having a (shared) discursive understanding of rape. The short stories imply that the writers assume the readers to be able to understand the stories with little information, which conveys the notion that these are general—rather than merely personal—experiences, and hence, ones that all women can relate to. This shared understanding can be more clearly underlined in some tes-

timonies that use generalized language to present their experiences. In the final section of this chapter, I examine how writers use generalized language when presenting their experiences and how this narrative structure functions to convey meaning.

The writers may speak of personal experiences but present them as the experience of all women, for example, by not presenting themselves as the subject of the story.

> In adolescence, guys at house parties who nagged and nagged until they got sex. And the bad conscience you got when you said that you did not want to. "But come on, I am so horny. Can't you at least give me a blowjob?
>
> At all bars, all the groping, all the men who push themselves against you, and all men who don't understand a no. When I complained to a male friend, I was told that maybe I shouldn't dance in such a way that shows that I'm single.
>
> [...]
>
> There's so much that should come out in the open. All the rapes at house parties, all the groping teachers in the high schools, all the assaults on the dance floors that the bar personnel chose to turn a blind eye to. (DB 295)

The way this writer describes her experiences makes them appear both general for her and the audience. She does not seem to describe a specific event, but things that happened in a broader sense, and her use of "you" instead of "I" also makes it appear to reflect a general experience for women.

Polanyj (1985, 10) differentiates between "event clauses" and "state clauses" in narratives, where state clauses are used to describe a state of affairs that perseveres over time rather than being a single event. The way that the writer presents "adolescence," "the bars," "home parties," and "high school" makes the narrative portray "how things were" rather than describe specific incidents. As a result, the focus is pulled from a specific incident to highlight a more general experience. The writer ends the first two paragraphs by anchoring them in personal experience, yet the experiences are still portrayed as general and, per extension, shared among the participants in the group.

The use of the general "you" (Swe: "man") instead of the first-person "I" signals a wider perspective; the narrator shifts from relating to personal experience to referring to experience at a more general level (Palmenfelt 2017b). By including personal examples, however, the narrator conveys how these are not *just* general experiences but have also happened to her, which gives her a right to their interpretation and positions her in

the group. In addition, the use of "you" can also be a means of conveying being part of a group, and as such, it has been argued to be a feminine stance that pulls focus from the importance of the self (Palmenfelt 2017a, 102). Phrased differently, by using a general "you," a narrator signals the story as being about general rather than personal experience, hence decentering herself (a narrative strategy perhaps more expected by women who should not draw attention to herself (cf. Sawin 2002)). Proceeding from this, the use of "you" could perhaps be perceived as distancing the story from oneself rather than claiming it to be a general experience. Using "you" could thus be understood as a means of avoiding talking about yourself and your experience, without necessarily claiming that the experience is that of all women. Nonetheless, the emphasis on general experience is also typical of the genre of testimony, which means that the use of "you" could be considered in line with the genre and places the writer in a metonymic relation to the group (cf. Sommer 1988). In this sense, the writer is not a representative *for* the group but *of* the group.

Regardless of whether the writer tries to write herself into the group or the story away from herself, I argue that this kind of generalizing fragmented narrating works only to the extent that it is experienced as general. If someone makes a "you" statement with something unfamiliar to the listener, the teller may receive pushback. People can be offended or uncomfortable when included in a statement they do not feel comfortable in. In other words, a writer's claim to mutual understanding—assumed by presenting their personal experience as more-than-personal—can be met with resistance (Shuman 2005). Perhaps people did get offended. There could have been a discussion in the comments by people who certainly do not feel bad for declining sex. Others may have fallen silent, feeling excluded by not being able to relate to this assumed group, never having been harassed or nagged.

My point with this is not to criticize the writer of this testimony but to highlight how the understanding of these fragmented stories depends on personal experience, and creating an "in-group" always creates an "out-group." Furthermore, the "gap" between narrator and listener may be wider with fragmented narrating than in more detailed, coherent narration (cf. Frank 2008). Frank (2008) notes that whereas coherent narrating develops a mutual understanding between the writer and reader, diminishing the distance between them as their knowledge increases, the reader of a fragmented story may have to accept never being able to comprehend it (ibid., 123).

Still, the sense of solidarity with a group has been noted to have increased tellability in these feminist digital spaces. The idea of these experiences as shared—as general—is fundamental for this sense of soli-

darity, making the generalized language unsurprising and perhaps even helpful for its establishment.

Summary: telling a little

In this chapter, I have focused on testimonies in which the writers narrate only a little. Departing from the assumption of different "small stories" as not only legit and important narratives to study but also as essential stories used to convey meaning, construct a "self," and co-create a shared reality with the audience, I have considered how these short or minimal stories are presented in *Dammen brister* and what they inform us about the space of tellability and hearability in the campaign.

Some writers in *Dammen brister* report on their experiences rather than narrate them. In these testimonies, the writers reiterate the sequence of events without interpreting or evaluating them, meaning that the story's point is left for the reader to assume for themselves, opening the testimony to multiple interpretations. This style of narrating still conveys meaning, but how the reports are interpreted depends on the readers and their discursive understanding of rape, sex, and gender. I have suggested that this kind of narration conveys an unwillingness or an inability to narrate. Reporting the experience, then, could perhaps be perceived as a compromise between the unwillingness to tell and an assumed duty to do so. A duty brought by the notion that such narration is crucial in order to bring change to the problem of rape and sexual violence.

The expectations placed on the readers to piece together and interpret the testimony are also present among the fragmented stories, in which the writers offer parts of the story that are clearly evaluative but have wide gaps to be connected by the readers. The story is expected to be "completed" in the readers' minds, necessitating a shared discursive understanding. This kind of fragmented telling, I have suggested, can have affective potential as it allows for a wide range of interpretations and creates discomfort by not presenting the "whole" story, hence, not giving the reader a sense of the scope of the experience.

A single story fragment is what I have termed a "story signifier." These are short mentions of experiences that are not developed into a story but merely signify that the writer has a story that is not told. I discussed different reasons for presenting story signifiers: first, the narration might appear unnecessary because the reader is assumed to understand the experience regardless, as the signifier reflects shared experiences and ones already presented in the campaign. Second, signifiers might also be used to replace untellable stories or stories the writer does not want to narrate. Naming the event can still benefit the writer, and the signifier allows the

writers to participate in the campaign without narrating their experiences. Third, not narrating the story allows the writer to maintain ownership of it, as these cannot be interpreted and misinterpreted in other contexts if they are not told. Fourth, story signifiers can assure anonymity, either the writers' own or their perpetrators'. I have suggested that these signifiers can be emotive, as they imply how these experiences are common enough not to require presentation and because they cause the possible interpretations to be endless by not narrating at all.

Essentially, presenting a signifier is a means of non-narration, of narrating silence, by showing how there *is* a story that is not being told. As such, the story signifiers convey the extent of the narrative space provided by *Dammen brister*—stretched to include the possibility of not narrating at all.

Lastly, I discussed how writers could use generalized language in presenting their experiences. By using the personal pronoun "you" instead of "I," writers could present their experiences as general rather than personal, conveying how the experiences might be perceived as shared among the members of the group. Furthermore, the use of a general "you" can also be a way of de-centering one's own experience. As a result, it might increase tellability of the experience by allowing writers to distance the story from themselves, which can be beneficial considering the sensitive subject. Yet this de-centering and use of generalized language could also be perceived as a means of circumventing expectations of femininity that restrict women from drawing attention to themselves and centering their own experiences (cf. Manne 2019). Nonetheless, the generalization of experience is also characteristic of the genre of testimony, meaning the use of such language could be perceived as adhering to genre, while also conveying the idea of these experiences as shared and recreating a sense of solidarity in the group.

The style of "telling a little" discussed in this chapter might challenge the genre of testimony that expects the stories to offer insight into these experiences and bring new understandings and change. However, as stories of rape can be exploited and sensationalized, reinterpreted as something else, or moved into different frameworks of meaning—non-telling can be an efficient means of maintaining ownership of the story and the interpretation of the experience.

Furthermore, this style of narrating sparingly could be assumed as a possible genre for the narration in feminist digital activism or "speaking out," as it is within such spaces that these kinds of short stories can be told, heard, and felt. The readers' discursive understanding of rape, gender, and heterosexuality is essential here, as the gaps in the texts require the readers to piece together and interpret much of the stories themselves. Still, I would suggest that such genre can be useful for narrators of rape,

as it is more accommodating for people from whom it is difficult to tell, allowing them to narrate "incomplete" stories while also recreating a sense of solidarity with others, which has been noted as important both for the narration of rape and recovering from it.

9. Telling a lot

In contrast with the previous chapter, where I focused on testimonies in which the writers narrated sparingly, I now turn my attention to the testimonies that tell a lot. These testimonies present many different experiences, sometimes merely lined up one after the other, while other times combined to offer a point above and beyond the experiences in themselves. I find these long testimonies interesting. What compels a writer to write so many stories?

Labov's model has been used to extract narratives from longer texts. However, not only could such an approach exclude different kinds of "small stories," as noted in the previous chapter, but it might also be restrictive when considering stories of personal experience in general. Sociologist Catherine Kohler Riessman (1993) argues that Labov's model is inadequate for discussing subjective experiences that extend over time, as such narratives are more about what a narrator feels and says to herself, as about "what happened" in a more objective sense (ibid., 51–52). This problem stems partly from the model focusing on the recreation of events rather than experiences (cf. Patterson 2013), but a focus on stories portraying a single experience also means we cannot consider how an experience has *history,* which affects how it is interpreted (Foucault 1990). Discourse affects how we experience, but previous experiences also shape our understanding of the latter ones, and vice versa. Squire (2013) notes that people do not experience events as distinct from the flow of experience that is their lives, and in stories of personal experience, tellers combine different components and discourse to create a sequential and meaningful narrative. This understanding of personal stories provides insight into how the different events described in some testimonies cannot necessarily be separated, as they form and inform one another.

Riessman (1993) suggests that instead of extracting narratives from a longer text, the entire response by a narrator can be understood as *a* narrative that has sequential or thematic structural coherence while being made up of smaller narratives in a Labovian sense (ibid.). Following Riessman, I consider the testimonies describing multiple experiences as *a* narrative constituted by smaller narratives that create a "whole." Thus, I use the terms narrative/story to refer to two different levels of narratives, that is, as either a shorter description of a specific experience or to refer to the entire testimony. Furthermore, I assume there to be a reason for the combination of multiple experiences; that it is a structure that conveys meaning, and the stories cannot necessarily be extracted from this larger whole.

By examining the style and structure of these testimonies, the purpose of this chapter is to consider what meaning is conveyed through the narration of multiple experiences. How are narratives presenting many experiences structured, and how do they convey meaning? What does this kind of narration say about the narrative space in *Dammen brister*, or the narration of sexual violence in general, and how is it affected by genre? Also considered is how discursive understandings of rape, gender, and heterosexuality are interpreted, reinterpreted, and challenged in these long testimonies.

Experience-stringing

In some testimonies, the writer presents multiple personal experiences that are merely lined up one after the other, with the only (explicit) connection being that they are all personal experiences by the writer and fit the topic of sexual harassment or abuse. I have introduced the term "experience-stringing" to refer to this style of presenting many experiences within the same story.

Some of these testimonies present brief introductions or codas that comment on the abundance of presented experiences, giving them a narrative frame. For example, one writer introduces her testimony by asking where you should start, a question she subsequently answers by stating, "or perhaps you simply line up the shit so you can choose yourself in what order you want to read" (DB 872). The writer then presents a list of short signifiers/reports phrased as rhetorical questions, answering her initial question of where to start.

> * The gross fucking idiots from a "football team" who chose to trick a lot of liquor in me to then take turns raping me until I passed out and woke up in my own vomit and blood? (DB 872)

The list presents six experiences and is concluded by the writer claiming how "THIS, my friends, is only a SMALL part of my life. Started way too early in my life and still you get to be pressured more or less daily. FUCK YOU FUCKERS" (DB 872). As mentioned, this testimony is more of a collection of signifiers, but it provides insight into the narration of multiple experiences. In the chapter on abstracts, I noted that having an abundance of possible experiences to present might make it difficult to know what to narrate. The testimonies focused on here lack such a narrative frame as presented above, but the reason for providing many narratives can still be the same: they have so many to present that they do not know where to start. Another reason could be what a testifier noted in the chapter on

codas; once she started, the words started flowing, and they did not want to stop (DB 605). Thus, the reason for stringing up multiple experiences could be that the writer has much to tell and does not want to limit herself to presenting only one.

However, when considering the testimonies in relation to genre, I argue that other important aspects of this narrative style should be acknowledged. Thus, in this section, I examine these long experience-stringing testimonies, focusing on how they are structured and what meanings they convey. Why do writers simply line up one experience after the other? Why are some explained in much detail, while others are merely mentioned?

Sometimes, these testimonies involve a variety of details, lengths, or experiences recounted, meaning that different experiences are presented in different ways within the same testimony, or the testimony can include a mixture of different kinds of experiences. I use these variations as points of departure for the analysis, focusing first on how different experiences can be presented with unequal amounts of detail and second on how a testimony can present very different experiences. Proceeding from the analysis of these two kinds of variations, I subsequently discuss the narrative style of experience-stringing more generally.

Variation in detail refers to some experiences being described more elaborately and detailed while others are strung along, almost as an afterthought.

> I don't remember how old I was, but regardless, I was at a high school party where the new [students] at the school would be hazed (I was probably myself in the first year at vocational school, I guess). I was myself not in high school but was there to party, drink alcohol and have fun. I had a "thing" with someone from another town who was not at the party. Anyway. As usual, you probably drank a little too much, went to the woods to go to the toilet because the line was too long inside. On the way, I also lost my pack of cigarettes, so after a while, I went back to look for it. Then a guy around my age shows up. I don't really remember how it happened since I've just wanted to forget it. But he almost dragged me into the woods.. he didn't touch me sexually, though but forced me to suck him off, he stood there and held my head and moved my head as he wanted me to do. I wanted to stop, but he forced me to continue. When it was "almost" done, I stopped because I didn't want anymore, but he said I must take the "load" in my mouth, which I didn't want at all, but I didn't dare to object, so yes, he got his will. I probably could have run away, but I was very drunk and didn't dare. Plus, I was quite innocent and quiet in comparison with today. This situation is one few know about, I maybe laugh at it sometimes, but when I

> think about it, am I so intensely disgusted by what happened that I haven't wanted to see the person after it, I hate hearing his name. It has left marks on me because what I had to do I don't want to do today or maybe ever. Because I am still so disgusted.
>
> Then I have, of course, had guys in my life who seemed so nice, considerate, and understanding but who have only been after one thing, sex, which I have not wanted but still started. There are probably many more situations, but I guess I've wanted to forget them..
>
> Not to forget all the times you, after a house party or after the bar, shared a bed with guys who are your friends. It has happened x number of times that you've woken up or still been awake, and you feel how he just takes the liberty to touch my entire body, and I just pretend to sleep and lie stiff and straight as a stick and have not dared to object. These are your guy friends who otherwise have not wanted you, but when they haven't succeeded in getting someone else, then you'll do, and they take the liberty to fiddle when I've slept. (DB 431)

The writer here starts by presenting one experience in detail. The first paragraph can be considered a "complete" narrative by orienting in time and space, presenting the complication action, a result, and what could be perceived as an unbalanced resolution. The writer also positions herself according to discourse that could question or blame her by explaining that she had a "thing" with another boy (hence, not "wanting it") and why she did not run away (as could be expected due to the discourse on resistance). After the narrative, the writer continues by presenting smaller stories describing "general" experiences that do not have the same kind of narrative style and do not include an equal amount of detail. These experiences are also presented as general rather than aiming at a specific person or situation.

This narrative style, where one experience is described in much detail only for the writer to move on to describe general experiences, is common for the experience-stringing testimonies. Notably, in contrast with the previous chapter, the general experiences are still presented as *her* experiences despite the general language of "you," as the writer switches between "you" and "I." However, the writer does not seem to present a specific event but rather a "state of affairs" (cf. Polanyj 1985, 10). The descriptions of general experiences bring interesting questions regarding the experience-stringing style of narration: have these experiences become so general that the writer cannot, or does not want to, single out a specific one to narrate? Or does the number of times rather make a single narra-

tive fail to convey the meaning of the experience? If it is something that has happened repeatedly, narrating all would appear repetitive, but presenting only one could be perceived as falling short. Presenting only one event might not be sufficient to convey something that has been experienced repeatedly.

The variety in detail between the presentation of the experiences also makes it relevant to question genre expectations. Roughly half of the testimonies in the campaign can be understood as personal experience narratives, meaning that the writer might have perceived that kind of testimony to be expected of her. Describing an experience according to a more "typical" narrative structure could be perceived as fulfilling such a requirement, henceforth allowing the writer to continue with more general descriptions. The presented narrative also establishes an interpretive frame that might increase the chance of the brief mentions being heard correctly, even when including little information about the events.

Another possible reason writers describe some experiences in more detail is that they are more critical to the writer. In the testimony above, the writer notes how she, to this day, is unwilling to perform oral sex. Thus, perhaps the first incident had a more severe impact on her, and the subsequent experiences are told to add additional points to the story: bringing up unwanted sex, being violated by friends, and being considered an object for sex. This brings us to how the experience-stringing testimonies can include a variety in the kind of experiences recounted.

Instead of focusing on one or a few experiences, adding on others more shortly, other experience-stringing testimonies describe each experience in a similar style but include a variety in *kind* rather than detail or length. To avoid citing a very long testimony, I have selected one presenting only two experiences to illustrate my point.

> When I had just turned 18, I took myself to a bar that is popular among Finland-Swedes in the town where I lived. I had a nice night even though people groped here and there on the dance floor (but I'm a big girl now, so I needed to get used to that) (note the sarcasm). Just as I was on my way home and went to pick up my jacket, an older man came and put his hands against the wall around me, so I couldn't move. He wanted me to follow him home, and I said no multiple times and made frightened eye contact with many other people who were looking, but no one did anything. After what felt like many minutes, he finally gave up and commented that I shouldn't dress like a whore if I don't act like one (not that it matters but I was wearing jeans and a long-sleeved shirt with very little cleavage).

> A couple of months later, I was at a house party one evening but left my jacket there when I went home. The next day I texted the guy who organized the party, and he said that it was fine that I come and get it. I went to get it around 9 in the evening but didn't get out before 2 at night. The guy forced himself on me immediately and held me down so that I couldn't do anything. He took vulgar pictures of my body and put them on Instagram. After he was done, he forced himself on me and raped me multiple times. When I finally got away (the jacket still at his place), I drove home so that my parents would not get worried. After that, I lay in bed and didn't take off my clothes because I had read that you shouldn't after a rape. The next morning, I drove to the hospital, where they didn't examine me because I didn't want to report it to the police (I regret this so incredibly much), and they didn't give me a plan b pill either. A year and a half later have I finally got out of therapy, but still suffer from panic attacks. #ustoo. (DB 383)

Without downplaying the first experience described by the writer here, I want to acknowledge that the two are different in kind. That is not to say that one does not belong here, should not be told, or is not "bad," but after reading the second experience, I find it interesting that the writer took the time and effort to describe the first one in as much detail. However, what I have also come to realize when examining the testimonies in *Dammen brister*, is that we cannot know what experiences affect people. An experience may seem small, but for people looking back on their life (especially with a focus on harassment and assault), such experience can be significant, and we cannot make simplistic, hierarchal, and universal claims regarding the harm of particular experiences (Fileborn 2019). Thus, what we as readers perceive as differences may not be considered as such by the tellers.

Nonetheless, I want to question what this kind of structure of combining different experiences means for the tellability of narratives. Perhaps the writer above chose to present these two precisely because they are different and, therefore, highlight different problems. She may have wanted to criticize the people who watched what happened but did nothing or point out how dangerous a public place can be for women. Although *Dammen brister* allowed for all stories of harassment and assault, such an experience could perhaps have been considered less tellable. Experiences of street harassment have been noted as untellable due to their *ordinariness,* which makes them easily trivialized and silenced (Fileborn 2019). Thus, the experience in the bar could have been assumed as less tellable but was perhaps easier shared when paired with a "worse" experience. In other words, combining experiences of various degrees could be a means

to increase tellability for otherwise ordinary experiences. As a result, experience-stringing becomes a means of conveying a more complex view of sexual violence by allowing a variety of experiences to be presented.

Conversely, however, "ordinary" experiences might also be *more* tellable. Recounting experiences perceived as common might be easier, due to being assumed to represent shared experiences (Fileborn 2019). Perhaps, then, presenting the common experiences creates space for the worse ones. If certain experiences are more easily told, maybe they can function to "grease the wheels"—open the floodgates—to present more difficult ones. If you have already written so many, what is one more? Even if it is one that you have never dared to tell before.

I now turn to consider the experience-stringing testimonies more generally. I have only cited a couple of testimonies here, but the style of stringing up multiple experiences after one another is common among the testimonies. The longest testimony is 3,636 words, recounting 25 experiences in much detail. At the beginning of this section, I questioned why writers present so many experiences lined up after one another. Thus far, I have suggested that presenting multiple experiences can be a means of increasing tellability or highlighting different problems with sexual violence, and that presenting only one instance of something that has happened repeatedly would be falling short of representing the experience. To consider experience-stringing more generally, I mean to elaborate on the notion that presenting only one experience might fail to convey the experience.

Katherine Young (1987, 79ff) argues that multiple stories told within the same conversation give perspective and explain one another. A story can frame another to change, transform, or intensify its meaning (ibid.). Perhaps, then, presenting multiple stories can be perceived as *necessary* in order for the meaning of *an* experience to be conveyed to the audience. In other words, multiple experiences might be necessary to convey the meaning of one. If our experience has "history" that affects how we experience, presenting only one means withdrawing it from this flow of lived experience, and, thus, the story might fall short of conveying the meaning that the writer ascribes the experience. By presenting multiple experiences, the writer can create a broader interpretive framework that facilitates understanding. This would indicate that the tellability of experiences of sexual violence is constrained by a story not being sufficient to convey the history of it that affected how it was experienced by the writer. The limitation of an event-centered narrative approach is noticeable here, as it implies how the reiteration of an *event* might not be sufficient for presenting an *experience*.

In summary, writers may have different reasons for stringing up multiple experiences, including not knowing what to narrate, wanting to present different kinds of experiences and problems or create narrative

space, or making the experiences understandable by establishing a wider interpretive frame, essentially conveying how these experiences have a history that has affected how they were experienced. This style of narration highlights how these experiences are part of a pattern of violence rather than isolated incidents, while also underlining the commonality of sexual violence.

An underlying point

The experience-stringing testimonies are not explicitly connected, whereas other long testimonies can be structured to convey or imply a certain "point" that might lie beyond the narrated experiences in themselves. This structuring can be done explicitly in the evaluation of the experiences or more implicitly by centering a particular theme. Similarly to in the previous section, the narratives presented in these testimonies build on and inform one another, but they can also move beyond making the experiences understandable to convey a "truth" that is more or less tied to the narrated event. Susan Bell (1988) notes that in interviews, people spontaneously tell stories that connect significant events and relationships in their lives, both to "make sense" of their experiences and to explain how such experiences and their interpretations of them have changed over time (ibid., 101). From this perspective, the different experiences presented in these testimonies could be perceived as building blocks for a general interpretation, which in turn aids the hearability of the narrated experiences by relating them to discursive perceptions of violence, sex, and gender. Thus, the testimonies could be perceived as conveying an underlying point (Adelswärd 1997) that is not necessarily tied to a specific event but emerges in the interpretation of multiple experiences.

Thus, the aim of this section is to examine how long testimonies can connect different experiences to conceptualize the violence and the writers' interpretation of it, conveying a point that is tied to such interpretation. Underlying points derived from interpretation can also be communicated using a single experience, which is why I consider in particular how the combination of multiple experiences affects the meaning, how it is conveyed, and how it increases hearability. How are these experiences connected to convey a point, and how does the narrative style affect hearability? How is discourse interpreted, reinterpreted, and challenged in these testimonies?

There are three themes that I focus on in this section: the normalization of sexual violence, the inherent boundarylessness of the female body, and the idea of violence as wanted. These should be considered as examples, as themes can be read from texts in many ways, and I do not attempt

to present an exhaustive thematic analysis. I begin this section by going through these themes and then end with a general discussion regarding how this structure affects the tellability and hearability of the testimonies.

***

The basic premise of the #MeToo movement was to show how common experiences of sexual harassment and abuse are in our society. This is partly due to such violence being perceived as "normal," as in representing the natural relationship between the genders. Men are expected to actively, even forcefully, pursue women, who passively either reject or accept such offers. This heterosexual discourse creates the preconditions for rape, as women's (active) desire is deemed irrelevant (Gavey 2019), and even her resistance can be interpreted as simply cohering with her gendered role (Ekström 2002; Nilsson 2018). Thus, the construction of gender as informed by a notion of sexual difference functions to normalize and legitimize sexual violence (Scott 2018); and, in turn, this assumed normalcy of sexual violence in heterosexual relations might cause victims to misinterpret their experiences, as women's gendered socialization makes them consider the abuse as deserved or not abuse at all (Alcoff 2018, 59). This *normalization* is the first theme I mean to discuss here.

The normalization can already be underlined in the introduction to a testimony. A writer stylistically frames a long collection of short narratives/reports by offering this introduction:

> My diaries are full of assaults. Written in passing, in between homework, beach days with the best friend, and careful descriptions of the guy I was in love with. Later forgotten, so normal that they don't even stick in your memory. Other events have been so serious that they couldn't be forgotten even if I'd wanted to. (DB 633)

It is not specified which of the described experiences that follow the introduction were perceived as "normal" and which were "serious"—that the readers get to decide for themselves. The writer presents twelve experiences, although some are presented as "general," such as men who sexually violated her in bars and men who nag for sex. These events are generally left uncommented, but the writer ends her testimony by noting, "This is not all. I have a box full of diaries." (DB 633). Thus, the "normalcy" of the events functions as a red thread that combines all the experiences, underlined by how she would not have been able to recall (most of) these events had it not been for the diaries. And in highlighting a discourse of normalcy, the writer also implicitly challenges it.

In the example presented above, the writer explicitly states how the events had been forgotten because of being "normal." In other testimonies, the normalization of sexual violence can be more subtly implied.

> I was in high school and was at a party at an acquaintance's house in my hometown. He was around 20, the one who always got too drunk and was seen as a "funny guy." We made out a little, but later in the evening, even I'd had too much alcohol, so I fell asleep on a pile of clothes on the floor. I don't remember if we also made out on the clothes pile. When I woke up, I saw him bobbing on top of me. It took a while before I realized what was happening. I screamed and asked what he was doing, and he answered that he thought I wanted it. I informed him that I was sleeping.
>
> The thought of reporting didn't even occur to me, he was one of the group. Instead, I told the story and was careful to underline that he was so small that I didn't realize he was inside me. Afterwards, I've heard that he's done the same to others, now I regret never going to the police.
>
> When I was in eighth grade, my friend got together with an older guy. One night we were going out driving with him and his friend. It ended up with everyone starting to drink, and no one could drive me home. I lied to mom that I'm sleeping at my friend's. My friend went home with her boyfriend, and I stayed at one of his friend's place. It was the first time I would sleep alone at a man's place. First, he nagged, then he straddled me, held me down, and tried to rip off my clothes. I'd read in the magazine SOLO[1] that you should tell the rapist what he's doing, so I repeated sentences such as "I don't want to, I say no, and if you continue, it's rape." It got more violent. But in the end, I managed to tear myself loose. I didn't dare to call anyone, so I slept on the couch. The next day he drove me home. Mom was angry, she had found out that I hadn't slept at my friend's and because I was late. I smoothed it over, and then we went to buy wallpaper, we would have new ones for my confirmation party.
>
> After a night out at a bar, I found my friend sitting outside. He'd gotten into a fight and was in a terrible mood. I felt sorry for him, and because he didn't live in the city center, I offered to let him sleep on my couch. When inside, he still wanted to sleep in the bed, which I agreed to, on the condition that he leaves me alone. After only a minute or so, his hands were everywhere, he tried to climb up over me, and I have to hold his arms and scream for him to understand that I don't want

1 Lifestyle magazine aimed at women and girls.

> to. A quarrel starts. He feels hurt and deceived because I "don't put out" and leaves the apartment. The next time we meet, I get a happy hi and a hug. He gets the same. (DB 102)

The writer presents three sexually violent experiences, to which she offers stern resistance. However, after the event, she quickly smooths it over and returns to normal, which she seems to be aware of herself. In the first experience, the writer notes that she did not even think of reporting because he was "one of the group," although she later regretted it. Instead, she told the story and underlined the size of the man's penis, which could be assumed as mockery. Thus, in a sense, she wrote the incident off as a joke. It is not stated whether the joke was challenged by the listeners—if someone commented that his actions were rape—but I assume that such reception would have been narrated, and the group accepted the incident.

In the second example, she does not mention what happened with her friend's boyfriend's friend—whether they continued as normal or if she told her friend, for example—but she ends the story by saying that she smoothed it over and continued with something as ordinary as going to shop for wallpaper. One can argue that she means she "smoothed it over" with her mum, who was angry, but nevertheless, she does not appear to have *told* her mum of the attempted rape but instead continued with what she had planned for the day. With the third experience, the writer notes how her friend acts as if nothing had happened, and she goes along with it. Her mention of the hug still conveys a sense of irritability: that she is amazed or annoyed at how he can continue "normally" and how she does too.[2] Thus, the discourse describing these experiences as normal can be distinguished as a red thread going through the different stories, becoming increasingly clear with each repetition.

The extension of an experience being assumed as normal is that it is not considered wrong. This may appear obvious, but when it comes to rape, there is an important distinction between considering it to be "something that happens," albeit unfortunate, and something that is *right*: the way it is supposed to be. Considering sexual violence as a normal experience for women does not mean it needs to be assumed to reflect the *correct* relation between the genders. To not understand something as "wrong" is an

2 However, the writer is not explicit nor evaluative in this testimony. Hence, it is possible she wanted the hug and did not see a problem with them continuing as normal. Stating such could perhaps be considered countering discourse within the campaign. Still, the act of sharing the story in this campaign makes it more likely that the writer wanted to highlight the hug as an absurd result: underlining how easy it is to continue as if nothing has happened.

extreme version of normalization, which, unfortunately, is also noticeable among the testimonies. A woman ends her testimony by stating:

> It has taken me many years to realize that the events presented above were not okay. For a long time, I thought that what had happened was simply a normal part of a woman's sex life. That I simply overreacted. Like sometimes you have to, even if you don't want to. Close your eyes and clench your teeth, and it'll pass quicker. My view on sex is still, at the time of writing, skew, and I've difficulties with saying no and drawing clear boundaries for what I'm comfortable with. (DB 906)

The four experiences presented are connected by this discourse of normalcy and how it has affected the writer's view on sex. Thus, the point of this story is not simply how she assumed these experiences to be normal, but the writer also highlights the result of this assumption—a skewed view of sex and difficulties upholding bodily boundaries, bringing us to the second theme of boundarylessness.

The normalization and acceptance of sexual violence reflect the idea of the woman's body as inherently available or "open" (cf. Andersson 2001). Swedish law researcher Ulrika Andersson (2001) presents how the focus on consent for determining rape recreates the female body as inherently *boundaryless*, as the victim then needs to prove *not* to have consented for something to be perceived as rape. Phrased differently, before non-consent is stated, the female body is perceived as open and hence accessible. This focus on whether non-consent was clearly communicated can be compared to how Finnish courts have expected victims to present *resistance* to the rape for it to be perceived as such (Alaattinoğlu, Kainulainen, and Niemi 2021). Requiring the victim to have resisted the rape presents the body as open unless stated otherwise. The changes in the criminal codes in both Sweden (2018) and Finland (2023) to center *voluntariness* aim to challenge this perception.

The writer quoted above explicitly states how the normalization of violence has prevented her from drawing clear boundaries. This difficulty is also noted in the introduction, in which the writer presents how the normalization of sexual violence was taught to her:

> The world that I've grown up in has taught me that my "no" doesn't mean "no." When boys hassled me in elementary school, it was "because they like me," and when they groped me in high school, it has dismissively been noted that "boys will be boys." Many of the guys I've dated have had difficulties in taking a no. My "no" has never meant "no" to them, but rather "well, I have to try a bit harder, then." They nagged, complained, and made me feel guilty until I said yes. Made

> me feel like a bad woman because I don't want to have sex. All this has led to me having many difficulties with standing up for myself and sticking to my "no," actually meaning "no," which has placed me in many situations that I have not felt comfortable in. Here are some examples. (DB 906)

The writer here presents how the dismissal and crossing of her boundaries were taught to her as normal, obstructing her ability to maintain boundaries for herself. Per extension, this normalization of sexual violence is noted to have made her vulnerable to further abuse. The discourse of boundarylessness is thus presented as an extension of the normalization of sexual violence. Taken together, they establish an interpretive frame for the presented experiences, clarifying the point to the reader and how the experiences should be understood.

Relevant to this discussion on how the normalization of violence can cause women to become vulnerable to abuse is Melanie Beres's (2018) argument that we need to go beyond focusing on consent to differentiate between sex and rape, as "consensual" sex can still cause harm. Consent constitutes a low bar for "good" sex, as people can consent to sex for reasons that are completely separated from desire or will (Alcoff 2018, 128). If we want to challenge harmful sex, Beres notes, we need to counter the discursive constructions of masculinity and femininity that pressure women to care for the sexual desires and needs of men (ibid.), and therefore contradict their own desires. This means that we must challenge the perceived differences that constitute our understanding of gender and acknowledge how these differences recreate relationships of power (cf. Scott 2018). The writer above notes how the nagging made her feel like a "bad woman," which in turn appears to have made her consent to sex that she did not want. Hence, sexual availability becomes intertwined with the writer's perception of being a woman, a notion derived from the gendered discourse that describes sex as a biological "need" for men and a duty for women (Gavey 2019).

In the testimony above, the writer is very explicit about the point of the story, but again, in others, boundarylessness can be noted as a subtle theme combining the presented stories in a testimony:

> 16 years old – it's Midsummer, and we are camping with friends. During the night, a guy from a neighboring tent comes to our girl tent. He is one year older, and he was with us partying that evening. He opens his pants and puts his dick in my mouth. I'm confused and freeze. After a while, when I start resisting and turn away, he gives up and sneaks out of the tent. We had not even flirted earlier in the evening or barely spoken, so it's a mystery to me what made him think that he had the right to do this.

> 18 years old – My male acquaintance gropes me on repeated occasions. Tries to sneak his hand under my dress etc. I always say no and pull away. He starts whining and says, "But why do you let person X do that if I can't." He referred to a person who I genuinely wanted to be with, and we had consent.
>
> 19 years old – I have a crush on a guy in our friend circle. I sleep over at his place. In the morning, we have sex. At some stage, he gets frustrated over slackening. This causes him to force me to suck him off. I remember so well how he pushed my head down and said, "suck like you mean it." After that, he forces me to have anal sex. He doesn't ask only turns me around and goes. I try to pull away, but in the end, I'm just frozen and disconnect. Some weeks later I tell my friends who know him. I cry and am upset. I finally dared to muster the courage to even tell anything about the incident! They wave it away with "he's like that" or "why did you go to his place then?" Today he's still a person I have to be able to associate with since he's part of the acquaintance circle. I have never dared to confront him. Mostly because I didn't get support from my friends, and I felt a lot of guilt.
>
> 26 years old – I go with my friend to an after-party at a cabin with a handball team. A male player seemed to have laid his eyes on me even before we leave for the cabin. We were at a bar first. I make it clear and plain that I have a boyfriend and talk about the boyfriend when it fits the discussion to further make it clear. When we are going to sleep in the cabin, it's crowded with few places to sleep. Of course, it ends with me having to sleep next to him. I try to be as far away from him as possible. During the night, he moves closer and closer, and at multiple times, he touches my intimate parts. I move his hand over and over again. I know that my body is mine, but ironically enough, I still don't dare to make a scene so that the others wake up, so I sleep with one eye open and move the hand frequently. (DB 551)

The bodily boundary of the writer is not explicitly commented on until in the last story—at which point it is not connected to the others—but the testimony touches on multiple aspects of such boundaries, nonetheless. The guy from the neighboring tent thought he had a right to put his dick in her mouth; her male acquaintance assumes that consent with one man makes a woman's body open to all; her friends seem to think that going home with a man means to consent to anal sex; and ultimately, despite knowing he has no right, the writer does not dare to make a scene when the handball player helps himself to her body. The earlier experiences of the writer's boundaries being disrespected or neglected might explain why she did not dare to object in the last experience, as she had been taught

that her right to her body was not absolute. Thus, even if unintended by the writer, a discourse of boundarylessness can be delineated to connect these experiences and create an interpretive framework that facilitates understanding. The testimony being presented in *Dammen brister* also makes it (perhaps invertedly) challenge such discourse.

If we move beyond the normalization of sexual violence and, subsequently, how this is assumed to be right because women are inherently boundaryless, we find yet another layer that perceives these instances of violence as *wanted.* The role of a sex object, that is, an object of desire, has, within a heterosexual logic, become connected to being validated as a woman (Gunnarsson 2020, 40). This means that the active/passive positions in heterosexuality not only make it *permissible* for the man to use "force" in his attempts to seduce but that such should be *hoped for* by the woman, as it affirms her desirability. Earlier in this section, I quoted a writer who noted how the boys' hassling in elementary school was dismissed with the argument that they liked her. Such an argument is not simply an explanation for the boy's behavior but also why she should not be bothered by it. She should not be offended by the boys' behavior because it means that she is desirable.

The idea of sexual violence as something one should be thankful to be the recipient of is another theme that can be highlighted when presenting many experiences.

> During high school, I remember that the guys at school uninhibitedly groped us… on the breasts, on the butt. We all laughed about it, didn't want to be "difficult" and risk being ostracized. It happened as good as daily for probably a year. No consent, no respect for our bodies. We should truly be thankful that they wanted to touch us.
>
> Another time I remember we were at a party at one of my then-best friend's place, I'm about 14-15 years old. She had two older brothers, of which one was good-looking, popular, cocky, and probably 7 years older. He was not home, so I'd gotten to go sleep in his bed. When he comes home during the night, he notes that I'm lying in his bed. That he, therefore, gets to sleep with me if I want to continue sleeping there. I say no to intercourse. He starts making out with me and licks me (I don't say no to that). Later I hear that he has put me on a scoreboard that he and his cool friends have, as a lay. I didn't think about it much then. It was "cool" that he wanted to sleep with me. After all, I should be grateful that he wanted me. (DB 39).

The two narratives are connected by the writer noting how she is presumed to be thankful for the attention. In fact, it appears as if the expected

gratitude is what bothers the writer the most, considering she notes how she did not object to being licked (however, nor does she claim to have wanted it or consented to it).

Kari Stefansen (2020) notes how the "micro-transgressions" that women and girls encounter function to shrink their space, reminding them of how their bodily integrity is less protected than men's. Thus, these micro-transgressions are a means of signifying power, placing women in a subordinate position while using gender to legitimize this practice. The objection to the "he teases you because he likes you" discourse is noticeable in many testimonies and in feminist discussions in general. Being dismissed in such a way, especially from school years, is often reiterated and rarely elaborated on, which conveys how the readers are assumed to be familiar with the discourse, and it can, therefore, be challenged simply by being mentioned.

***

In these compilations of experiences, the writers can convey an underlying point that is more or less connected to the told experiences. In this section, I have discussed both points underlined by the writers themselves and ones that I have delineated from the testimonies centering on a particular theme. In both cases, the point emerges not solely from a specific experience—as "what happened" in an objective sense—but in the interpretation of the experience by the writer or me. Such points can also be derived from stories describing only one experience; however, in presenting multiple experiences, this point might be more clearly underlined and efficiently argued.

In presenting many experiences, the point is conveyed repeatedly, making it more emphasized for the reader. Additionally, using many experiences as the basis for the point can strengthen the argument by conveying how it is not a question of an isolated incident but part of a pattern. Being based on multiple experiences might cause the interpretation to be less easily dismissed by the audience. In other words, multiple experiences can affirm the argument, validating a specific interpretation.

Thus, by combining multiple events, the narrator illuminates the structural inequalities and dominant discourse that constitute the foundation of these experiences, conveying each experience's significance. Phrased differently, by combining multiple experiences and placing them within the same interpretive frame, these testimonies show how different experiences are part of the same problem—regardless of whether it was intended by the writer. This combination can be useful, particularly when it comes to stories that describe experiences often dismissed as "not that bad," such as sexual harassment (cf. Fileborn 2019).

As a narrative structure, presenting multiple experiences can be useful as it allows the writer to substantiate a specific interpretation of these experiences, which in turn makes the testimonies more effective in challenging dominant discourse of rape, gender, and sex. A single experience is perhaps more easily dismissed as an isolated incident or the writer as overreacting or over-analyzing. However, in showing how these experiences interconnect and are part of a continuum of sexual violence, the point is more clearly substantiated. The combination of experiences also opens the possibility for writers to convey a point that is not necessarily distinguishable from a single event but emerges in the connection and interpretation of multiple experiences.

Life narratives

In the previous section, I presented a testimony in which the writer structured her compilation of multiple stories according to her age. Structuring according to age is a relatively common way of creating order in long testimonies describing multiple experiences. Besides age, the writer can structure similarly according to school or a period in time, such as childhood, teenage years, etc. These testimonies often start in childhood and offer a timeline that reaches adulthood, which is why I here mean to consider how these stories adhere to the genre of *life narrative.*

A life narrative, or life story, is a story that a person tells of her life (Arvidsson 1998, 8). It is often presented in an interview setting, and rather than being perceived as an "objective" reiteration of a person's life, it can be considered as a result of a process of remembering and interpreting experience, formed into an explanation of a person's life (Saresma 2007, 100). The life story constantly undergoes revision, expressing the teller's current understanding of the meaning of her life (Linde 1993, 25). Per this view, a life story is not something a person "has" that is ready to be presented at any given time but something that is recreated in the situation of telling and in the interaction between teller and listener (Stark 2006, 84). However, considering the popularization of biographies also by "common" people that have been noted to have increased since the late 1990s (Gilmore 2010; Karlsson 2013), I would suggest that the genre of "life story" is one that people are familiar with. Thus, in this section, I examine how testimonies can be structured according to the genre of life story. How are such life stories described, and how does this structure convey meaning? How are these testimonies affected by the space of *Dammen brister*, and what do they inform us about the style of narrating a lot?

Folklorist Alf Arvidsson (1998) describes the process of narrating one's life as a continuous switching between presenting chronological and descriptive sequences and narratives (ibid., 25). The chronological sequences describe the teller's lived life according to the passage of time. They are often short examples of what happened in the teller's life, reflecting a picture of their chronological life. In comparison, descriptive sequences lose the time perspective and instead focus on certain spaces, routine actions, and attitudes that are given in a coherent form. These can involve long periods and might describe significant changes, but the primary function is still to represent a narrative world. Narratives, in the sense of distinguishable stories with a beginning, middle, and end, can be introduced into this pattern to illustrate or deepen the description of the person's life (ibid., 26).

Presenting a life narrative in an interview setting is different from presenting it in writing. However, this switch between references to time, general descriptions, and narratives is noticeable among the testimonies. As mentioned, the long testimonies are often structured according to age or stage in life, with these references functioning as an introduction to each experience/paragraph. Subsequently, the writer presents either a more general description or a narrative. Writers generally rely on either descriptions or narratives, but they can also mix by offering some general descriptions and some more clear narratives. I present one example here, in which the writer uses mainly descriptive sequences that will serve as a basis for discussing these kinds of testimonies more generally.

> I am a child, 0-6 years old. Family acquaintances with two guys who are 3 and 6 years older than I. I'm continuously forced for years to show my vagina, touch their genitals, I'am restrained, and forcefully kissed, and so on. Don't tell anyone because I don't understand it is wrong before I'm 20+ and tell it to my therapist.
>
> I am in elementary school. I'm continuously bullied for my appearance, mostly by older guys. I'm often hit on the breasts, and sometimes someone pulls down my pants and such. I am sad but think it's normal.
>
> I am a teenager and lose my virginity to my boyfriend, who is many years older. He nagged for weeks until I agreed to it. Later in our relationship, he gets more aggressive. I develop panic attacks and imagine that no one else wants anything to do with me. He is unfaithful and puts me down daily. To have sex feels like rape. I think there is something wrong with me.
>
> I am single again. A guy at a party who I dance with shoves his finger up in me. A guy I sleep with when I am drunk refuses to stop even though I ask him to. Guys at parties grope and

> force themselves on me, and I think that this is what it's like to grow up.
>
> I am 17 years old and fall in love with an older guy again. We become a couple, and pretty soon, he starts to continuously put me down. His mental problems escalate, and he often hurts himself in front of me and tells me it's my fault. He abuses [alcohol/drugs][3], blames his suicide attempt on me. He leaves me because I'm such a bad girlfriend, and I believe him.
>
> I am single. I think I am abnormal if I don't have one-night stands too. I have never yet found sex pleasurable but think that's normal. I get stalked many times from the bar by guys who want sex, often acquaintances. Sometimes I don't dare to say no. It always feels like rape. After the act, when the guy has fallen asleep, I often go and sleep with my roommate or on the floor. The next day I almost always wake up and cry.
>
> I start studying. Already in the first weeks, a tutor[4] starts courting me, and I think I'm in love. We have sex, and I start to notice that I don't want to have a relationship. He spreads out false rumors about me as "punishment." A year or so later, my lecturer invites me to an evening lesson, and not until he drives his tongue down my throat do I realize how naïve I am.
>
> [...]
>
> I am 24 years old. I have gotten close to healthy and met someone who is all that they never were. Feel safe and have started to like sex (!). Work in a restaurant. Customers in the form of older men stare, grope, and continuously present shameful propositions. Male colleagues as well, often the jargon in the kitchen is incredibly demeaning to women and sexual. I have put on a shell to stand it. My foreman dismisses the whole thing with, "it never ends, and they will never stop." (DB 200)

This testimony is cited almost in its entirety, which is necessary to show how the writer uses both time and place to structure it chronologically. Starting from zero until the present time, the writer presents various experiences that are specific yet also general. These are presented not as having happened once but used to describe a period in time. Some events are described as particular but then connected to a description of a more general time. Similarly to the story signifiers, the short examples mention experiences rather than narrate them but efficiently convey these periods

3 The writer is not explicit with what he abuses, and in Swedish "abuse," or "misuse," can refer to the abuse of both drugs and alcohol.

4 Tutors, in Finland, are people who help guide new students in matters concerning studying and student life.

in the writer's life. The short narratives exemplify these periods while also explaining them by positioning them according to discourse describing normal experience and normal sexuality.

The descriptions and narratives presented by the writer convey how sexual violence has followed her through life, affecting her perception of her body and sex. Through describing the unfolding of her life, the writer shows how the normalcy of sexual violence and women's inherent boundarylessness have been taught to her from an early age, creating an interpretive frame that informs how the specific experiences are to be heard. Birgitta Svensson (2011) notes that the life story conveys how the individual relates to the collective and how different situations provide preconditions for experience. This means that in life stories, people write themselves into history while showing how this history has shaped their lives. Using the genre of life narrative, the writer above conveys what it can be like growing up as a woman in a culture that normalizes sexual violence and how women's perceptions of their bodies, selves, and sexuality are affected by these experiences of violence that inform them not only about sex but about what a woman "is" in general.

The testimony presented above is also structured according to time, which is a common way of creating order in a life narrative (Svensson 1997). Time offers a chronological structure, but as I noted in chapter 5, time also carries meaning and can intensify or highlight certain experiences. The writer above switches between mentioning age or school years to a period in life, such as being in her first relationship or being single. Starting at zero and continuing to the present day can produce affect, conveying an uncomfortable ever-presence as well as continuity by representing ongoing experience. Periods in time such as being a teenager, being single, or in a first relationship also carry meanings and expectations, which, alongside age, can be connected to *life scrips.*

Normative *life scripts* determine how a life is supposed to play out: at what time in your life you are supposed to be doing what (Ambjörnsson and Jönsson 2010). Hence, references to time in life narratives are not simply a means of organizing; they also place the experiences according to an expected life script. The writer above, however, is not placed in line with the script but rather against it. The script is the norm against which her own story is contrasted, enhancing its "wrongness." The contrast between what "should have been" and what "was" increases the affective potential of the story. The correct life script does not involve sexual abuse in childhood, losing your virginity should not result from nagging, and sex should not feel like rape. In comparison to this script, the severity of these experiences is exacerbated.

However, within *Dammen brister*, starting in childhood and narrating until adulthood or the present was common. The narrated experiences

vary, but the structure of the testimony in various life stages of childhood, elementary school, high school, first love, teenager, university, etc., is repeated in many testimonies. Thus, in a sense, the writers in *Dammen brister* presented a different life script for women.

In her study on women's life stories of becoming preachers in a Pentecostal community, Lawless (2019) notes that previous stories opened the possibility for others to imagine taking such a path (which was generally only open to men). However, she further notes that the presented life narratives could also have created a script for how these stories should be told, which could, in turn, function to limit others' stories. All testimonies in *Dammen brister* were posted—anonymously or with the writer's name—in the Facebook group for others to read. I find it likely that the women who testified started by reading through at least some of the others before posting their own, giving them ideas of what experiences they could share and how they could share them. It is also noticeable how the testimonies grew longer as the collection process carried on (the testimony's number representing the order in which it was collected), which implies that the writers told increasingly long stories, perhaps as a result of the interaction and validation received in the group.

Therefore, it may be that the testimonies shared in *Dammen brister* created a kind of life script of sexual violence that guided women in narrating their experiences; however, perhaps less in a restrictive sense of what *should* be shared and instead more in a suggestive way of what *could* be shared and how it could be shared. Similar experiences are often presented in the testimonies regarding, for example, harassment or incest in childhood; groping in high school and rapes at home parties; how you lost your virginity; boyfriends and friends nagging for sex; creepy driving instructors or teachers; abusive relationships; and groping in bars. The experiences with driving instructors are also quite commonly shared despite being relatively "mild" compared to other experiences narrated by the same writers, causing me to question whether they would have been presented if not others' testimonies had brought the experiences to mind.

The life script described in *Dammen brister* conveys a different life than could be expected from the gender-equal, safe, Finland-Swedish society. Consequently, the members of the campaign collectively challenged the normative life script for Finland-Swedish women. Rather than absent, these life story testimonies convey how *saturated* with sexual violence women's lives can be and underline how different experiences of violence are not distinct events but experiences that inform and affect one another and can negatively affect a woman's perception of herself, her body, and her sexuality.

To summarize, some writers presenting many experiences relate these to the unfolding of their lives, structuring the testimony from childhood

and even into the present. These stories allow the writers to convey how sexual violence is not an isolated incident but rather constitutes a recurrent feature in their lives of growing up as a woman in our "gender equal" society. Thus, these testimonies imply a different reason for telling a lot: to convey how sexual violence has saturated and affected a writer's life.

Summary: telling a lot

In this chapter, I have examined long testimonies that describe multiple experiences. Starting from the assumption that stories of personal experience cannot necessarily be reduced to the reiteration of an event and that all experience has history, I have considered how combining multiple experiences can function to convey meaning. The narrative space afforded by *Dammen brister* allowed the writers to narrate as much as they liked, and in narrating multiple experiences, the writers created a wider frame of interpretation for the stories. Furthermore, in presenting multiple experiences, the writers could challenge the perception of sexual violence as isolated incidents and convey how the experiences relate to one another and exist on a continuum of sexual violence.

Thus, even testimonies that seemingly just string up one experience after the other—a narrative style I have referred to as experience-stringing—function to convey meaning beyond the reiteration of the events. As the stories build on and inform one another, they collectively create an interpretive frame that might increase tellability and hearability of each narrative. In other words, previous experiences can explain how later ones are interpreted and understood by the writers, causing these experiences to become more hearable. Presenting only one experience could be difficult if it, as a stand-alone narrative, does not suffice in conveying this full experience.

This interpretive frame can be more noticeable in the testimonies I have argued to center an underlying point. For example, the difficulty of upholding one's bodily boundaries can be made understandable through narratives describing the times these boundaries have been ignored and crossed. These underlying points can be more or less explicit in the testimonies, but regardless of the writer's intention, I would suggest that presenting multiple experiences informed by the same discourse can more effectively challenge it by allowing the writer to do so repeatedly and based on multiple, rather than isolated, incident. The point is better supported when based on many experiences, and the differences between, for example, harassment and assault are blurred as the focus is placed on the foundational discursive structures that facilitate the violence.

The ways in which the stories inform one another and create such patterns might be necessary for conveying the meaning of each experience. I have suggested that when extracted from the flow of experiences, one story might appear as falling short, as it might fail to convey the meaning ascribed to the experience by the writer. Thus, the reason for telling a lot would be to convey more efficiently how the experiences are interpreted and felt by the narrator.

In the life story narratives, the writers can further present how these experiences have affected their lives. These testimonies convey how discourses of boundarylessness and sexual violence as normal can be taught from an early age through violence and how this violence can be a recurrent feature in women's lives. Consequently, they challenge the culturally assumed life script we have in Finland, as we regard ourselves as a gender-equal and safe country, and the contrast between this script and the writers' experiences gives the stories enhanced meaning. The life script reflects what the writers have been denied, and this becomes most clear in these "life narratives" of sexual violence since they follow the chronology from childhood up to the present. Per extension, the life story testimonies also start representing a different life script for women, a life script of sexual violence.

Consequently, these long testimonies gave ideas regarding what could be shared in the campaign, perhaps explaining why some experiences are so recurrent. Writers narrated in different ways, but the subjects can be similar, and the testimonies grew in length. Other women's stories could have informed the writers (or perhaps reminded them) of possible types of experiences, which are then included in these long testimonies. Even the notion that you *could* present "all" your experiences—take up space—is something I would argue grew out of the members' interaction in the campaign. However, an assumed script could also have dissuaded women from participating in the campaign, as the texts, subject matters, or experiences could have created a standard, marginalizing those whose experiences do not fit.

By presenting many experiences, the narrator moves further beyond the assumption of the story as retelling an event. Rather than being about a specific incident or experience, the writer can convey a sense of *lived* experience, regardless of whether it is shaped according to a genre of life story. Thus, rather than the different narratives simply informing one another or constructing a stronger argument including interpretation beyond the told events, the combination of multiple experiences can convey a more "complete" picture of a writer's experience of sexual violence in general; how it is not necessarily an isolated incident but a recurrent feature in their lives. Additionally, these testimonies reveal how described events are not experienced in vacuum but dependent on and

informed by previous experiences and discursive understanding of gender, sex, and rape.

10. Telling the self

Through telling stories, we show the world who we are. When narrating an experience, we recreate it and make sense of it, of ourselves, to ourselves, and to others. Self-narration allows the narrator to relive, transform, control, re-imagine events, and reclaim or construct identity, social interaction, and communities (Gready 2013). Thus, all narratives are means of self-representation and recreation, yet certain genres do this more explicitly.

Sociologist Norman Denzin (1989) presents the term *self-story* to refer to a more distinguishable story of the self. The self-story is a specific kind of personal experience story in which the narrator describes how she became who she is (Denzin 1992). The self-story genre could be compared to the type of *autobiography* that Gilmore (2001; 2018) argues started receiving much interest in the 1990s, a trend noted to be transnational and ongoing (Karlsson 2013). In contrast with previous autobiographies, Gilmore (2001) argues that this genre is characterized by the subject of trauma and the narrative following a structure of redemption and overcoming (Gilmore 2010). By centering trauma, this autobiography can be compared with the self-story genre; as Denzin argues, the self-story is often constructed around a specific *turning point*, an incident that caused the writer's life to take a new turn. Additionally, this kind of autobiography is also comparable to the genre of *testimony;* however, in contrast with the testimony that aims to give insight into human rights abuses and is often more explicitly political, the autobiography focuses on personal pain (Gilmore 2010).

My intention with this is to show how different genres of self-narration overlap, and the understanding of this type of narration might shape expectations regarding the narration of personal experience. The genres are not easily distinguishable, but neither is that of great concern here. Instead of trying to pin down the genre, I focus on how the aspects of turning points and change—foundational both for the genre of self-story and autobiography—are used to represent and recreate a self in the *Dammen brister* testimonies. However, because of the autobiography's association with the genre of life story (Gilmore 2018, 3), I use the term self-story to refer to the testimonies discussed here.

In a previous chapter, I argued that the interest in self-narration, particularly biographies, has made people familiar with the genre. As rape is an experience that is often deemed life-changing—altering a person's innermost self (Gavey and Schmidt 2011)—it can also be considered an expected genre. Critique of the trauma discourse challenges

the perception of rape as causing irreversible damage to a person, but I would argue that the notion of rape as an experience that might have much effect on a person is still common enough to affect the narration or reception of these stories. In other words, if rape is assumed to have changed a person, presenting *how* one has been changed could be expected by the audience. Therefore, I suggest that self-story can be an expected genre for the narration of experiences of rape.

How change is narrated is also affected by discourse. Particularly the trauma discourse can inform narrators of how to present change, as it describes the experience of rape as resulting in negative psychological effects such as impairment of trust and difficulties with relationships. These negative effects are understood as potentially having long-standing impacts on the victims that, despite decreasing, leave "scars" and lasting vulnerability and require that the victims go to therapy to be able to overcome their trauma (Gavey and Schmidt 2011). As noted in chapter 6, such discursive understanding could have been perceived as shared within the interpretive community and not requiring much elaboration from the narrators.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine how turning points and change are narrated in the testimonies and what meanings are conveyed through such narration. What turning points are presented in the testimonies, and how do they relate to the (re)creation of self? How do the writers narrate change, and what discourses affect such change? The chapter is split into two sections. In the first one, I focus on the structural aspect of *turning points*, while in the second one, I examine more broadly how the writers reflect on how they have *changed* due to sexual violence and what this can inform us about such experiences.

Turning points

The self-story often revolves around a specific situation, an incident that caused the person's life to take a new turn (Denzin 1992, 26). As mentioned, these turning points—or epiphanies—are experiences that radically alter and shape how people view themselves and their lives. In life stories, the self-narration also often revolves around different turning points; however, the ones emphasized by Denzin could be understood as more dramatic (Koskinen-Koivisto 2014, 49). Roughly half of the testimonies I have placed in the category of self-story include a turning point. Focusing on turning points in this section, I question how these are narrated. What is recognized as a turning point, and how can they be understood as having affected the writers' perception of their lives and selves? What does a turning point do to the story, and what meaning can be conveyed from these turning points?

Denzin presents four types of turning points: the major upheaval, the cumulative moment, the illuminative moment, and the relieved moment. The major upheaval is when something changes a life forever (e.g., a man kills his wife). The cumulative moment refers to the final buildup of a prolonged crisis (e.g., a battered wife leaves her husband). The illuminative moment is when the underlying structures of a relationship or situation are revealed (e.g., realizing one has been abused and/or is not to blame). Finally, the relieved moment refers to when a person, after an event has occurred, comes to understand it in meaningful words (e.g., a widow comes to feel free of her loved one's presence in her life) (Denzin 1992, 83). These different turning points serve as a point of departure in this section, and the analysis is loosely structured accordingly.

An experience of rape as a major upheaval—an incident that changes a person's life forever—is arguably expected by the discourse on rape that determines it as a life-changing (or life-ending) experience. This discourse allows writers to present a turning quite shortly:

> All this has scarred me deeply. Have not been able to have functioning relationships. Don't trust men. Go to psychotherapy 2 times a week. (DB 286)

The writer shortly presents how she has been affected by the rape, a brevity that could be assumed as understandable within the interpretive community of *Dammen brister.* According to discourse of rape, this level of trauma can even be expected. Being "scarred" and unable to have functioning relationships with men are described by the trauma discourse as common effects of rape (Gavey and Schmidt 2011). The writer above, however, presents two different experiences as having caused this scarring. This causes me to question whether a turning point is expected to occur at a single instance in time or if it can be understood as the culmination of multiple experiences. How are turning points expected to be delineated and narrated?

Among the testimonies, it is rare for the turning point to be pinpointed to a specific instance in time, although it happens:

> During childhood, I often spent the night at my close relatives' place, and the family was like my other family. As a 12-year-old, I woke up to the father (drunk) of the family touching my genitals and my mouth. In the background, a movie was playing where a woman was raped. I pretended to sleep and was completely paralyzed by fear. I lost all faith in grown men after that night, and for many years after, after that, I suspected that they all were sexually interested in me. I wish men would understand the feeling of all security disappearing from the

> world, that no one can be trusted. To not tear the family apart, I have never told anyone, and still today pretend like nothing [happened] in the presence of my male relative. (DB 110)

This writer pinpoints the exact situation in which she lost all faith in grown men. I will question whether such pinpointing makes the story more tellable or hearable, but first, I mean to focus on how the writer describes her experience as causing her to lose faith in men, lose the feeling of safety, and start suspecting that all men were interested in her sexually. The writer presenting the result in past tense makes it appear as if she has regained her trust in men, but what I want to highlight in this example is how the change is presented.

Rather than understood through a discourse on rape or trauma, this change becomes understandable through discourse presenting the female body as dangerous. The major upheaval in this testimony can be described as the writer becoming aware of her sexualized body, which changes her perception of herself. Cahill (2000; 2001) presents how a woman is taught to experience her body as dangerous, a danger that is explicitly sexual. This danger is assumed to be located in her body rather than residing outside of it, causing women to perceive their bodies as alienated from themselves. In other words, the body becomes perceived as the threat. The writer's realization of the danger of her feminine body is explicitly clear in the testimony cited above, and thus this turning point complexifies what is assumed to be the result of a major upheaval that is rape. Instead of presenting the body or self as broken and scarred, it conveys how a woman's relation to herself, her body, and the world might be altered by rape, as it reestablishes and repositions her in a subordinate gendered role.

If a turning point is expected by the genre of self-story, it needs to be questioned what it does to the tellability of the story. Is a story more hearable when a turning point can be pinpointed in an exact moment? Or is a result rather more hearable when based on multiple experiences? I cannot answer such questions; however, proceeding from the discussion in the previous chapter, it is questionable whether providing a specific turning point is even possible for those who have experienced sexual violence. The idea of the major upheaval relates to a perception of the experience of violence as a singular event, which might be at odds with how violence can be experienced. Serisier (2018, 49) presents how women of color tend to narrate rape within longer life stories, arguing that this complicates the idea of a story of rape as a singular and incomparable event that dominates a person's life story. The focus on a specific incident, Serisier argues, marginalizes the voices of women for whom the rape is placed alongside other trauma and constrains the possibility of viewing rape as a causal factor in a story, yet still irreducible to it (ibid.). Countering expectations of *a* turning point challenges the idea of rape as an "exceptional" expe-

rience in a person's life and opens the possibility of considering rape as rather a *part* of a more complex story.

Thus, complexifying our idea of turning points might be useful for understanding rape in general. Conveying how an experience of rape is *not necessarily* a life-changing event challenges the idea of rape as a fate worse than death that leaves the victim severely traumatized. As has been noted, such discourse might be harmful as it can cause victims to misinterpret their experiences or stay silent. The position afforded victims by such discourse presents them as broken and scarred, essentially a stigmatized position.

The illuminative moment is presented as the moment when the underlying structures of a situation or relationship are revealed (Denzin 1992, 83). Among the testimonies, it is common for the writers to note how they did not recognize an experience as abuse when it occurred or how widespread the problem of sexual violence is in society. Sometimes, such a realization can be ascribed much meaning to the writer:

> The first time I had sex, I got raped. Didn't understand it until the other week in therapy. In therapy, I've also understood that because my first time was how it was, I've later sought out similar situations because that is how I thought sex is. And that it's all I'm worth. Through the years, I've felt terribly bad and sought out dangerous, destructive situations with men, and a lot has happened. (DB 206)

In this testimony, the writer presents two turning points. The first rape is presented as the turning point that shaped her perception of sex, which the writer presents realizing in an illuminative moment that constitutes a second turning point. The writer continues to describe experiences with five men, three of which she states raped her and one forced intercourse, but the "initial" rape is not presented (in this version[1]). As the writer states in the introduction, she felt bad and sought out these situations. She narrates little resistance to the rapes and continues relationships with men who have raped her. The illuminative moment, however, being presented in the introduction constitutes an interpretive frame that makes these experiences understandable. In other words, the illuminative moment conveys why she placed herself in these situations because she thought it was how sex is. This is explained by the first turning point, the rape, but it is also a perception supported by discourse that establishes

1 This testimony is presented twice in *Dammen brister*. The later version, DB 903, is an elaborated version of this one, which includes more detailed descriptions of the rapes as well as other experiences of forced sex and harassment. The illuminative moment, cited here, is the only part that is almost exactly repeated in the extended version, only with an additional sentence shortly describing the initial rape.

these heterosexual gender positions as normal. Thus, this positioning functions to shield the writer from being blamed while conveying how the writer perceived the position of being a woman.

In this testimony, the illuminative moment also sufficiently conveys how the realization might occur long after an experience of rape, which challenges discourse that presents rape as unambiguous. The inclusion of an illuminative moment can be helpful in stories of rape, as it conveys how sex and rape are not always easily distinguishable. Instead, reevaluating past experiences can be necessary, highlighting how increased knowledge on the subject might change how we perceive the past (Kelly 1988).

What is also noticeable in the illuminative moment above is how such realization is crucial for reinterpreting the self. The writer states how she thought sexual violence was "all she was worth," but then she realizes how this thinking had been implanted in her from her first rape, supported by discourse on gender. The necessity of realizing an event as abuse or "wrong" has been discussed repeatedly in the analysis (e.g., chapters 5 and 9). However, such illumination as a specific "turning point" should not be overemphasized as it can be something that the writer needs to be reminded of repeatedly. In other words, realizing "wrongness" might not be like turning on a light that changes a person's understanding forever but a process that requires reiteration. This process is reflected in a writer's description of an abusive relationship:

> It is 3,5 years since it ended. 4,5 years since my hell started. The nightmares still persist. The panic anxiety still persists. Hundreds of therapy-hours, hundreds of breakdowns, and I understand almost that it was not my fault, everything that happened. That there is something called rape in a relationship. That what I had was not a relationship, it was a master and his slave. It took me 2 years before I realized what had happened. My entire freshman year is a black hole, I saw pictures of events I don't remember having participated in. Saw grades from courses I don't remember taking. I have slowly started to remember everything, but I don't know if I want to. But I have survived thus far, and now it's time to hit back. Let them stand with the shame. Let them be sealed in an apartment for a year. (DB 605)

The writer notes that it had taken her two years to realize what had happened and another year and a half to *almost* understand that it was not her own fault. Lawless (2001) underlines how narration constitutes an important step for women who have suffered domestic abuse to be able to move toward self-revelation and self-construction. In speaking of the violence, the woman can start to distance herself from it, and the act of narrating affords new ways of understanding experience and the self (ibid.). To do

this, the narrator must consider certain experiences as wrong, but such a realization is not necessarily instant but needs to be processed. It is also a realization that can be challenging, exemplified above in how the writer presents uncertainty regarding whether she *wants* to remember everything. My point here is that the idea of a turning point as an instance in time might be insufficient for understanding how a person recovers from violence, which can be a process of reinterpretation and self-construction stretching over an extended period of time.

The turning point that Denzin refers to as the cumulative moment is the result of a longer build-up of a situation that finally breaks. Such breaking points might be expected in stories of abusive relationships—when was the point that you *finally* realized that you needed to leave? These cumulative moments can be a significant part of a person's story:

> In the summer of 2005, I had to choose: live or die. I couldn't continue the life I then had. No more abuse and rape. It's enough now. I had run out of tears, there was only anger left. I was more than some sick fuck's sex toy. Even though I risked my life, I chose to leave my abusive boyfriend and moved approx. 500 km away from my family. A decision I have never regretted, even though it was hard to be away from the people I love. I started a new life. Slowly and steadily, I learned that I do deserve something better. It has not been easy, but I made it. (DB 554)

The narrator creates her story in the now, looking back on her life and recreating it. In doing so, she is able to construct a story in which she is her own hero. The cumulative moment plays an important part here and is clearly distinguished, underlining the moment in which she decides that she can no longer be "some sick fuck's sex toy" and instead becomes strong and courageous, choosing life. Consequently, the story becomes one of empowerment, action, and survival and can be compared to the style of autobiography presented by Gilmore (2010; 2018), a motivational story that might be helpful or uplifting for others.

The story presented as one of survival and overcoming might also have caused it to be more tellable, as a position of strength is preferred by listeners (Thorne and McLean 2003). Being able to reconstruct their experiences in such a way might be beneficial for narrators, but I also want to question what happens to stories that lack such a turning point. All testimonies of abusive relationships do not have a cumulative moment. In some stories, there is no resolution narrated; in others, the abuser is the one who left, while still others describe being in the abusive relationship at the time of writing.

A writer who presents being in an abusive relationship for years as a teen describes only in passing how she eventually left him.

> I am 17 years old and still (!?) in a relationship with the asshole. Have over the years multiple times woken up to him using my hand to jerk himself off. He explains this with, "but I never want to have sex." Eventually, I break up [with him], but the man continues to call, text, and show up at the places I'm at, work place, at friends' places, at my parents' place, yeah anywhere. Sometimes he nags for sex, which I reluctantly agree to because I see no other way out of the situation. It calms down when he finds a new girlfriend some months later.
>
> I hate you because you stole half my teenage years and ruined my already bad self-esteem. I hate myself for letting you have power over me and my life. I have wondered many times what my life would look like had I been spared from this 3-year nightmare. May you burn in hell. (DB 113)

What I mean to highlight with this quote is how the leaving of her perpetrator is mentioned briefly and in passing, and perhaps the reason why she did not present it as a cumulative moment is that she could not (here) re-create it as the positive turning point as the previous writer could. In other words, the leaving of her ex is not presented as a turning point because the writer could not, or did not want to, construct the story as one of overcoming and survival. We do not know the distance in time these writers have to their experiences, which would affect their ability to re-create them. Over time, perhaps this writer is able to re-create a narrative of her experience that does not present her hating herself, but the cumulative moment of the break-up does not have to change, nonetheless. What I want to underline with this is that a cumulative moment is neither obvious nor automatic, and when listening to stories of abuse, it should not be expected.

Again, I must emphasize that silence does not necessarily indicate a lack. The writers could have many reasons for not presenting a cumulative moment (or resolution), as the campaign's request was not for people's life narratives but for experiences of sexual violence. As I noted in chapter 6, not offering a resolution could even be used as a narrative tool to create discomfort for the listeners, without claiming this to be the intention of the writers. The testimony cited above does not adhere to the genre of autobiography as presented by Gilmore, but it could also be perceived as countering—implicitly or explicitly—expectations placed on women in abusive relationships. Hydén (2008) presents how women leaving abusive relationships are expected to be happy about it, adhering to an idea of the "past evil and the future good life." The moment of leaving is seen as a

single event that leaves no room for pain (ibid.). By not adhering to the structure of overcoming, writers can challenge discourse that determines they should be happy for having escaped and adopt a positive outlook on life. Although these writers might, at some point, feel happiness and relief by having been able to escape an abusive situation, it should not be expected of narrators because they do not necessarily assign the moment of leaving as much positive meaning as the audience might expect.

The cumulative moment as expected to provide relief connects to Denzin's turning point referred to as the relieved moment, in which a person comes to understand an experience in a meaningful way. Such is exemplified in the following testimony:

> I have been through a whole lot but also actively struggled upward already for so many years that I view these experiences as a part of my history that has made me into the pretty strong woman I am today. (DB 717)

The writer here places her experiences as part of her history that has made her into the strong woman she is. This story exemplifies how the recreation of past experiences can be beneficial for a person's recovery, allowing them to reestablish a positive sense of self.

However, my reason for highlighting this relived moment is that it is very rare in my material. The writers rarely reinterpret their experiences in such a positive sense, which was also noted in chapter 7. The most optimistic testimonies use a more neutral language of having overcome and being in a good place at the time of writing. This lack of a positive end could perhaps be explained by the space focusing on the perpetrators rather than the writers, but straying from such optimism could also be perceived as contradicting discourse that expects stories of trauma to be narrated as resulting in strength. The "what does not kill you makes you stronger" is a rigid truism that hardly helps people who suffer from trauma and can silence discussions of social injustice. Furthermore, if the assumption is that your trauma should strengthen you, failing to live up to such expectations can incite feelings of shame. If there is an expectation on people to view their experiences as something that has made them better in some way—something that has meaning—not wanting to or managing to do so could become perceived as a personal failure. Similarly to a cumulative moment and the happy end, I would suggest that including a relieved moment can make a story more tellable, and conversely, the lack of it can result in untellability.

The anthology *Responsible Selves. Women in the Nordic legal culture* (Nousiainen et al. 2001) presents the myth of the "strong Nordic woman" as a reason explaining the insufficient work against violence against women in the Nordics (e.g., Niemi-Kiesiläinen 2001). The idea of the

strong Nordic woman presents a "woman as a strong survivor who is capable of taking care of herself and of others under all circumstances" (Ruuskanen 2001, 316). Despite strength often being associated with masculinity, the anthology shows how women can also be subjected to an idea of strength that limits their space to speak of the wrongness conducted against them—as they should be able to "handle it." Thus, the discourse of the strong Nordic woman becomes the ideal against which victims can judge themselves negatively, firstly by not being able to *avoid* the violence and secondly by not being able to *heal from* it.

A focus on strength might also be disturbing work against violence, as it centers on the victims rather than the perpetrators. For the recreation of a traumatic event, being able to narrate a relieved moment would probably be beneficial for the narrator. However, the idea of growing stronger from violence or trauma places the focus on the harmed individual rather than the violence that caused it, implying that the problem that needs to be dealt with is that of traumatized victims instead of violent perpetrators.

***

In this section, I have discussed different turning points among the self-stories. These could be expected by the genre of self-story and can be sufficient for conveying the effects that rape has, including challenging perceptions regarding such effects described by discourse on trauma and abuse. If expected by genre, the inclusion of a turning point could also make the story more tellable, which can be further increased if adhering to the genre of autobiography that favors stories of redemption. However, I have also suggested that the genre expectation might not be compatible with the experience of violence, as narrators might not always be able to pinpoint or recreate such a turning point. Thus, as a genre requirement, the turning point might cause stories to become untellable.

Change

Instead of narrating a turning point, other writers reflect more generally on how they have been affected by the rape. Earlier in the analysis, I noted how the crossing of women's boundaries and the normalization of violence affect women's perception of their bodies. This can be connected to Alcoff's (2018, 111) suggestion that what is harmed by sexual violence is people's *sexual subjectivity*, that is, their capacity for sexual agency. Sociologist Rebecca Plante (2007, 32) presents sexual subjectivity as "a person's sense of herself as a sexual being." This subjectivity includes not only people's arousal patterns, conducts, or sexual choices but also the constellation of beliefs, perceptions, and emotions that inform

their sexual scripts and capacity for agency (Alcoff 2018, 111). Sexual subjectivity is created in interaction with others and the social environment; thus, it is always in process and changes according to experiences (ibid.). Perceptions of gender difference and heterosexuality give meaning to these subjectivities and constrain people's capacity to form sexual subjectivity (cf. Scott 2018). However, this capacity is further disturbed by experiences of sexual violence.

In this final part of the analysis, I examine how writers narrate change in their self-stories, specifically in relation to how it has affected their capacity for sexual subjectivity, but also their perception of gender in general. What change can be delineated in the testimonies, and how has it affected the writers?

Genre expectations on stories of trauma may be for writers to describe how they have become stronger—which are present—but most self-stories tell of a negative view of their selves, their sexuality, having bad bodily boundaries, and even self-harming behavior. These negative results can be connected to described rapes but also different forms of harassment, people's reactions to assaults, and culture in general. By being a non-hierarchal space of peer-to-peer witnessing (cf. Loney-Howes 2020, 73), the narrative space of *Dammen brister* facilitated these kinds of reflections, allowing writers to discuss and (re)interpret their own experiences in a space that was assumed safe. As a result, different topics of change beyond "traumatized," "ashamed," or "stronger" become visible.

Notably, this is not about a person's "inner self" being changed, as rape discourse also can state, but the perception of oneself. As discussed in the previous chapter on telling a lot, change caused by earlier experiences can be used to explain why and how later experiences happen. One writer states, "However, I choose [to tell] the first three incidents because they have in many ways formed me, so I have let myself be exposed time and again." (DB 297). This introduction places the testimony in the category of self-stories and gives the incidents an interpretive frame that conveys how they should be understood.

The writer briefly presents the three experiences in a reporting style but does not return to how these have formed her or in what ways she has "exposed herself" to abuse later. After the third experience report, she merely states that "[i]t takes an additional three years before I dare to be intimate with anyone after that." (DB 297). This testimony falls a bit short of being a self-story, as it presents the experiences that have caused self-formation but not *how* she has been formed. Still, it is notable that the writer states how these experiences formed her so that she has "let herself be exposed" to abuse. The writer centers herself—or rather, her perception of herself—as the reason for why she suffered later abuse, a perception that is noted to have been formed by sexual violence.

The writer above presents experiences of rape and attempted rape by friends and acquaintances. Another writer states that she wants to focus on close relationships and initiates by presenting her first relationship. She notes how he was controlling and wanted to "own her," but:

> The worst was how he nagged for sex the times that I did not want to, which I wanted less and less as the behavior continued. Beg and nag and grope. After having said "no, I don't want to" maybe twelve times, then maybe you are just quiet the thirteenth time to get it over with. So you lie there, 14 years old, under someone who is considerably heavier than yourself and who just goes at it with his own pleasure in mind, it feels like your lungs will be crushed under his weight. I have tears in my eyes and moan a little sometimes so that he'll cum faster. Because my "no's" rarely were enough, I started to make up excuses such as headaches and similar, but that wasn't good enough either. He used to get angry at me, and I was so young and didn't dare to do anything but finally give in because I was scared that he'd leave me if I didn't give him what he wanted. You'd heard the jokes about girlfriends who didn't "put out," and I didn't want to be "that kind" of girl. It actually took many, many years for me to understand that this was also a kind of rape and how fucking negatively it has affected my capacity to enjoy sex. (DB 908)

The writer here presents how being nagged at by her ex-boyfriend not only turned her off from having sex with him but also affected her capacity to enjoy sex in general. The experience of being coerced into sex through nagging is an often-presented experience among the testimonies. It is often mentioned without any explanation, indicating how it is perceived as a common and shared experience that requires no elaboration to be understood. A heterosexual discourse determining sex as mandatory in a relationship (Keskinen 2007) and centering male pleasure is noticeable here, as the writer notes how she did not want to decline sex out of fear of being a "bad girlfriend" and that he would leave her. Thus, the writer relates to a perception of the "ideal" woman in heterosexuality to make her experience and its effects intelligible. Although this position is noted to have been taught to her discursively (e.g., with jokes about girlfriends who do not "put out"), this perception of her position as a woman is crucially reinforced by her ex and his rapes.

Being denied bodily autonomy is reported by writers as possible to have long-standing repercussions for their sexual subjectivity. The quote above is from a lengthy testimony that presents detailed descriptions of experiences from three relationships and with a close friend. Besides the boyfriend presented in the quote, the writer also presents another boy-

friend who would change between nagging for sex and saying he loved her to pushing her away and calling her worthless; and a third which, in addition to nagging at her, also forced fellatio and subjected her to non-consensual sexual filming. I will not go into the experiences here but focus on how the writer connects them in a resolution/evaluation at the end of her testimony:

> Now I am with a completely wonderful man who really cares about my well-being and will. But it is also not until now I actually start to notice how much my earlier experiences with relationships and sex have really stained me. My current boyfriend is very mindful that I should feel pleasure and sometimes asks how I want him to make it better for me. Even such a thing has caused me to start crying and get confused multiple times, and a little panic-stricken when the focus is suddenly on my body and not the man's. Because I don't know how to be, I'm not used to it… but I hope it's not too late to learn. (DB 908)

Here, the experiences described in this testimony are connected by their results: having stained her and hindered her from investigating her own body as a source of pleasure. Hence, the writer conveys meaning beyond the experiences in themselves by presenting how they affected her sexual subjectivity. In other words, the point of the story is not only to present these experiences of rape but also to convey how they have affected the writer, derived from her interpretation of these experiences. The fact that the writer's interpretation of the experiences is allowed to be presented is crucial, as Alcoff notes that such work of creating knowledge from experience is not—or has not always been—afforded to people with experiences.

The term "hermeneutic injustice" (Fricker 2007) refers to how certain groups have been excluded from establishing new concepts, definitions, and terms—in general, creating *knowledge.* Victims of rape are often perceived as providing "raw data" for other's to make meaning out of, which Alcoff (2018) argues limits their capacity for self-making: "When victims are excluded from contributing to the production of new terms and concepts and understandings, this adversely affects the formations of their sexual subjectivity, their capacity for self-making, and their ability to contribute to the production of concepts and meanings." (ibid., 124). Thus, being allowed space to interpret and create meaning out of personal experience is crucial for the formation of the self, in addition to being focal for our understanding of experiences of rape in general.

Victims being allowed to make meaning from their own experiences can complexify our understanding of sexual violence. For example, what has been noticeable in this analysis is how also "lesser forms" of sexual vio-

lence—that do not include brute, physical violence—can affect how people view themselves and their bodies (cf. Alcoff 2018). Ambiguous experiences that feel uncomfortable and wrong—but that are not easily understood as rape—can still negatively affect a person's sense of self (ibid.). In her study on how consent is established, Lena Gunnarsson (2020, 184–85) notes that even if people who "agree to" sex that they do not want might not consider it a problem, it could affect their capacity to create sexual subjectivity in the long run. In other words, even if someone willingly contradicts her own desires, it can impact her perception of sex and her sexual subjectivity.

Furthermore, Gavey (2019, 139) presents how sexual availability and desirability can become intertwined with a person's sense of self (e.g., as a woman who always wants to have sex). As noted above, conforming to gendered expectations in sexual situations can correlate with a person's sense of herself as a gendered subject. Hence, sex can become a means to affirm self-worth. A writer presents how ten of her first sexual experiences were the result of nagging where her "countless no's" were not enough. Although she did not want to participate in these sexual encounters, they gave her the idea that she needed to satisfy.

> I still get a guilty conscience if I say no to sex with my boyfriend. He would never in any way nag for sex or coerce me, but it's so ingrained that it is ME who needs to satisfy, ME who needs to be "nice so that it does not go really badly" as another man 10 years older than me told me when I was 15. I've always had a need for attention. Especially as a teenager, and many men have taken advantage of it and made me feel good in the moment. Because I'd satisfied him. And because "he wants me specifically!". They've made me believe that I wanted to, that I shouldn't say no, that this is how it's supposed to be. I've always known that it's not supposed to be that way, but deep inside me, I still believed it until I was around 20. (DB 123)

The writer combines experiences of pressure from the men—ignoring her "no's" and threatening her—with situations in which she seems to have more agency, and the man is able to take advantage of her simply because of her need for attention and validation. I do not think she refers to the same experiences; however, her combination of the situations with various forms of coercion makes it appear as if she does not differentiate between them. This combination, which blurs the lines between "good" and "bad" sexual encounters, and the writer's use of story signifiers that require the readers to fill in the gaps, convey more about how the experiences have affected the writer than about how they were carried out. The writer does

not present the experience with the man ten years older than her, but the story signifier is used to convey how it affected her sense of self. Thus, the testimony presents how the writer's experiences changed her perception of herself, affecting her capacity to state her will and, per extension, her sexual subjectivity.

Agency is fundamental for creating sexual subjectivity (Alcoff 2018). However, the idea of agency is often framed as being allowed to "choose," which stems from a libertarian view of the autonomous subject who is able to make such a choice. This understanding of agency can be a barrier to considering vulnerability as a structural issue (Andersson et al. 2019), and an overemphasis on agency opens the possibility for rape being perceived as a victim's failure to claim agency (Bay-Cheng 2015). Agency and vulnerability are often presented in binary opposition, meaning that women can be considered as either having agency or being vulnerable (McKenzie-Mohr 2014).

Conversely, a Foucauldian view of agency can be presented as the "always present potentiality of the subjects to alter, unsettle, and invest the power relations they are shaped by" (Cremonesi et al. 2016, 2). For Alcoff (2018), this means being conscious about your sexual practices and being able to participate in the formation of your sexual will and self (ibid.). The writer above notes how men made her believe she wanted to have sex, causing her to contradict her own will. This conveys how being allowed to choose is a limited approach to understanding agency, as one can still be vulnerable while having agency, and consent is easily manipulated. The realization of how she has been affected, as conveyed by the writer, could hence be presumed as a crucial first step in reinterpreting experience as something other than bad sex and for (re)creating sexual subjectivity.

The reinterpretation allows the writer to connect experiences to make sense of later ones. As noted in the previous chapter, such a connection can be useful for presenting and conceptualizing "lesser forms" of violence. Another writer introduces her testimony by saying how she has a lot she could tell but will focus on a few experiences that she had previously thought to be insignificant because they were not too radical: "But ones I have now realized not only contributed to me having bad trust in men but also to an erroneous picture of myself." (DB 558) One of the experiences described is with a friend who she allows to stay over at her place. He initiates sex, but she declines, which he ignores. She tries to push him off her and tells him no repeatedly, but he proceeds to rape her.

> I felt dirty and ashamed. Why had I "agreed to" this? I felt ashamed but still thought that I must've done the right thing because the guy wanted me, and I'd given it to him.

> And all these other times I've had sex with men against my will. My whole self not wanting to, but the voice inside me says that if I don't have sex with him now, then he really won't want to see or meet me again. I must give them what they want and ask for, otherwise, I'm nothing.
>
> […]
>
> I've felt and often still feel today that I'm not much more than a body with big breasts that men feel they should get to see and touch and use. That I really exist for men to satisfy themselves with when they want to. My opinions and feelings don't matter in these situations.
>
> It feels sad. When you know you shouldn't think that way, but it's very difficult to get yourself out of that twisted mindset. (DB 558)

The writer presents how her friend crosses her boundaries and rapes her, but she managed to reinterpret the situation as "the right thing" because it coincided with her self-perception as existing for and needing to please, men. What I want to highlight here is how this idea of needing to please is connected to her sense of worth, as she notes that if she does not do what is asked, then she is "nothing." The writer presents how this bad self-esteem has caused her to participate in sex that she does not want to have, indicating a lack of sexual subjectivity that has made her feel like an object of pleasure for men.

Gavey (2019) notes that coercion in sexual situations does not need to be explicit but can stem from discourse that has formed and constrained people's sexuality and sense of self. The internalization of a heterosexual norm based on the perception of gender difference that generally presents sex as for the pleasure of men and the duty of women can cause explicit pressure to be unnecessary. However, the writer here also presents how this assumed function to satisfy was taught to her through pressure and nagging, affecting her perception of herself. Thus, even if such norms are internalized to urge women to bend their own bodily boundaries, this process of internalization is also *enforced*. The limitation of women's agency and capacity to create sexual subjectivity is not simply a result of discourse, but of violence.

The enforcement of discourse is not always as explicit as in the examples I have cited thus far in this section, but it can be conveyed through the described acts of sexual harassment, assault, and rape. One writer initiates by describing sexual assault from childhood by her stepfather and a rape by a childhood friend when she was 18 years old, concluding:

> But worst of all is that they don't seem to understand what it does to you… what a wrong view you get of sex and relationships, how you start viewing yourself and your worth… how you can start weighing your self-worth with how many you've had sex with or how many want to have sex with you… (DB 398)

You can assume that "they" and "it" in the first sentence of the quote refer to perpetrators and sexual violence. The writer does not explicitly state that such self-view was encouraged by her stepfather, but it was the conclusion that she derived from the experiences of assault. The writer's note on self-worth is interesting as, for women and girls, having had sex with many people is often assumed to *lower* their worth. Later in the paragraph, the writer notes being called a whore by those she has slept with. This reflects the double bind for women, as their worth is based both on having and not having sex (cf. Saarikoski 2001).

Sexual violence does not simply constrain a person's perception of their sexual subjectivity but of what sex is in general. This includes not only the appropriate "roles" that place women as the ones needing to satisfy but also what sex is and how it is supposed to be practiced. Another writer introduces her testimony with how she still feels great respect toward the man and hence does not want to say too much about their relationship, lest he is recognized. Still, she ponders about how healthy their relationship had been because of his sexual preferences. For example, he was addicted to porn, filmed, and whipped her. She was "school age," and he was ten years her senior. She concludes:

> He placed the bar for what I let men do to me over the years and asked them to do to me because I thought it was normal, and that it was completely okay if I whimpered or cried from pain and that it was the man's pleasure that counted in the bedroom. It has been hard for me to grow up and realize how wrong I was. (DB 301)

The writer notes how the relationship affected her perception of what sex *is.* In fact, as the writer initiates by claiming that she still feels respect toward him and excuses his behavior by stating that she was the one that advanced him and not the other way around, her negative feelings appear to be aimed more toward her perception of sex than the man who affected it. Thus conveying sadness over how the experience affected her sexual subjectivity, which she realized later on as she "grew up." That this testimony is presented in *Dammen brister* also conveys a certain meaning. Despite her careful positioning of the perpetrator, the harm of these kinds of experiences/relationships is underlined.

Without going into the complexity of BDSM (bondage/discipline, dominance/submission, sadomasochism), communities of BDSM practitioners carefully underline *consent* as a core aspect of the practice (Beres and MacDonald 2015). However, consent does not necessarily reflect desire or will, as people can consent to sex they do not desire. For people to state their desire and "willfully consent," it requires that they are aware of their wills and desires, that is, that they have sexual subjectivity. Being young or not having created such subjectivity could make you vulnerable to abuse in sexual situations (Bay-Cheng 2015), particularly in situations of BDSM that work on challenging and bending people's boundaries (Grønli Rosten 2020), even if consent is underlined.

The change in one's boundaries and self-view can allow for additional abuse. As noted in this section, a negative sense of self-worth causes boundaries to blur, and this can become a source of shame. According to McKenzie-Mohr (2014), the negative conclusions that victims draw from their experiences, such as believing they are at fault, can cause them to become vulnerable. This is exemplified by a writer of a very short testimony who initiates by stating how she mostly feels ashamed of how she changed after being raped and how it caused her to not care about her body: "Have let myself be exploited by other men after that and then only felt complete shame. A strong no has been able to turn to a yes, just because it has felt easier to let the man get what he wants." (DB 397). The amount of pressure in these situations is uncertain, as the writer presents "letting herself" be exploited but then says that a strong "no" is turned into a yes. This conveys how having agency is not the opposite of being vulnerable, but the writer also connects this vulnerability to an experience of violence.

A diminished sense of self-worth or sexual subjectivity might also result in the use of sex as a practice of self-harm. When discussing the illuminative moment earlier in this chapter, I cited a woman who argued that because her first sexual experience was rape, she started seeking out similar situations because that's how she thought sex was (DB 206/903). However, I would also like to suggest that a reason for seeking out such situations is to attempt to *reclaim* agency and control. To recreate a position for oneself that is not subordinate. A writer who describes being exposed to an attempted rape at a party presents how her friends excused the man's behavior. She expresses shock over this, having assumed that her friends would be there for her "through thick and thin" (DB 425). She reflects:

> And now, long afterward, I have realized that that was when I seriously became sexually active. Because those who I trusted most at the time had, with their comments, shown that that is how the world works. And my way of protecting myself was

> to myself become sexually active so that in case something would happen that I didn't feel very comfortable with, I could just blame it on myself for wanting it. The worst sort of denial. I'm not saying that I haven't had phenomenal sexual experiences… I've met many nice men and women, and I've learned a lot. But there are some instances in my life where I'm unsure of whether I have used them or they have used me. (DB 425)

The uncertainty regarding whether she had used others for sex or they had used her conveys how the referenced sex can be perceived as potentially self-harming. The writer here contemplates how she actively started seeking out sex in order to gain control of her sexual activities. In other words, her increased sexual activity is explained as an attempt to control her body and sexuality. The writer places the blame for this need to be in control, most explicitly, on her friends' reactions to her attempted rape, but her need to protect herself still comes from the potential threat that her body poses. Her reasoning is similar to consenting to sex to avoid being raped, although she appears to be more preemptive: seeking out these situations in which she can feel in control.

A few writers in *Dammen brister* describe using sex for self-harming. Self-harming behavior is a complex problem that can be perceived differently by the psychiatric field and the people who practice it (Ekman and Söderberg 2009). Whereas the medical field considers it a form of weakness or sign of disease, those who practice self-harm can describe it as a powerful tool to handle difficulties (ibid.). Anna Johansson (2010), in her study on young people's practice of cutting, notes how it can relieve or handle feelings of anxiety, anger, self-hatred, or strong feelings in general. These feelings are perceived as chaotic and uncontrollable, and thus, in contrast, cutting becomes perceived as an act of control and self-determination, which is argued as the reason for its relief of suffering (ibid.). Following this, I suggest that seeking out sex—even painful sex—could be assumed as an attempt to (re)create agency and sexual subjectivity. Willingly engaging in sexual intercourse, even without feelings of "desire," could then be understood as an attempt to place oneself in a position of power and control: to challenge the gendered position described by or to reclaim the agency that their perpetrator denied them. However, drawing on the writers' experiences who have presented such practice, it does not appear to be a sufficient means of creating sexual subjectivity.

***

In this section, I have discussed how writers, through their interpretation of their experiences of violence, present how these have affected their perception of themselves and sex. Their capacity to create sexual

subjectivity—of having agency—is noted to have been constrained and formed by experiences of violence. This conveys how sexual subjectivity and gendered identity are not only limited by discourse of heterosexuality—although it informs and enforces it—but crucially also by experiences of violence. This change can include the perception of self as needing to satisfy, how to be worthy as a woman, and the idea of what constitutes sex in general. The notion that women need to establish a better agency in order to avoid sexual violence hence reveals itself as illogical, as this agency is easily harmed and constrained by discourse or experiences of violence that can make them perceive this abuse as "normal."

Summary: telling the self

In this chapter, I have focused on turning points and change in stories of rape. Starting from the assumption of the self-story as an expected genre—as rape is often perceived as an experience that changes a person's "self"—I have questioned how a turning point can be distinguished and presented in the testimonies, as well as how the writers can present and interpret change more broadly.

The emphasis on change in these self-story testimonies allows narrators to convey meaning beyond what perhaps would be read from a presentation of the events themselves. Similarly to the previous chapter, where I discussed how writers could use multiple experiences to convey a point above and beyond the narrated events, using a self-story format, the narrator can convey the significance that the experiences have had on her person. From these testimonies, it becomes noticeable how various forms of sexual violation—from harassment to assault—and discourse on gender and heterosexuality can affect women's sense of self and sexual subjectivity.

I have suggested that turning points might be efficient for conveying the effects of rape, and such turning points might complexify perceptions regarding *what* such change entails, challenging discourse of rape and trauma. If the turning point is expected by genre, including one might also increase the tellability of the story, especially if the story is presented as one of "overcoming," including a satisfying resolution. However, I have also noted that the idea of a turning point possible to delineate in time and space might not correlate with how violence is experienced. A rape might not represent a specific turning point in a person's narrative of violence but is merely a part of a larger story. If a person has experienced violence repeatedly, singling out a turning point might not be possible. The experience of violence also cannot be limited to the violent act in itself, and recovering from it can be a process, lacking any specific instance where

the person victimized is illuminated and healed. Thus, the experience of violence is multifaceted, and a writer might not be able to or want to, represent a specific turning point in their stories.

In presenting change more broadly, writers convey how discourse on gender and heterosexuality and various forms of sexual harassment have shaped their sexual subjectivity even before they become sexually active themselves. Yet, instances of violence are noted to have further damaged their capacity for establishing agency and sexual subjectivity. The problem with considering agency and vulnerability as dichotomous—and vulnerability as fundamental for establishing whether someone is a victim—is noticeable here. How people act and react in sexual or violent situations depends on how they have been formed and informed by gendered discourse as well as prior experience, which makes it impossible to present a "universal" experience of rape or determine how people "should" act in these situations. Stories of complex and ambiguous experiences of rape and sex are essential in challenging the narrow perception of rape, which can constrain people's ability to understand and interpret these experiences, whether their own or those of others.

Furthermore, being allowed to create meaning and knowledge from their own experiences is useful for the process of self-making. Narrating and recreating a self allows victims to distance themselves from the violence they have endured (cf. Lawless 2001) and to reclaim agency and sexual subjectivity. Notably, the reclamation of agency is not suggested as a strategy to handle the problem of rape but to make these experiences and discourses more perspicuous and allow women to be able to participate in the making of their selves.

Part II: Conclusion

The aim of the second part of the analysis has been to examine the variety of ways in which women narrated experiences of rape in the *Dammen brister* campaign. As I wanted to present the variety of narrative structures among the testimonies, the second part has departed from the broad categories of telling a little, telling a lot, and telling the self.

The analysis conveys how a mono-linear perception of personal experience narratives might be limited in understanding how women narrate experiences of rape in the campaign. However, what I have focused on more here is the extent of the tellable space in *Dammen brister* and how it allowed writers to determine how much to narrate or whether to narrate at all. This space not only functioned to make these stories tellable in general—by allowing women to decide what, or how much, to share—but it also made it possible for women to interpret, reinterpret, and challenge both their own understanding of the experiences as well as the discourse surrounding them. In other words, the space allowed writers to be both witnesses and theorists of their own experience (cf. Alcoff and Gray 1993) and, per extension, creators of knowledge of experiences of sexual violence. In the remaining part of this conclusion, I summarize the conclusions drawn in each chapter.

In chapter 8, titled Telling a little, I examined how writers narrated sparingly within the campaign while still conveying their experiences and communicating meaning. Different genres and styles were recognized among the testimonies that tell little: reporting, fragmented telling, story signifier, and the use of generalized language. These styles of narrating little were made possible because of the assumed shared understanding and knowledge within the *Dammen brister* campaign. The descriptions' brevity required such shared knowledge, while the style also recreated the group as an interpretive community by assuming that these testimonies would still be understandable. I also suggested how these styles of narrating little convey the extent of tellability within the campaign, which stretched to include non-narration, allowing the writers to remain silent about their experiences. Still, these testimonies were emotive as they conveyed both that there *is* an experience, perhaps so common it was unnecessary for it to be narrated, recreating the idea that all women have had these experiences, while also, by not telling much or at all, they made multiple interpretations possible by allowing the readers to "complete" the stories themselves.

In chapter 9, Telling a lot, I examined testimonies in which the writers presented multiple experiences, questioning why one presents many stories and how it affected the meaning conveyed. I distinguished between different styles of narrating multiple experiences: testimonies

of experience-stringing that lined up one experience after the other, testimonies in which these stories were combined with a point or theme, and stories structured as a life narrative. I have suggested that presenting many experiences conveys how common these experiences are and how they interconnect and overlap on a continuum of violence. Additionally, I have argued that the reiteration of multiple events might have increased tellability and hearability by presenting an expanded interpretive frame within which these stories can be understood. If experience has history, a person's prior experiences of violence affect how they experience and interpret later ones. Therefore, narrating only one experience could have appeared as falling short since the experience, in itself, might not have conveyed the meaning ascribed to it by the writer. This would imply that the tellability of stories of rape is limited by the difficulty of representing an isolated experience in an understandable way, as the history of it might be focal.

In chapter 10, Telling the self, I examined testimonies in which the writers describe how they have been affected and changed by the assault. Rape being described as a life-altering event might make the narration of a turning point or change expected. Presenting a turning point can therefore be assumed to have increased tellability of the story, while I have suggested that this notion of a turning point does not necessarily align with the experience of rape, and all narrators might not be able to or want to narrate such a turning point. Contradicting the expectations of a turning point challenged the idea of a rape's effect on a person's life, for example, by illustrating how a single event is not necessarily a life-altering (or life-ending) experience or how instances of violence can constitute merely a part in a longer story of violence. Realizing having been victimized or recovering from rape also might not be possible to pinpoint to a specific instance in time but is rather a process of renegotiation and reinterpretation of the experience. In considering change more broadly, I discussed how experiences of violence can affect women's perception of themselves and their sexual subjectivity. Although discourse on gender and heterosexuality constrained women's ability to create sexual subjectivity, it is clear that the position of "woman" is also enforced by violence, which further disrupted their capacity for agency. Considering agency as the opposite of being vulnerable, then, reveals itself as problematic, as the ability to act and participate in the making of oneself does not mean that the person exists outside of discourse and is unmarked by prior experience. Through narration, writers can begin to reinterpret and create meaning from their experiences, which can allow them to recreate the experience in a way that is more beneficial for them and, per extension, to (re)claim agency and sexual subjectivity.

11. Discussion: Tellability and hearability

> In order to construct self-narratives we need not only the words with which to tell our stories, but also an audience able and willing to hear us and to understand our words as we intend them. This aspect of remaking a self in the aftermath of trauma highlights the dependency of the self on others and helps to explain why it is so difficult for survivors to recover when others are unwilling to listen to what they endured (Brison 2022, 51).

Despite the aspect of silence-breaking that has been connected to #MeToo and *Dammen brister,* rape is not inherently a silenced subject; rather, it is constrained by discourse that determines which stories can be told, where, how, and by whom, and this results in many voices being silenced. Therefore, instead of perceiving the untellability of rape as stemming from the experience causing feelings of shame or trauma (although these factors might add to it)—the outset of this thesis has been that the tellability of rape is constrained by the audience's capacity and willingness to hear these stories. In order for people to continue believing that society is a just place (cf. Bohner et al. 2009) or to avoid acknowledging their own vulnerability (cf. Brison 2022, xvi), listeners can either refuse to hear these stories or try to reinterpret them as something other than rape, generally as the victim's fault or "just sex" (McKenzie-Mohr 2014). Although the #MeToo movement received much praise, it was also criticized on the basis of what was told and how it was told. People, particularly women, had not only spoken on a subject that people did not want to hear but also challenged the forms and spaces in which this speech was allowed. Sexual violence is perceived as necessary to be spoken of, but only in specific contexts and "correct" terms.

Thus, there are constraints on what experiences of rape can be shared, where these can be shared, how they can be shared, and who is allowed to share them, which, per extension, determine what is told and what is heard. These constraints marginalize stories and limit victims' capacity to speak of their experiences and hence contribute to reestablishing a dominant understanding of rape, including what constitutes rape, why it happens, and how often. *Dammen brister*, representing a "wrong place" for sharing these stories (a point to which I return shortly), allowed women to contradict these constrictions on tellability and choose different ways of narrating their experiences. What I initially questioned was how women narrated their experiences when not having to adhere to specific structures or established discourse. In this concluding chapter, I summarize some of the focal conclusions drawn in this thesis by considering how the writers relate to and challenge restrictions regarding *what*, *where*, *how*,

and *who*, which are placed on stories of rape. Considering these restrictions, I end by questioning *why* people would share these stories.

What can be spoken about?

Rape is, by most, considered a serious offense and something that should be abolished, meaning it needs to be spoken of. What experiences are understood as belonging to the category of rape, however, is debated. Generally, the experiences that fit the discourse describing "real rape" are more easily placed in this category and, per extension, tellable, while other experiences might be silenced due to not being allowed access to this category (but instead perceived as, e.g., "just sex"). A narrow definition of rape hence excuses a wide range of abusive behavior by categorizing it as essentially "not rape" and, thus, legitimate (Kelly 1988). Thus, what "counts" as rape is focal to the discussion on it, and these categories also affect a story's tellability.

There were critical voices raised against the #MeToo movement that requested proper differentiation and categorization of different sexually violent experiences. Australian journalist Libby-Jane Charleston (2017) notes how she did not participate in #MeToo even though she had been sexually harassed due to the concern that stories of harassment "water down" the ones that "really deserve" to be told. Hence, certain stories are denied access to the category of "important" stories and should, therefore, not be told. Such a request is silencing, demanding a hierarchal categorization of experience and judging what can be told while ignoring how different forms of sexual violence cannot be separated from one another and how personal experiences can be surrounded by ambiguity, not easily placed into a specific category.

The fact that *Dammen brister* was open to experiences ranging from sexual harassment to assault resulted in it presenting a wide variety of different experiences. Therefore, rather than perceiving the lack of proper categorization as something negative, I view it as a strength, as it opened the possibility of representing many different, sometimes ambiguous, experiences, of which some perhaps do not easily fit a specific category. The writers did not have to question whether their experience "fits" the category of rape, harassment, abuse, etc., but they were instead allowed to select any and all experiences from a continuum of violence. Even though I have focused on the experiences of rape, the breadth of the scope permitted writers to convey experiences from the "gray area" between sex and rape, to present ambiguous experiences that are perhaps not readily understood as rape even by the writer herself. Had the campaign tried to differentiate between stories of harassment, assault, and rape, my material

would perhaps have been smaller, as not all experiences of coercive sex always fit comfortably in the category of rape.

By starting from personal experience as well as being open to a wide range of experiences, the testimonies in *Dammen brister* could present a more complex picture of rape: what constitutes rape, how it happens, how it is experienced, and with which consequences. Many testimonies presented experiences that fit a dominant perception of rape, but again others described ones that might fall outside a narrow definition, hence challenging this perception and broadening the category of "real" rape. Being told in the context of the campaign meant that writers did not have to name the experience as rape (although many do), but the experience is still understood as "wrong." A lack of language to describe the experiences in the gray area is noted to have made the narration of them difficult, but I would suggest that simply being able to narrate without *naming* it, and with the assumption that it would still be validated, the campaign increased tellability of these experiences.

Expectations regarding how rape happens are complexified in testimonies presenting how relationships of trust can cause an assault to be sudden, and how a situation does not necessarily appear as escalating toward rape when the event is unfolding. The expectation that women should be able to secure their bodies and deflect a situation in time is revealed as illogical in the testimonies that show how there is not necessarily any indications in the events preceding the rape that signify such a result, but rather how the rape can be sudden and unexpected in commonplace situations and environments in which the writer felt safe. When reinterpreted in hindsight, the events preceding the rape can be understood as leading to the endpoint of rape (or sex), but such a sequence of events does not have to be obvious as they are unfolding.

Testimonies also complexify the expectation of resistance as the necessary precondition for something to be understood as rape, or at least as the logical reaction to it. For example, testimonies present how not resisting can be a means of limiting damage and escaping pain. In these situations, submitting can be the safest action and should hence be perceived as an act of agency (cf. Mardorossian 2014). Other testimonies describe how easily resistance can be ignored. Through continuous manipulation, coercion, and boundary-crossing, a woman can be forced into a position from which she finds no other escape than to submit, essentially to avoid being raped. These stories problematize the idea that rape can be avoided if women knew how to say no, showing how it is less the result of misunderstanding than how comfortable men can be in forcing sex. A woman pressured into submitting might be "heard" by the perpetrator as consenting, and thus, the act as essentially "not rape," demonstrating why "consent" might not be a useful way of differentiation between sex and

rape. What forcing consent also indicates is how little relevance a woman's actual desire can have in sexual situations, which relates to heterosexual discourse that presents sex as for the pleasure of men and the duty of women (cf. Gavey 2019). Such discourse can also make coercion obsolete, as by having been internalized, it can constrain women's perception of sex and their sexual subjectivity, limiting their capacity for establishing agency and refusing sex they do not want (ibid.). Having had difficulties declining sex is commonly presented among the testimonies, in particular during teenage years and the writers' first relationships, and this is presented as stemming from such discourse. Still, crucially, it is also an understanding that is supported and re-established by the perpetrator and experiences of violence.

Per extension, the testimonies present complex positions of victims and perpetrators, challenging notions regarding who is a "real" victim and a "real" perpetrator, as described by discourse, and hence problematize the dichotomy of agency and vulnerability. The stories convey how people can be vulnerable while still having agency, as contextual factors such as place and the victim's relationship with the perpetrator can create situations in which the ability to affirm agency and subjectivity is limited (Jokila and Niemi 2020). The way in which discursive constructions of gender and heterosexuality contribute to making women vulnerable is specifically highlighted among testimonies that reflect on how previous experiences have shaped and affected their agency, their perception of sex, and their own self-worth. This also emphasizes how different people have different prerequisites for presenting agency and resistance, depending on their bodies and the discourse and previous experience that has formed and marked said body. That these gendered positions are noted to be recreated and reestablished by experiences of rape and sexual violence demonstrates the social function of rape to reestablish gender (cf. Cahill 2001, 122). Further research using a different material than in the present study is needed for analyzing rape as an embodied experience to consider how different subjects experience rape and how it affects their perception of their selves and their sexual subjectivity.

The testimonies in *Dammen brister* can also offer a counterview to the so-called trauma discourse, which has been criticized due to its determining trauma as the *obvious* (rather than possible) outcome of rape (Gavey and Schmidt 2011). The trauma discourse was introduced to counter the idea of rape as "no big deal," but by becoming increasingly dominant, it, in turn, can marginalize and silence stories by those who do not feel or adequately show signs of trauma. As there is no universal experience of rape, it is crucial to continue complexifying the perception of it, including the notion that it necessarily results in trauma. The writers in *Dammen brister* rarely explicitly challenged the idea that they would be

traumatized—an issue that easily could have been considered as beside the point of the campaign—but ones that discuss the aftermath of the experience rarely use the term trauma. The writers do present a variety of negative effects that they suffer or have suffered from their experience, only without naming it as trauma. As sharing these effects with others has been noted as beneficial for those who have been victimized (Alcoff 2018; Brison 2022), I have suggested that there might be a benefit in being able to mention and discuss such effects without the label, or category, of trauma. In this sense, the category of trauma-narrative could be perceived as rendering stories untellable if the person telling is not comfortable within such category. Thus, similarly to the difficulty of naming something as rape, the necessity of naming something as trauma (or having such a label imposed upon one's story) could make them less tellable. My point here is that it might be easier to discuss negative effects if they are not labeled trauma, just as it might be easier to present a negative sexual experience if it does not need to be labeled rape.

The focus on categorizing experiences and establishing proper definitions can silence individual experiences by arguing that their story does not fit the category and hence should not be told, but furthermore, it also shifts the attention from the violence to discussing proper definitions, which essentially silences the problem of violence altogether. By ignoring the necessity of categorization of experience, *Dammen brister* challenged what experiences were perceived as important and tellable and what experiences constitute "real rape." Instead, the writers started from their own experiences, and therefore, they could introduce new understandings and interpretations of sexual violence.

Where should you speak of rape?

Dammen brister and the #MeToo movement have been criticized not explicitly due to *speaking* of rape but because this speech was presented in the "wrong" spaces. In the backlash, the movement is argued to be extrajudicial, a threat to due process, basically making those speaking out to be the offenders and the accused victims of a witch hunt (Gilmore 2023, 6; Stenius 2017). Alcoff (2018, 52) notes how victims of sexual violence are confined to certain "legitimate venues" in which they are allowed to speak of rape. These include, for example, the court and other officially recognized sites where people of authority determine the structure and content of the communication, and victims venturing outside these legitimate venues can be suspended and sanctioned (ibid.). Thus, limiting where people are allowed to speak constrains tellability, as it confines

these voices to specific spaces—where they have less control over it—while denying them access to others.

While the understanding that the criminal justice system should take care of these problems might be ingrained in people's understanding, confining victims to legal (or therapeutic) spaces is essentially denying them their right to their stories—their entitlement to the experiences and the interpretation of them—by arguing that these experiences need to be examined and judged by someone *other* than the tellers themselves. Alternatively, compelling victims to speak in specific venues can reflect an unwillingness to hear these stories, which is both silencing and obstructing their ability to recover from the incident (Brison 2022, 51). In contrast to the court, digital feminist spaces generally lack the hierarchy between teller and listener and instead offer a space of peer-to-peer witnessing (Loney-Howes 2020, 73). In discussion with their peers, rather than an "expert," victims are allowed to become theorists of their own experiences, interpret their experiences, and create knowledge.

In *Dammen brister,* the writers could reflect on their experiences, piece together different ones, and interpret how these have affected their lives. This was done in collaboration with the other members, yet they were not dependent on them or their interpretations; instead, the campaign created space by promising hearability and validation of the stories. Such space was perhaps not assumed automatically but established during the week of the collection process as members of the group supported each other, either through direct commenting or "reacting" or by sharing their own stories, thus motivating others to share theirs. Writers contributed to creating a "we" by relating to the other members and the campaign in their testimonies, establishing a sense of community in the group. This was done, for example, by directly addressing the others, which was often carried out in the abstracts or the codas of the stories, or by relating to an assumed shared knowledge or experience of sexual violence. Thus, the campaign was established as an interpretive community where members could speak with the expectation of being heard.

Being able to recreate the experience in a narrative can be fundamental for moving past and healing from it, but this is a process that requires a listener (Laub 1992; Brison 2022). Thus, constituting a space in which these stories were promised to be heard, the campaign can be argued to have made the recreation of them possible. In addition, however, merely offering a place in which these stories could be told also contributed to their making, as a story is not something that exists prior to being told but is produced in the telling of it and having a place to present a story is crucial for being able to do so. Many writers in *Dammen brister* note how they had never told this story before, which could be caused by the untellability of the subject, but I would further suggest that a lack of places

in which to tell stories of rape can explain why they have not been told. There is no obvious place in which one would present stories of rape (cf. Bates 2016, 18–19), besides therapeutic or legal spaces or specific feminist spaces, and having no space in which to be told can cause them not to be. Per this view, rape is not a silenced subject but rather lacks spaces in which to be performed.

Furthermore, digital spaces offer people victimized the chance to be in control of their own stories, and for some, this can be understood as more powerful than participating in the formal legal system (Loney-Howes 2020, 126). Feminist criminologists have noted that the formal justice system is badly equipped to meet the needs of the victims, which includes being able to express themselves in meaningful ways, receive validation and support, and affirmation of having been wronged (Fileborn 2017; J. L. Herman 2005). Thus, having their perpetrator punished in the criminal justice system might not be perceived as the primary goal for writers, which, in addition to the report presented by Amnesty International (2019) that shows how the reporting of sexual crimes in Finland is basically a lottery with no way of knowing how it will be handled, can explain why people chose to share in these spaces rather than within the "legitimate" justice system. This does not make digital feminist campaigns extrajudicial or challenging the formal justice system, but are rather revealed as other informal spaces that might be either more suitable or more accessible for the needs of these writers. Thus, the question ought not to be whether women are "allowed" to share in these spaces, but their doing so should instead incite inquiry into *why* they choose to share in these spaces rather than within the "legitimate" venues.

The "problem" with people sharing in these spaces is likely not that it endangers due process but rather because these stories lack the control of an "objective" interpreter. The writers themselves are allowed to create meaning from their experiences, and this can be perceived as threatening since it might challenge dominant discourse. In this case, discourse determining what should be perceived as rape, how it happens, what reactions are logical, etc. Confining these stories to the legitimate venues for a small audience of authorized individuals to determine their legitimacy and interpretation, as well as what is to happen with the stories, could hence be perceived as a means to silence them and control the cultural understanding of rape and sexual violence. By proceeding from personal experience, the testimonies present a different perception of rape and other forms of sexual violence, which might challenge dominant discourse and, generally, expand on the idea of what constitutes rape, what causes it, and who is to blame. Thus, *Dammen brister* could be perceived as the wrong space to share stories of rape, not because the place itself is wrong but because the

stories can represent "wrong" experiences of rape and hence need to be controlled by someone other than the teller herself.

How can you speak of rape?

The aforementioned "legitimate venues" represent not only where stories of rape should be shared but these venues also create expectations regarding *how* they should be narrated. This narrative structure might not be sensitive to the needs of the victims and limits their capacity to narrate in their own voice (J. L. Herman 2005; Loney-Howes 2020), and the cross-examination and detail required for these testimonies can even be perceived as a second assault (Serisier 2018, 73). As the stories move beyond the courts to a digital space, such requirements are expected to lose their legitimacy; however, due to the long-standing tradition of doubting women's stories (Gilmore 2017, 17), stories of rape can still be judged according to legal criteria (Serisier 2018, 112), as people on the internet conduct their own investigation into the texts describing the rape (ibid., 105). Thus, being told outside of the court does not necessarily shield them from being subjected to particular structural expectations and critique. Furthermore, the genre of personal stories, as well as the campaign itself, also placed expectations on how the writers should present their stories.

The writers in *Dammen brister* could adhere to certain expectations, positioning themselves according to discourse in a way that would ensure their stories are heard correctly, carefully explaining the events preceding the rape, how they resisted, etc. This could suggest how the requirements for establishing legitimacy and credibility were known to the writers or simply how ingrained these discourses of blame are in our perception of rape. Yet, as was noted in the first section of this chapter, the space was also perceived as open and accepting of all kinds of stories, and this extends to include the structure of the narrative. Thus, writers could be creative when presenting their testimonies, opting for which parts to narrate, how little, or how much.

Genre can force a structure to an experience that it might lack (Andrews 2010). When the narrative form wants to bestow coherence on an incoherent experience, it offers a frame that might not correlate with how it is perceived by the narrator. For example, if one cannot delineate a beginning, middle, and end for one's experience, forcing it into such a structure can transform the experience into something it is not—finished and in the past. An experience of rape is not necessarily easy to delimit in time and space, as it can stretch out over a long period of time and even into the present. The difficulty of creating coherence can stem from the experience being traumatic, but I have also suggested that experiences for which there

is limited language, are dependent on previous ones, or the writers have not told before, might be challenging to present according to an established story structure.

Expectations of coherence and a simple structure of presenting a beginning, a middle, and an end could hence already be obstructive for people attempting to narrate rape. However, the writers in *Dammen brister* did not appear all that restricted by such expectations. Some testimonies are constructed according to an expected genre of personal experience narratives, but by proceeding from such an expected structure, it becomes apparent how writers also took liberties to deviate from it and use it creatively, which indicates how the campaign offered narrative space for the writers. In opting for what to include or the amount of detail in the presentation of different parts, the writers could focus on certain parts and exclude—or merely mention—others. I have suggested that being allowed to choose what to include and how might have made these stories more tellable. For example, not needing to narrate the rape act in itself might have eased the recreation of a story, while careful orientation presenting the situation in which the rape happened could have caused another one to be more hearable. The rape act might be expected to be described in a story of rape; however, it might also constitute the most difficult part to narrate, and I find it questionable for whom such a description would be necessary.

The expectation for a story to include an end that preferably provides restitution, of having "overcome" the incidents, could be ignored by the writers. Instead of creating comfort for the audience by presenting how it all worked out in the end, the writers could leave the readers in an unbalanced, uncomfortable state, also challenging expectations of having to heal from rape. These stories describe vulnerability, which is a narrative form that might place more burden on the listeners (Thorne and McLean 2003) while creating comfort might also be expected from a feminine position. Being allowed to ignore such requirements, I would argue, is crucial, as the victims of rape do not owe their audience comfort or healing, and prohibiting them from creating discomfort can be silencing. Such discomfort might even be helpful, forcing the listeners to be privy to the reality of this violence. Additionally, challenging expectations of overcoming and healing could be crucial in order to avoid such a path becoming perceived as the "ideal" for victims of rape. If women victimized are expected to heal, failing to adhere to this ideal could create feelings of shame. In this manner, providing a satisfying end would not only be necessary to be a good narrator but also a Good Victim of rape.

Other testimonies could exclude much more than simply the rape or the end of the story. In chapter 8. Telling a little, I argue that the interpretive community of *Dammen brister*, in which an understanding of sexual vio-

lence was perceived as shared among the members, made different styles of narration possible, as the writers could expect the readers to understand (or at least accept) their stories regardless of elaboration and detail. The narrators did not have to be elaborate in their descriptions if they believed the readers would be capable of piecing together the story correctly themselves. As a result, writers could present a report of the incident or simply fragments of the experience, making the audience interpret much for themselves. The experience could also be merely signified, as writers present having an experience that is not told. Sharing the hashtag "me too" was also a means of signifying a story, but using what I have named "story signifiers" in the campaign, the writers also named the event but stopped short of narrating the experience.

The story signifiers convey the extent of the tellable space provided by *Dammen brister*, extended to include the possibility of not narrating at all. Due to the limitations of the material, I have not been able to determine the reason why writers simply signify experiences, but regardless, these signifiers allowed writers to participate in the campaign without sharing an experience and convey a view of how these are common and shared among the participants. By not including details, the signifiers challenge the expectations of allowing the experience to be subjected to readers' scrutiny and interpretation and instead remain in the ownership of the writer. In other words, the story signifiers challenge how women are supposed to speak of rape and efficiently convey the commonality of these experiences while essentially staying silent. Simply naming the event could still have been beneficial for the writers, acknowledging (and voicing) *having* been victimized.

The difficulty of creating coherence out of incoherent experiences might explain testifiers who, in contrast to those signifying experiences, told multiple stories in long testimonies. These stories could be strung up one after the other—a narrative style I have referred to as experience-stringing—or connected according to a theme or the narrator's life. These testimonies, I have suggested, imply a difficulty of presenting a single experience when one has many that might have affected and shaped how the individual experiences are understood. By presenting many experiences, the writers could construct a broader interpretive framework within which the specific narratives are more understandable as these stories build on and inform one another. Experience has history, and thus how people experience rape is dependent on prior experience, knowledge, and situated discourse that has informed and shaped both their perception of reality as well as their material bodies (Alcoff 2018; Cahill 2001). When extracted from its history, an experience might fail to communicate the meanings ascribed to it by the writer, and might perhaps even be perceived as unintelligible.

The practices of telling a little and telling a lot challenge notions regarding how rape is to be told. By telling little or simply signifying an experience, the writer does not provide the necessary detail that a reader might expect, perhaps in order to form their own opinion regarding "what really happened." In telling a lot, the writers could construct knowledge and interpretation that stretches far beyond a single event to illuminate how an experience of rape cannot necessarily be delineated in time and space or separated from other instances of violence. It is presented as a personal experience that is experienced differently by different people, thus challenging the idea of a universal experience of rape. The infeasibility of expecting every victim of rape to react and rationalize in specific ways is revealed, as it is shown how subjects are shaped by discourse and previous experience. By allowing the person victimized to herself make sense of the incident on the basis of her previous experiences, rather than someone else attempting to conceptualize an event extracted from such context and according to a normative idea of how rape happens and how victims should react to it, we can gain valuable insight to the experience of rape.

Who can speak of rape?

How (and if) a story of rape is heard depends on who is telling it. This includes how the victim is perceived, with those who are understood as "ideal" victims (cf. Christie 2001)—who acted correctly and are assumed to be "innocent"—are more easily heard than those who did not take the expected precautions to protect their bodies and acted wrongly before, during, or after the rape. Moreover, the general position of the speaker established by identity categories such as gender, sexuality, race, class, and ability affect what they can disclose and in what circumstances (Fileborn 2019), meaning that not everyone has equal access to speaking and being heard. Being placed under the signifier woman can limit a person's space to speak. Women's access to the position of performer has been noted as limited in general (Sawin 2002), and thus, not only have women historically been excluded from determining what rape is (Kelly 1988), but women speaking publicly about rape challenge cultural notions regarding who is allowed in the spotlight (Manne 2019). This space is reserved for men, and women drawing attention to themselves can be accused of self-centeredness and -dramatization (ibid., 231).

The writers in the campaign, who travel under the signifier woman, could hence be perceived as claiming a position that has not been readily available for them. Some writers appeared to take a careful approach to claiming such a position, negotiating their right to speak of their

experience, while others made copious use of the space, reiterating multiple experiences. In general, the permission and opportunity to tell these stories were celebrated, conveying how such speech had not previously been considered acceptable. Many testimonies present experiences from younger years, implying that these either happen more frequently to younger people or that it is more difficult for girls to speak of these experiences. Not yet having explored and established a sexual subjectivity might hamper one's capacity to interpret and recognize sexually abusive behavior, understanding it as such only in hindsight. Althewhile, younger children have even more limited language to interpret and describe such experiences.

In addition, the small minority of Finland-Swedes is noted to have impeded on writers' possibility to present these experiences, not only because Finland-Swedish men are not recognizable as rapists but also because accusing a Finland-Swedish man likely means accusing a friend's or acquaintance's friend, brother, son, colleague, etc. There is the risk that people will hold the perpetrator's back, they will themselves be ostracized, and doors will close. Identifying someone as a perpetrator of rape also means revealing oneself as a victim of rape and having one's story become an object for public interpretation in small communities. Regardless of whether one is believed, such a process and marking of oneself might be uncomfortable. The permission to be anonymous, also within the secret group, hence most likely increased tellability for many writers. The "secret" setting on Facebook is little comfort if the group is filled with friends, family, and acquaintances, in addition to journalists happy to break the embargo for a quick scoop.

Furthermore, due to the permission to speak, the writers could challenge the perceptions of which victims' speech is permissible and accepted. As noted in the first section on what could be told, the testimonies illuminated the complexity surrounding rape, and this also challenged ideas regarding who is a "real" victim. The stories of women who had been in a relationship with their perpetrator; who willingly went home with him; who did not resist; who drank alcohol; who only later realized having been raped were allowed to be narrated and heard; thus, broadening the idea of who deserves to speak and be validated. The redistribution of blame and recognition of these experiences as rape or simply "wrong" challenges the idea that these women are blameworthy and should feel shame.

Sawin (2002) suggests that a reason why the position of the performer is not readily available for women is due to the performance's capacity to convey emotions. Stories can produce affect, and thus, when oriented toward the wrong objects, these stories can be perceived as dangerous. The writers in *Dammen brister* challenged not only who could speak of

rape, but through their stories, they might also urge people to reimagine their perception of the person who has been victimized; in an empathizing, rather than blaming, way. And to recognize where the blame should lie. Therefore, limiting who can speak can be understood as a means of maintaining the structures established by the dominant order.

Why speak of rape?

Speaking about rape is often presented as necessary for its eradication, yet it has been noted that there has been no decrease in the crime despite the fact that we have been speaking about it for at least fifty years (Serisier 2018). Speaking publicly about one's experience of rape is also a precarious project. Sharing a story of rape might pose a risk for the teller, such as being disbelieved, blamed, excluded, harassed, or threatened; and, as the story travels from the person who experienced it, it can be reinterpreted and given a fundamentally different meaning than the teller initially intended. When placed in new contexts, the story might have other functions; for example, they can be used for entertainment, offering "trauma-drama" or sadistic voyeurism for the audience (Alcoff and Gray 1993). Sharing within a campaign, in collaboration with others, and in a space constructed as safe might be easier and more secure, but the aims and intentions of these campaigns can also be diffused when represented in traditional media (Karlsson 2019b). Why people remain silent about being raped could hence be perceived as a less relevant question than why they decide to narrate their experiences at all.

The writers in *Dammen brister* offer multiple reasons for why they decided to share their experiences. These reasons included wanting to raise awareness of the problem of sexual violence, cause change, and due to feelings of solidarity with others. In addition to this, I would suggest that a reason for sharing was that they could. Some writers express relief to be allowed to speak or that we finally speak of these issues. But in general, considering merely the sheer amount of testimonies and the incredible length of some of them, it seems to me that these are stories that people really want to, or have a need to, tell. And as some writers noted, they could share these without being dismissed or disbelieved. Telling your experience of rape has been argued to require an audience, as these stories must be heard to make recovery possible (Brison 2011, 58). Sharing with others who have similar experiences can also be beneficial, as it might allow them to reinterpret their own, realize they are not alone in having had them, and how their actions and reactions might be shared and "normal." Brison further argues that hearing others' stories can be healing for victims of rape. It might be easier to empathize with others,

and this empathy can subsequently be extended to oneself. It can also give people access to emotions such as anger—directed first at someone else's perpetrator, which in turn can allow them to be angry at their own, instead of feeling guilt and shame toward themselves (ibid., 73). This means that telling and listening to others' stories can aid victims in recreating their own narratives in a way that is more beneficial for them, one that represents a more positive self-view and allows them to empathize with their former selves (cf. Lawless 2001).

However, the audience, regardless of whether it consists of people with or without personal experience, must be ready to listen to these stories. In order to listen, the audience needs to be willing to imagine things differently, but additionally, to accept not knowing or understanding someone else's experience. People too ingrained in their own ways of perceiving rape might not be open to the experiences of others and could even do harm by attempting to fit these into their own understanding, denying the teller her right to her story and the interpretation of her experience. This includes not only the dominant categories discussed at the beginning of this chapter but also feminist counter-discourse describing rape can be limiting, hindering people from hearing others' stories. Therefore, we need to continue presenting stories of rape to complexify our understanding of it and recognize how not everyone's experience is the same; to enhance people's capacity to listen and hear these stories, alerting them of how their way of thinking is shaped by discourse describing gender, rape, and sex and making them susceptible to new perceptions and frameworks of meaning.

Furthermore, I argue that we must not expect those who have been victimized to present their experiences in a way that makes them understandable to the audience. One key suggestion I have presented in this thesis is that tellers might benefit from being able to choose what to share, share briefly, or simply signify an experience, and I think we must be open to these kinds of unfinished, uncomfortable narratives in order to increase the tellability of rape. Conversely, we should also afford space to those who might require a different approach to narrating, presenting a myriad of stories to facilitate understanding (for themselves or others) of individual ones. An experience of rape might not be extractable from the flow of one's life, and thus the narration of *an* account of rape should not be expected. This difficulty demonstrates why rape cannot be understood in general terms, as it is an individual experience that affects people in different ways, depending on the discourse and prior experience that has marked and formed them (cf. Cahill 2001).

Connected to why we should speak of rape is the question of why such speech should be studied. The intention of this thesis has been to examine how women narrate rape when allowed to do so in their own words, but

why is this examination beneficial for working against the problem of rape and sexual violence? Understanding different ways of telling was meant to offer insight into how previously untellable stories were made tellable, which could benefit people victimized by informing them of how they can narrate, while also instructing listeners on how stories can be shaped differently and how to listen. Speaking of rape can be difficult, and this is partly due to the audience's inability to hear these stories; thus, in order to increase tellability of rape, women's own stories need to be rendered hearable and respected (Cahill 2001, 111). Phrased differently, I suggest that understanding the diverse ways of narrating rape is crucial for facilitating hearability of these stories. Personal stories of rape demonstrate the complexity and ambiguity surrounding these experiences, but what also needs to be acknowledged is how these can be represented in a multitude of ways yet still be "good" stories of rape; important, beneficial, and worthy of being heard.

References

Adelswärd, Viveka. 1997. "Berättelser från älgpassen. Om metoder för att analysera jaktberättelsers struktur, poäng och sensmoral." In *Att studera berättelser. Samhällsvetenskapliga och medicinska perspektiv*, edited by Lars-Christer Hydén and Margareta Hydén. Stockholm: Liber.

Ahmed, Sara. 2017. *Att leva feministiskt*. Hägersten: TankeKraft Förlag.

Ahrens, Courtney E. 2006. "Being Silenced: The Impact of Negative Social Reactions on the Disclosure of Rape." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 38 (3–4): 31–34.

Alaattinoğlu, Daniela, Heini Kainulainen, and Johanna Niemi. 2021. "Rape in Finnish Criminal Law and Process - A Discussion on, and beyond, Consent." *Bergen Journal of Criminal Law and Criminal Justice* 8 (2): 21–40.

Alcalde, M. Cristina, and Paula-Irene Villa, eds. 2022. *#MeToo and Beyond: Perspectives on a Global Movement*. University Press of Kentucky.

Alcoff, Linda. 2018. *Rape and Resistance: Understanding the Complexities of Sexual Violation*. Cambridge: Polity.

Alcoff, Linda, and Laura Gray. 1993. "Survivor Discourse: Transgression or Recuperation?" *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 18 (2): 260–90.

Allardt, Erik, and Christian Starck. 1981. *Språkgränser och samhällsstruktur: finlandssvenskarna i ett jämförande perspektiv*. Stockholm: AWE/Geber.

Ambjörnsson, Fanny, and Maria Jönsson. 2010. "Introduktion." In *Livslinjer: berättelser om ålder, genus och sexualitet*, edited by Fanny Ambjörnsson and Maria Jönsson. Göteborg: Makadam.

Amnesty International. 2019. *Time for Change: Justice for Rape Survivors in the Nordic Countries*. Amnesty International Publications.

———. 2023. "Naisiin kohdistuva väkivalta." Amnesty International. Accessed: September 15, 2023. https://www.amnesty.fi/mita-amnesty-tekee/naisiin-kohdistuva-vakivalta/.

Anderson, Monica, and Skye Toor. 2018. "How Social Media Users Have Discussed Sexual Harassment since #MeToo Went Viral." *Pew Research Center* (blog). October 11, 2018. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2018/10/11/how-social-media-users-have-discussed-sexual-harassment-since-metoo-went-viral/

Andersson, Ulrika. 2001. "Det gränslöst feminina. Kvinnor kroppar och sexualiteter i rättslig hantering av våldtäkt." In *Mord, misshandel och sexuella övergrepp: historiska och kulturella perspektiv på kön och våld*, edited by Inger Lövkrona. Lund: Nordic Academic Press.

Andersson, Ulrika, and Monika Edgren. 2018. "Vulnerability, Agency and the Ambivalence of Place in Narratives of Rape in Three High-Profile Swedish Cases." *NORA: Nordic Journal of Women's Studies* 26 (3): 197–209.

Andersson, Ulrika, Monika Edgren, Lena Karlsson, and Gabriella Nilsson. 2019. "Introductory Chapter: Rape Narratives in Motion." In *Rape Narratives in Motion*, edited by Ulrika Andersson, Monika Edgren, Lena Karlsson, and Gabriella Nilsson, 1st edition. Cham: Springer International Publishing: Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan.

Andreasen, Maja Brandt. 2021. "'Rapeable' and 'Unrapeable' Women: The Portrayal of Sexual Violence in Internet Memes about #MeToo." *Journal of Gender Studies* 30 (1): 102–13.

Andrews, Molly. 2004. "Opening to the Original Contributions." In *Considering Counter-Narratives: Narrating, Resisting, Making Sense*, edited by Michael Bamberg and Molly Andrews. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

———. 2007. *Shaping History: Narratives of Political Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2010. "Beyond Narrative. The Shape of Traumatic Testimony." In *Beyond Narrative Coherence*, edited by Matti Hyvärinen, Lars-Christer Hydén, Marja Saarenheimo, and

Maria Tamboukou. Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamin.

Andrews, Molly, Corinne Squire, and Maria Tamboukou. 2013. "Introduction: What Is Narrative Research?" In *Doing Narrative Research*, edited by Molly Andrews, Corinne Squire, and Maria Tamboukou, 2nd edition. Los Angeles; California: Sage.

Arvidsson, Alf. 1998. *Livet som berättelse: studier i levnadshistoriska intervjuer*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

———. 1999. *Folklorens former*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

———. 2022. *Kulturanalys och metakultur*. 1st edition. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Asplund Ingemark, Camilla. 2022. "Framtidens Former: Hur Genrer Formar Förståelsen Av En Klimatförändrad Framtid i Folkloristiska Frågelistsvar." *Tidsskrift for Kulturforskning*, no. 1: 31–48.

Backa, Andreas. 2017. "Tolerans som ideologi och hanteringsstrategi. Två finlandssvenska organisationers tal om tolerans." In *Föreställda finlandssvenskheter: intersektionella perspektiv på det svenska i Finland*, edited by Sven-Erik Klinkmann, Blanka Henriksson, and Andreas Häger. Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland.

Bäckman, Maria. 2003. *Kön och känsla: samlevnadsundervisning och ungdomars tankar om sexualitet*. Göteborg: Makadam.

Baker, Andrea, and Usha Manchanda Rodrigues. 2022. *Reporting on Sexual Violence in the #MeToo Era*. Routledge.

Bakhtin, Mikhail M. 1986. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Edited by Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson. Translated by Vern McGee. 1st edition. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Bal, Mieke. 1985. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Bamberg, Michael. 1997. "Positioning Between Structure and Performance." *Journal of Narrative and Life History* 4 (1–4): 335–42.

———. 2004. "Considering counter narratives." In *Considering Counter-Narratives: Narrating, Resisting, Making Sense*, edited by Michael Bamberg and Molly Andrews. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

———. 2006. "Stories: Big or Small: Why Do We Care?" *Narrative Inquiry: NI* 16 (1): 139–60.

Bamberg, Michael, and Alexandra Georgakopoulou. 2008. "Small Stories as a New Perspective in Narrative and Identity Analysis." *Text & Talk* 28 (3): 377–96.

Bartholdsson, Åsa. 2010. "Mamma-pappa-barn. Femåringar om den heterosexuella familjen som livsprojekt." In *Livslinjer: berättelser om ålder, genus och sexualitet*, edited by Fanny Ambjörnsson and Maria Jönsson, 125–47. Göteborg: Makadam.

Bates, Laura. 2016. *Everyday Sexism*. First U.S. edition. New York: Thomas Dunne Books/St. Martin's Griffin.

Bauman, Richard. 2004. *A World of Others' Words: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Intertextuality*. Malden: Blackwell.

Bay-Cheng, Laina Y. 2015. "The Agency Line: A Neoliberal Metric for Appraising Young Women's Sexuality." *Sex Roles* 73 (7–8): 279–91.

Bell, Susan E. 1988. "Becoming A Political Woman: The Reconstruction and Interpretation of Experience Through Stories." In *Gender and Discourse: The Power of Talk*, edited by Alexandra Dundas Todd and Sue Fisher. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Benmayor, Rina. 2012. "Digital Testimonio as a Signature Pedagogy for Latin@ Studies." *Equity & Excellence in Education* 45 (3): 507–24.

Beres, Melanie. 2010. "Sexual Miscommunication? Untangling Assumptions about Sexual Communication between Casual Sex Partners." *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 12 (1): 1–14.

Beres, Melanie, and Jo E. C. MacDonald. 2015. "Talking About Sexual Consent: Heterosexual Women and BDSM." *Australian Feminist Studies* 30 (86): 418–32.

Berg, Heather. 2020. "Left of #MeToo." *Feminist Studies* 46 (2): 259–86.

Beverly, John. 2000. "Testimonio, Subalternity, and Narrative Authority." In *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, 2nd edition, 555–65.

Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Billig, Michael. 2005. *Laughter and Ridicule: Towards a Social Critique of Humour*. London: Sage.

Bletzer, Keith V., and Mary P. Koss. 2004. "Narrative Constructions of Sexual Violence as Told by Female Rape Survivors in Three Populations of the Southwestern United States: Scripts of Coercion, Scripts of Consent." *Medical Anthropology* 23 (2): 113–56.

Bohner, Gerd, Friederike Eyssel, Afroditi Pina, Frank Siebler, and G. Tendayi Viki. 2009. "Rape Myth Acceptance: Cognitive, Affective and Behavioural Effects of Beliefs That Blame the Victim and Exonerate the Perpetrator." In *Rape: Challenging Contemporary Thinking*, edited by Miranda A. H. Horvath and Jennifer M. Brown. London: Willan.

Boshoff, Priscilla, and Jeanne Prinsloo. 2015. "Expurgating the Monstrous: An Analysis of the South African Daily Sun's Coverage of Gang Rape." *Feminist Media Studies* 15 (2): 208–22.

Briggs, Charles L., and Richard Bauman. 1992. "Genre, Intertextuality, and Social Power." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 2 (2): 131–72.

Brink, Axel. 2018. "Nu Ställer Sig Folk Upp Mot Sexuella Trakasserier Inom Kyrkan – 'Förskräckliga Berättelser Tystas Ner.'" *Svenska Yle*, January 10, 2018.

Brison, Susan J. 2022. *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self*. 2nd edition. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Brockmeier, Jens, and Lars-Christer Hydén. 2008. "Introduction: From the Retold to the Performed Story." In *Health, Illness and Culture: Broken Narratives*, edited by Jens Brockmeier and Lars-Christer Hydén. New York: Routledge.

Brodie, Ian. 2014. *A Vulgar Art: A New Approach to Stand-Up Comedy*. Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi.

Brownmiller, Susan. 1975. *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*. London: Secker & Warburg.

Burgess, Ann Wolbert, and Lynda Lytle Holmstrom. 1974. "Rape Trauma Syndrome." *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 131 (9): 981–86.

Butler, Judith. 2011. "Sexual Consent: Some Thoughts on Psychoanalysis and Law." *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law* 21 (2): 405–15.

Cahill, Ann J. 2000. "Foucault, Rape, and the Construction of the Feminine Body." *Hypatia* 15 (1): 43–63.

———. 2001. *Rethinking Rape*. 1st edition. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Carstensen, Gunilla. 2022. "Gränslösa Relationer Och Tystnadskultur. En Studie Av Svenska Kyrkans #metoo-Upprop #vardeljus." In *Maktordningar Och Motstånd. Forskarperspektiv På #metoo i Sverige*, edited by Hillevi Ganetz, Karin Hansson, and Malin Sveningsson. Lund: Nordic Academic Press.

Certeau, Michael de. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Chandra, Giti, and Irma Erlingsdóttir. 2020a. "Introduction: Rebellion, Revolution, Reformation." In *The Routledge Handbook of the Politics of the #MeToo Movement*, edited by Giti Chandra and Irma Erlingsdóttir. Routledge.

———. 2020b. *The Routledge Handbook of the Politics of the #MeToo Movement*. Routledge.

Charleston, Libby-Jane. 2017. "Why I'm Not Joining The #MeToo Hashtag Even Though I Was Sexually Harassed." *HuffPost*, October 16, 2017.

Chemaly, Soraya. 2018. *Rage Becomes Her: The Power of Women's Anger*. London: Simon & Schuster.

Christie, Nils. 2001. "Det Idealiska Offret." In *Det Motspänstiga Offret*, edited by Malin Åkerström and Ingrid Sahlin. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Cook, Nancy, and Olivia O'Halloran. 2023. "Using YouTube Vlogs to Study Women's Experiences of Participating in #MeToo." *The Canadian Review of Sociology* 60 (3): 502–15.

Cox, Lara. 2015. "Standing Up against Rape Culture: Irony and Its Vicissitudes." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 40 (4): 963–84.

Cremonesi, Laura, Irrera Orazio, Daniele Lorenzini, and Martina Tazzio. 2016. "Introduction:

Foucault and the Making of Subjects. Rethinking Autonomy between Subjection and Subjectivation." In *Foucault and the Making of Subjects*, edited by Laura Cremonesi. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield International.

"#dammenbrister." 2018. Astra. November 29, 2018. https://www.astra.fi/dammenbrister/.

Das, Veena. 2007. *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Denzin, Norman K. 1989. *Interpretive Biography*. London: Sage.

———. 1992. *Symbolic Interactionism and Cultural Studies: The Politics of Interpretation*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Edgren, Monika. 2016. "Trauma: ett tveeggat narrativ om våldtäkt och som stöd i bevisprövning av våldtäkt." *Retfaerd : Nordic Journal of law and Justice* 39 (3): 17–30.

———. 2019. "Conditional Vulnerability: Rape Narratives in Swedish Courts 1990–2014." In *Rape Narratives in Motion*, edited by Ulrika Andersson, Monika Edgren, Lena Karlsson, and Gabriella Nilsson, 1st edition. Cham: Springer International Publishing: Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan.

Edwards, Katie M. 2011. "Rape Myths: History, Individual and Institutional-Level Presence, and Implications for Change." *Sex Roles* 65 (11–12): 761–73.

Ekman, Inger, and Stig Söderberg. 2009. "'Across the Street--Not down the Road'- Staying Alive Through Deliberate Self-Harm." In *Internet and Suicide*, edited by Leo Sher and Alexander Vilens. New York: Nova Science Publishers.

Ekrem, Carola. 2017. *Många krokar i långdansen: finlandssvenska ordspråk och talesätt*. Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland.

Ekström, Simon. 2002. *Trovärdighet och ovärdighet: rättsapparatens hanterande av kvinnors anmälan av våldtäktsbrott Stockholm 1946–1950*. Hedemora: Gidlund.

Emtö, Jenna, Ida Kronholm, Nina Nyman, Ylva Perera, and Vilhelmina Öhman, eds. 2018. *Dammen brister: #metoo*. Helsingfors: Förlaget.

Eriksen, Anne, and Kyrre Kverndokk. 2022. "Innledning: Sjanger." *Tidsskrift for kulturforskning*, no. 1: 3–15.

Ferrell, Ann K. 2009. "Review of These Are Our Stories: Women's Stories of Abuse and Survival, Edited by Jan Rosenberg." *Western Folklore* 68 (2/3): 382–83.

Fileborn, Bianca. 2017. "Justice 2.0: Street Harassment Victims' Use of Social Media and Online Activism as Sites of Informal Justice." *British Journal of Criminology* 57 (6): 1482–1501.

———. 2019. "Naming the Unspeakable Harm of Street Harassment: A Survey-Based Examination of Disclosure Practices." *Violence against Women* 25 (2): 223–48.

Finch, Emily, and Vanessa Munro. 2006. "Breaking Boundaries? Sexual Consent in the Jury Room." *Legal Studies (Society of Legal Scholars)* 26 (3): 303–20.

Flinterud, Guro, and Ida Tolgensbakk. 2022. "Tradering Og Sjangre På Den Digitale Allmenningen." *Tidsskrift for Kulturforskning*, no. 1: 65–86.

Flood, Michael. 2019. "Men and #MeToo: Mapping Men's Responses to Anti-Violence Advocacy." In *#MeToo and the Politics of Social Change*, edited by Bianca Fileborn and Rachel Loney-Howes, 285–300. Palgrave Macmillan Cham.

Fludernik, Monika. 1996. *Towards a "Natural" Narratology*. Abingdon, Oxon: Taylor & Francis Group.

Foucault, Michel. 1990. *The History of Sexuality. 3: The Care of the Self*. London: Penguin Books.

———. 1991. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London: Penguin Books.

"Fragment." n.d. In *Merriam-Webster*. Accessed August 30, 2022. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fragment.

Frank, Arthur W. 1995. *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

———. 2008. "Caring for the Dead. Broken Narratives of Internment." In *Health, Illness and Culture: Broken Narratives*, edited by Jens Brockmeier and Lars-Christer Hydén. New York: Routledge.

franzke, aline shakti, Anja Bechmann, Michael Zimmer, Charles M. Ess, and the Association of Internet Researchers. 2020. "Internet Research: Ethical Guidelines 3.0." https://aoir.org/reports/ethics3.pdf.

Fricker, Miranda. 2007. *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ganetz, Hillevi, Karin Hansson, and Malin Sveningsson. 2022a. "Att Skapa Trygga Rum. Risk, Tillit Och Feministisk Kultur i Organiseringen Av #metoo." In *Maktordningar Och Motstånd. Forskarperspektiv På #metoo i Sverige*, edited by Hillevi Ganetz, Karin Hansson, and Malin Sveningsson, 143–57. Lund: Nordic Academic Press.

——— eds. 2022b. *Maktordningar Och Motstånd. Forskarperspektiv På #metoo i Sverige*. Lund: Nordic Academic Press.

Gavey, Nicola. 2019. *Just Sex? The Cultural Scaffolding of Rape*. 2nd edition. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Gavey, Nicola, and Johanna Schmidt. 2011. "'Trauma of Rape' Discourse: A Double-Edged Template for Everyday Understandings of the Impact of Rape?" *Violence against Women* 17 (4): 433–53.

Georgakopoulou, Alexandra. 2006. "Thinking Big with Small Stories in Narrative and Identity Analysis." *Narrative Inquiry: NI* 16 (1): 122–30.

———. 2015. "Small Stories Research. Methods - Analyses - Outreach." In *The Handbook of Narrative Analysis*, edited by Anna De Fina, Alexandra Georgakopoulou, and Gary Barkhuizen. Chichester, England; Malden, Massachusetts: Wiley Blackwell.

Gill, Rosalind, and Shani Orgad. 2018. "The Shifting Terrain of Sex and Power: From the 'Sexualization of Culture' to #MeToo." *Sexualities* 21 (8): 1313–24.

Gilmore, Leigh. 2001. "Limit-Cases: Trauma, Self-Representation, and the Jurisdictions of Identity." *Biography (Honolulu)* 24 (1): 128–39.

———. 2010. "American Neoconfessional: Memoir, Self-Help, and Redemption on Oprah's Couch." *Biography (Honolulu)* 33 (4): 657–79.

———. 2017. *Tainted Witness: Why We Doubt What Women Say about Their Lives*. New York: Columbia University Press.

———. 2018. *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

———. 2023. *The #MeToo Effect: What Happens When We Believe Women*. Gender and Culture. New York: Columbia University Press.

Goffman, Erving. 1975. *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Goldstein, Diane E. 2012. "Rethinking Ventriloquism: Untellability, Chaotic Narratives, Social Justice, and the Choice to Speak For, About, and Without." *Journal of Folklore Research* 49 (2): 179–98.

Goldstein, Diane E., and Amy Shuman. 2016. "Introduction: The Stigmatized Vernacular: Where Reflexivity Meets Untellability." In *The Stigmatized Vernacular: Where Reflexivity Meets Untellability*, edited by Amy Shuman and Diane E. Goldstein. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Goldstein, Donna M. 2013. *Laughter out of Place: Race, Class, Violence, and Sexuality in a Rio Shantytown*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Goldstein, Jeffrey H., and Paul E. McGhee. 1972. *The Psychology of Humor: Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Issues*. New York: Academic Press.

Gottzén, Lucas, and Anna G. Franzén. 2020. "Othering the Rapist. Rurality, Sexual Violence and the Bjästa Case." In *Rape in the Nordic Countries: Continuity and Change*, edited by Marie Bruvik Heinskou, May-Len Skilbrei, and Kari Stefansen. New York: Routledge.

Granbom-Herranen, Liisa. 2016. "The Proverb Genre: A Relic or Very Much Alive?" In *Genre - Text - Interpretation: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Folklore and Beyond*, edited by Kaarina Koski, Frog, and Ulla Savolainen. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society.

Gready, Paul. 2013. "The Public Life of Narratives: Ethics, Politics, Methods." In *Doing Narrative Research*, edited by Molly Andrews, Corinne Squire, and Maria Tamboukou, Second

edition. Los Angeles, California: Sage.

Grønli Rosten, Monika. 2020. "Cultivating Ethical Negotiations or Fetishing Consent in BDSM?" In *Rape in the Nordic Countries: Continuity and Change*, edited by Marie Bruvik Heinskou, May-Len Skilbrei, and Kari Stefansen. New York: Routlegde.

Gunby, Clare, Anna Carline, and Caryl Beynon. 2013. "Regretting It After? Focus Group Perspectives on Alcohol Consumption, Nonconsensual Sex and False Allegations of Rape." *Social & Legal Studies* 22 (1): 87–106.

Gunnarsson, Lena. 2020. *Samtyckesdynamiker: Sex, våldtäkt och gråzonen däremellan*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Gunnarsson Payne, Jenny. 2006. *Systerskapets logiker: en etnologisk studie av feministiska fanzines*. Umeå: Institutionen för kultur och medier/Etnologi, Umeå universitet.

Gunnell, Terry, and Owe Ronström. 2013. "Folklore Och Performance Studies - En Introduktion." In *Folkloristikens Aktuella Utmaningar. Vänbok till Ulf Palmenfelt*, by Owe Ronström, Georg Drakos, and Jonas Engman. Visby: Gotland University Press.

Gustavsson, Karin. 2017. "Kunskap ur tomrum. Närläsning som etnologisk metod." In *Kulturhistoria: en etnologisk metodbok*, edited by Lars-Eric Jönsson and Fredrik Nilsson. Lund: Lunds universitet.

Hacking, Ian. 2002. *Historical Ontology*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Halberstam, Judith. 2005. *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York: New York University Press.

Haraway, Donna. 1988. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies* 14 (3): 575–99.

Heinskou, Marie Bruvik, May-Len Skilbrei, and Kari Stefansen, eds. 2020. *Rape in the Nordic Countries: Continuity and Change*. New York: Routledge.

Henri, Yazir. 2003. "Reconciling Reconciliation: A Personal and Public Journey of Testifying Before the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission." In *Political Transition: Politics and Cultures*, edited by Paul Gready. London: Pluto Press.

Herman, David. 2009. *Basic Elements of Narrative*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.

Herman, Judith Lewis. 2005. "Justice From the Victim's Perspective." *Violence against Women* 11 (5): 571–602.

Hindes, Sophie, and Bianca Fileborn. 2021. "Reporting on Sexual Violence 'inside the Closet': Masculinity, Homosexuality and #MeToo." *Crime, Media, Culture* 17 (2): 163–84.

Holmberg, Carin. 2003. *Det kallas manshat: en bok om feminism*. 2nd edition. Stockholm: Modernista.

Holmes, Janet. 2000. "Politeness, Power and Provocation: How Humour Functions in the Workplace." *Discourse Studies* 2 (2): 159–85.

Honkatukia, Päivi. 2001. "Rough Sex? Understandings of Rape in Finnish Police Reports." *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention* 2 (1): 15–35.

Hutcheon, Linda. 1985. *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*. London: Methuen.

Hydén, Lars-Christer. 2013. "Bodies, Embodiment and Stories." In *Doing Narrative Research*, edited by Molly Andrews, Corinne Squire, and Maria Tamboukou, 2nd edition. Los Angeles, California: Sage.

Hyd**é**n, Margareta. 2001. "Misshandlade kvinnors uppbrott: en motståndsprocess." In *Det motspänstiga offret*, edited by Malin Åkerström and Ingrid Sahlin. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

———. 2008. "Break-Up Narratives." In *Health, Illness and Culture: Broken Narratives*, edited by Jens Brockmeier and Lars-Christer Hyd**é**n. New York: Routledge.

Hyvärinen, Matti, Lars-Christer Hydén, Marja Saarenheimo, and Maria Tamboukou, eds. 2010. *Beyond Narrative Coherence*. Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamin.

Jeffner, Stina. 1998. *Liksom våldtäkt, typ: om ungdomars förståelse av våldtäkt*. Stockholm: Utbildningsförlaget Brevskolan.

Johansson, Anna. 2005. *Narrativ teori och metod: med livsberättelsen i fokus*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Johansson, Anna. 2010. *Självskada: en etnologisk studie av mening och identitet i berättelser om skärande*. Umeå: h:ström - Text & kultur.

Johnstone, Barbara. 2016. "'Oral Versions of Personal Experience': Labovian Narrative Analysis and Its Uptake." *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 20 (4): 542–60.

Jokila, Helena. 2010. *Tahdonvastainen suostumus ja liiallisen luottamuksen hinta: raiskauksen ja muiden seksuaalirikosten oikeudellisen tiedon konstruktiot*. Helsinki: Suomalainen lakimiesyhdistys.

Jokila, Helena, and Johanna Niemi. 2020. "Rape Law and Coercive Circumstance." In *Rape in the Nordic Countries: Continuity and Change*, edited by Marie Bruvik Heinskou, May-Len Skilbrei, and Kari Stefansen. New York: Routledge.

Kagal, Neha, Leah Cowan, and Huda Jawad. 2019. "Beyond the Bright Lights: Are Minoritized Women Outside the Spotlight Able to Say #MeToo?" In *#MeToo and the Politics of Social Change*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kalčik, Susan. 1975. "'... Like Ann's Gynecologist or the Time I Was Almost Raped': Personal Narratives in Women's Rap Groups." *The Journal of American Folklore* 88 (347): 3–11.

Karlsson, Lena. 2013. "'This Is a Book about Choices': Gender, Genre and (Auto)Biographical Prison Narratives." *NORA: Nordic Journal of Women's Studies* 21 (3): 187–200.

———. 2019a. "Testimonies in Limbo? Swedish News Media's Framing of Digital Campaigns Against Sexual Violence." In *Rape Narratives in Motion*, edited by Ulrika Andersson, Monika Edgren, Lena Karlsson, and Gabriella Nilsson, 1st edition. Cham: Springer International Publishing: Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan.

———. 2019b. "Towards a Language of Sexual Gray Zones: Feminist Collective Knowledge Building through Autobiographical Multimedia Storytelling." *Feminist Media Studies* 19 (2): 210–24.

Kelly, Liz. 1988. *Surviving Sexual Violence*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Keskinen, Suvi. 2007. "Gränskränkningar–Våld, Sexualitet Och Parförhållande i Familjeprofessionella Praktiker." In *Kvinnor, Kropp Och Hälsa*, edited by Elina Oinas and Jutta Ahlbeck-Rehn. Pozkal, Poland: Studentlitteratur.

Kinnunen, Eeva-Liisa. 1998. "Women's Humor: Conceptions and Examples." In *Gender and Folklore: Perspectives on Finnish and Karelian Culture*, edited by Satu Apo, Aili Nenola, and Laura Stark-Arola. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society.

Kitzinger, Celia, and Hannah Frith. 1999. "Just Say No? The Use of Conversation Analysis in Developing a Feminist Perspective on Sexual Refusal." *Discourse & Society* 10 (3): 293–312.

Kitzinger, Jenny. 1997. "Who Are You Kidding? Children, Power, and the Struggle Against Sexual Abuse." In *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*, edited by Allison James and Alan Prout, 2nd edition. London: Falmer Press.

Klinkmann, Sven-Erik. 2017. "'Svenska talande bättre folk'--mellan ironi, stereotyp och humor." In *Föreställda finlandssvenskheter: intersektionella perspektiv på det svenska i Finland*, edited by Sven-Erik Klinkmann, Blanka Henriksson, and Andreas Häger. Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland.

Klinkmann, Sven-Erik, Blanka Henriksson, and Andreas Häger. 2017. "Introduktion." In *Föreställda finlandssvenskheter: intersektionella perspektiv på det svenska i Finland*, edited by Sven-Erik Klinkmann, Blanka Henriksson, and Andreas Häger. Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland.

Koskinen-Koivisto, Eerika. 2014. *Her Own Worth: Negotiations of Subjectivity in the Life Narrative of a Female Labourer*. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society.

Labov, William. 1972. *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

———. 2010. "Where Should I Begin?" In *Telling Stories: Language, Narrative, and Social Life*, edited by Deborah Schiffrin, Anna De Fina, and Anastasia Nylund. Washington: Georgetown University Press.

———. 2013. *The Language of Life and Death: The Transformation of Experience in Oral Nar-*

rative. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Labov, William, and Joshua Waletsky. 1967. "Narrative analysis. Oral versions of personal experience." In *Essays on the verbal and visual arts*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Laclau, Ernesto. 2005. *On Populist Reason*. London: Verso.

Langellier, Kristin M., and Eric E. Peterson. 1992. "Spinstorying: An Analysis of Women's Storytelling." In *Performance, Culture and Identity*, by E. C. Fine and J. H. Speer. Westport: Praeger.

Langer, Lawrence L. 1993. *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Laub, Dori. 1992. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. Translated by Shoshana Felman. New York: Routledge.

Lawless, Elaine J. 2001. *Women Escaping Violence: Empowerment through Narrative*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press.

———. 2019. *Reciprocal Ethnography and the Power of Women's Narratives*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Leskinen, Minna. 2017. "Raiskaus 2010-luvulla: Yhä vain väkisinmakaamista?" In *Sukupuolistunut väkivalta: oikeudellinen ja sosiaalinen ongelma*, edited by Johanna Niemi, Heini Kainulainen, Päivi Honkatukia, and Teija Hautanen. Tampere: Vastapaino.

Linde, C. 1993. *Life Stories: The Creation of Coherence*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Löfgren-Mårtenson, Lotta. 2013. *Sexualitet*. 1st edition. Malmö: Liber.

Loney-Howes, Rachel. 2020. *Online Anti-Rape Activism: Exploring the Politics of the Personal in the Age of Digital Media*. Bingley: Emerald Publishing Limited.

Loney-Howes, Rachel, Kaitlynn Mendes, Diana Fernàndez Romero, Bianca Fileborn, and Sonia Núñez Puente. 2022. "Digital Footprints of #MeToo." *Feminist Media Studies* 22 (6): 1345–62.

MacLeod, Nicci. 2016. "'I Thought I'd Be Safe There': Pre-Empting Blame in the Talk of Women Reporting Rape." *Journal of Pragmatics* 96: 96–109.

Mann, Bonnie. 2018. "Femininity, Shame, and Redemption." *Hypatia* 33 (3): 402–17.

Manne, Kate. 2019. *Down Girl. The Logic of Misogyny*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Marander-Eklund, Lena. 2000. *Berättelser om barnafödande: form, innehåll och betydelse i kvinnors muntliga skildring av födsel*. Åbo: Åbo Akademis förlag.

———. 2002. "Narrative Style. How to Dramatize a Story." Edited by Ulrika Wolf-Knuts. *ARV. Nordic Yearbook of Folklore* 58: 113–24.

Marcus, Sharon. 1992. "Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words: A Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention." In *Feminists Theorize the Political*, edited by Judith Butler and Joan Wallach Scott, 385–403. New York: Routledge.

Mardorossian, Carine M. 2002. "Toward a New Feminist Theory of Rape." *Signs* 27 (3): 743–75.

———. 2014. *Framing the Rape Victim: Gender and Agency Reconsidered*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

Mathisen, Stein R. 2022. "Fortellinger til kommisjonen. Fornorskingserfaringer og sannhet i et sjangerperspektiv." *Tidsskrift for kulturforskning*, no. 1: 49–64.

Mattsson, Kristin. 2011. *Att skriva det finlandssvenska: etnicitet i kvinnors livshistorier*. Åbo: Åbo Akademis förlag.

McKenzie-Mohr, Suzanne. 2014. "Counter-Storying Rape. Women's Efforts toward Liberatory Meaning Making." In *Women Voicing Resistance: Discursive and Narrative Explorations*, edited by Michelle N. Lafrance and Suzanne McKenzie-Mohr. London; New York: Routledge.

Mendes, Kaitlynn, Katia Belisário, and Jessica Ringrose. 2019. "Digitalised Narratives of Rape: Disclosing Sexual Violence Through Pain Memes." In *Rape Narratives in Motion*, edited by Ulrika Andersson, Monika Edgren, Lena Karlsson, and Gabriella Nilsson, 1st edition. Cham: Springer International Publishing: Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mendes, Kaitlynn, Jessica Ringrose, and Jessalynn Keller. 2018. "#MeToo and the Promise

and Pitfalls of Challenging Rape Culture through Digital Feminist Activism." *The European Journal of Women's Studies* 25 (2): 236–46.

———. 2019. *Digital Feminist Activism: Girls and Women Fight Back against Rape Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Möller, Anna, Hans Peter Söndergaard, and Lotti Helström. 2017. "Tonic Immobility during Sexual Assault – a Common Reaction Predicting Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Severe Depression." *Acta Obstetricia et Gynecologica Scandinavica* 96 (8): 932–38.

Morreall, John. 2009. *Comic Relief: A Comprehensive Philosophy of Humor*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Murray, Yxta Maya. 2012. "Rape Trauma, the State, and the Art of Tracey Emin." *California Law Review* 100 (6): 1631–1710.

Niemelä, Pirkko. 1991. "Kvinnans Depression: En Följd Av Förnekad Vrede Och Ett Falskt Jag." In *Kvinnors Hälsa Och Ohälsa*, edited by Ulrica Hägglund and Elianne Riska. Åbo: Institutet för kvinnoforskning vid Åbo Akademi.

Niemi-Kiesiläinen, Johanna. 2000. "Mitä seksuaalirikoslailla halutaan suojella?" In *Lähentelyistä raiskauksiin: tyttöjen kokemuksia häirinnästä ja seksuaalisesta väkivallasta*, edited by Päivi Honkatukia, Johanna Niemi-Kiesiläinen, and Sari Näre. Julkaisuja / Nuorisotutkimusseura 13. Helsinki: Nuorisotutkimusverkosto.

———. 2001. "Criminal Law or Social Policy as Protection Against Violence." In *Responsible Selves: Women in the Nordic Legal Culture*, edited by Kevät Nousiainen, Åsa Gunnarsson, Karin Lundström, and Johanna Niemi-Kiesiläinen. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Nilsson, Gabriella. 2009. *Könsmakt Eller Häxjakt? : Antagonistiska F**ö**rest**ä**llningar Om M**ä**ns V**å**ld Mot Kvinnor*. Lund: Lunds universitet.

———. 2018. "När Hennes Kropp Är Hans." In *Mitt Och Ditt. Etnologiska Perspektiv På Ägandets Kulturella Betydelse*, edited by Karin Salomonsson. Lund: Lunds universitet.

———. 2019a. "Narrating the Moral Geography of Rape in Swedish Newspapers." In *Rape Narratives in Motion*, edited by Ulrika Andersson, Monika Edgren, Lena Karlsson, and Gabriella Nilsson, 1st edition. Cham: Springer International Publishing: Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan.

———. 2019b. "Rape in the News: On Rape Genres in Swedish News Coverage." *Feminist Media Studies* 19 (8): 1178–94.

Nilsson, Gabriella, and Inger Lövkrona. 2020. *Våldets kön: kulturella föreställningar, funktioner och konsekvenser*. 2nd edition. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Nousiainen, Kevät, Åsa Gunnarsson, Karin Lundström, and Johanna Niemi-Kiesiläinen, eds. 2001. *Responsible Selves: Women in the Nordic Legal Culture*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Nylund Skog, Susanne. 2002. *Ambivalenta upplevelser & mångtydiga berättelser: en etnologisk studie av barnafödande*. Stockholm: Etnologiska institutionen, Univ.

———. 2012. *Livets vägar: svenska judinnors berättelser om förskingring, förintelse, förtryck och frihet*. Uppsala: Institutet för språk och folkminnen.

Nyman, Nina. 2022a. ""Aktivism Möter Arkiv" – #metoo-Aktionen #dammenbristers Donationsurval." *Laboratorium För Folk Och Kultur* 1.

———. 2022b. "#metoo Som Transnordisk Rörelse. Feministisk Kunskapsproduktion." In *Maktordningar Och Motstånd. Forskarperspektiv På #metoo i Sverige*, edited by Hillevi Ganetz, Karin Hansson, and Malin Sveningsson. Lund: Nordic Academic Press.

O'Callaghan, Erin, and Hannah Douglas M. 2021. "MeToo Online Disclosures: A Survivor-Informed Approach to Open Science Practices and Ethical Use of Social Media Data." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 45 (4): 505–25.

Österlund-Pötzsch, Susanne. 2022. "Att Gå För Långt? Genre Som Metod För Att Studera Rörelsemönster." *Tidsskrift for Kulturforskning*, no. 1: 15–31.

Paal, Piret. 2009. "Cancer and Emotions—The Moment of Diagnosis and Metaphoric Transformation." *Tidsskrift för Kulturforskning* 8 (4): 39–51.

———. 2010. *Written Cancer Narratives. An Ethnomedical Study of Cancer Patients' Thoughts, Emotions and Experiences*. Tartu & Helsinki: ELM Scholarly Press.

Palmenfelt, Ulf. 2017a. *Berättade gemenskaper: individuella livshistorier och kollektiva tankefigurer*. Stockholm: Carlsson Bokförlag.

———. 2017b. "Folkloristisk narrativanalys." In *Tillämpad kulturteori*, edited by Jenny Gunnarsson Payne and Magnus Öhlander. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Patterson, Wendy. 2013. "Narratives of Events: Labovian Narrative Analysis and Its Limitations." In *Doing Narrative Research*, edited by Molly Andrews, Corinne Squire, and Maria Tamboukou, 2nd edition. Los Angeles, California: Sage.

Peterson, Zoë D., and Charlene L. Muehlenhard. 2004. "Was It Rape? The Function of Women's Rape Myth Acceptance and Definitions of Sex in Labeling Their Own Experiences." *Sex Roles* 51 (3–4): 129–44.

PettyJohn, Morgan E., Finneran K. Muzzey, Megan K. Maas, and Heather L. McCauley. 2019. "HowIWillChange: Engaging Men and Boys in the #MeToo Movement." *Psychology of Men & Masculinity* 20 (4): 612–22.

Phipps, Alison. 2020. *Me, Not You: The Trouble with Mainstream Feminism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Phoenix, Ann. 2013. "Analysing Narrative Contexts." In *Doing Narrative Research*, edited by Molly Andrews, Corinne Squire, and Maria Tamboukou, 2nd edition. Los Angeles, California: Sage.

Plante, Rebecca. 2007. "In Search of Sexual Subjectivities: Exploring the Sociological Construction of Sexual Selves." In *The Sexual Self: The Construction of Sexual Scripts*, edited by Michael Kimmel. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.

Plummer, Kenneth. 1995. *Telling Sexual Stories: Power, Change, and Social Worlds*. London: Routledge.

Polanyj, Livia. 1985. *Telling the American Story: A Structural and Cultural Analysis of Conversational Storytelling*. Norwood: Ablex.

Pollack, Ester. 2019. "Sweden and the #MeToo Movement." *Interactions* 10 (3): 185–200.

Požar, Irena. 2022. *Backlashen: metoo och revolutionen som stoppades*. Stockholm: Weyler.

rbadmin2014. 2018. "Regnbågsperspektivet saknas i #metoo." *Regnbågsallians Svenskfinland* (blog). February 7, 2018. https://www.regnbagsankan.fi/2018/02/regnbagsperspektivet-saknas-i-metoo/.

Riessman, Catherine Kohler. 1993. *Narrative Analysis*. Newbury Park, California: Sage.

Rosen, Ilana. 2008. *Sister in Sorrow: Life Histories of Female Holocaust Survivors from Hungary*. Translated by Sandy Bloom. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

Ruuskanen, Minna. 2001. "The 'Good Battered Woman': A Silenced Defendant." In *Responsible Selves: Women in the Nordic Legal Culture*, edited by Kevät Nousiainen, Åsa Gunnarsson, Karin Lundström, and Johanna Niemi-Kiesiläinen. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Ryan, Kathryn M. 2011. "The Relationship between Rape Myths and Sexual Scripts: The Social Construction of Rape." *Sex Roles* 65 (11–12): 774–82.

Saarikoski, Helena. 2001. *Mistä on huonot tytöt tehty?* Helsinki: Tammi.

Sadler, Neil. 2018. "Narrative and Interpretation on Twitter: Reading Tweets by Telling Stories." *New Media & Society* 20 (9): 3266–82.

"Samtycke2018." n.d. Samtycke2018. Accessed September 15, 2023. https://suostumus2018.fi/sv/.

Sandell, Karin. 2022. *Parasiter och "bättre folk": Affekt i näthat mot det svenska i Finland*. Åbo: Åbo Akademis förlag.

Saresma, Tuija. 2007. *Omaelämäkerran rajapinnoilla: kuolema ja kirjoitus*. Nykykulttuurin tutkimuskeskuksen julkaisuja 92. Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopisto.

Savigny, Heather. 2020. *Cultural Sexism: The Politics of Feminist Rage in the #MeToo Era*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.

Sawin, Patricia E. 2002. "Performance at the Nexus of Gender, Power, and Desire: Reconsidering Bauman's Verbal Art from the Perspective of Gendered Subjectivity as Performance." *The Journal of American Folklore* 115 (455): 28–61.

Scott, Joan Wallach. 1992. "Experience." In *Feminists Theorize the Political*, edited by Judith

Butler and Joan Wallach Scott. New York: Routledge.

———. 2018. *Gender and the Politics of History*. 30th Anniversary Edition. New York: Columbia University Press.

Serisier, Tanya. 2018. *Speaking Out. Feminism, Rape and Narrative Politics*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Shuman, Amy. 2005. *Other People's Stories: Entitlement Claims and the Critique of Empathy*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Shuman, Amy, and Carol Bohmer. 2016. "The Stigmatized Vernacular: Political and the Politics of Visibility/Recognition." Electronic resource. In *The Stigmatized Vernacular: Where Reflexivity Meets Untellability*, edited by Amy Shuman and Diane E. Goldstein. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Sigurvinsdóttir, Rannveig, Bryndís Björk Ásgeirsdóttir, and Sara Arnalds. 2020. "Breaking the Silence: Social Media Disclosures of Sexual Violence in Iceland." In *Rape in the Nordic Countries: Continuity and Change*, edited by Marie Bruvik Heinskou, May-Len Skilbrei, and Kari Stefansen. New York: Routledge.

Skilbrei, May-Len, Kari Stefansen, and Marie Bruvik Heinskou. 2020. "A Nordic Research Agenda on Rape and Sexual Violence." In *Rape in the Nordic Countries: Continuity and Change*, edited by Marie Bruvik Heinskou, May-Len Skilbrei, and Kari Stefansen. New York: Routledge.

Sletteland, Anja. 2018. "Da #metoo kom til Norge: Et ufullendt normskifte mot seksuell trakassering." *Tidsskrift for kjønnsforskning* 42 (3): 142–61.

Smart, Carol. 1992. "The Woman of Legal Discourse." *Social & Legal Studies* 1 (1): 29–44.

Smith, Olivia. 2019. "Narratives, Credibility and Adversarial Justice in English and Welsh Rape Trials." In *Rape Narratives in Motion*, edited by Ulrika Andersson, Monika Edgren, Lena Karlsson, and Gabriella Nilsson, 1st edition. Cham: Springer International Publishing: Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan.

Sommer, Doris. 1988. "'Not Just a Personal Story': Women's Testimonios and the Plural Self." In *Life/Lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography*, edited by Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Squire, Corinne. 2013. "From Experience-Centered to Socioculturally-Oriented Approaches to Narrative." In *Doing Narrative Research*, edited by Molly Andrews, Corinne Squire, and Maria Tamboukou, 2nd edition. Los Angeles, California: Sage.

Stahl, Sandra Dolby. 1977. "The Oral Personal Narratives in Its Generic Context." *Fabula* 18 (1): 18–39.

———. 1983. "Personal Experience Stories." In *Handbook of American Folklore*, edited by Richard Mercer Dorson, Winthrop Edson Richmond, Inta Gale Carpenter, Elizabeth Peterson, and Angela Maniak. Bloomington: Indiana university.

Stark, Laura. 2006. *The Magical Self: Body, Society and the Supernatural in Early Modern Rural Finland*. Folklore Fellows Communications 290. Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica.

Stefansen, Kari. 2020. "Understanding Unwanted Sexual Touching. A Situational Approach." In *Rape in the Nordic Countries : Continuity and Change*, edited by Marie Bruvik Heinskou, May-Len Skilbrei, and Kari Stefansen. New York: Routledge.

Steiner, Sallie Anna. 2019. *Stitched Together: Craft and Community at a Refugee Sewing Group*. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Stenius, Geo. 2017. "Metoo." *Hufvudstadsbladet*, December 10, 2017.

Sunnari, Vappu, Jenny Kangasvuo, and Mervi Heikkinen. 2003. "Introduction." In *Gendered and Sexualised Violence in Educational Environments*, edited by Vappu Sunnari, Jenny Kangasvuo, and Mervi Heikkinen, 2nd edition. Oulu: University of Oulu.

Sunstein, Cass R. 2020. "#MeToo as a Revolutionary Cascade." In *The Routledge Handbook of the Politics of the #MeToo Movement*, edited by Giti Chandra and Irma Erlingsdóttir. London: Routledge.

Sveningsson, Malin, Karin Hansson, and Hillevi Ganetz. 2022. "'Något Annat Än "Vem Ska Hängas Ut Nu?"' En Innehållsanalys Av Svenska Tidningars Rapportering Före Och under Uppropen." In *Maktordningar Och Motstånd. Forskarperspektiv På #metoo i Sverige*, edited

by Hillevi Ganetz, Karin Hansson, and Malin Sveningsson. Lund: Nordic Academic Press.

Svensson, Birgitta. 1997. "Livstid: Metodiska reflektioner över biografiskt särskiljande och modern identitetsformering." In *Skjorta eller själ? kulturella identiteter i tid och rum*, edited by Gunnar Alsmark. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

———. 2011. "Det moderna varat som biografisk presentation." In *Biografiska betydelser: norm och erfarenhet i levnadsberättelser*, edited by Lena Marander-Eklund and Ann-Catrin Östman. Hedemora: Gidlunds förlag.

Thorne, Avril, and Kate C. McLean. 2003. "Telling Traumatic Events in Adolescence: A Study of Master Narrative Positioning." In *Autobiographical Memory and the Construction of a Narrative Self: Developmental and Cultural Perspectives*, edited by Robyn Fivush and Catherine A. Halden. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Tilastokeskus. n.d. "Befolkning och samhälle." Tilastokeskus. Statistikcentralen. Accessed August 3, 2022. https://www.tilastokeskus.fi/tup/suoluk/suoluk_vaesto_sv.html#befolkning-efter-harkomst-sprak.

Todorov, Tzvetan. 1977. *The Poetics of Prose*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Trott, Verity. 2021. "Networked Feminism: Counterpublics and the Intersectional Issues of #MeToo." *Feminist Media Studies* 21 (7): 1125–42.

Ulander, Markku. 2017. "Riksdagen debatterar sexuella trakasserier – 'En historisk diskussion.'" *Hufvudstadsbladet*, December 12, 2017.

Valtonen, Malin. 2017. "Raseborgspolitiker vill minska på sexuella trakasserier bland barn och unga: "Vi har ett ansvar att göra någonting"." *Svenska Yle*, December 1, 2017.

Walker, Lenore E. 2009. *The Battered Woman Syndrome*. 3rd edition. New York, NY: Springer Pub. Co.

Wanström, Sofia. 2020. "'Kom Ihåg Att ALDRIG Skämmas!' Skamdiskursen i Vittnesmål Om Sexuella Övergrepp." *Kulturella Perspektiv. Svensk Etnologisk Tidskrift* 29 (4): 15–21.

Waterhouse-Watson, Deb. 2019. "Who Is the 'Real' Victim? Race and Gender in the Trial of an Elite Australian Footballer." In *Rape Narratives in Motion*, edited by Ulrika Andersson, Monika Edgren, Lena Karlsson, and Gabriella Nilsson, 1st edition. Cham: Springer International Publishing: Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan.

Willis, Matthew. 2011. "Non-Disclosure of Violence in Australian Indigenous Communities." *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, no. 405: 1–11.

Witt-Brattström, Ebba. 2019. *Historiens metoo-vrål: #är jag inte människa*. Stockholm: Norstedts.

Wyer, Robert S., and James E. Collins. 1992. "A Theory of Humor Elicitation." *Psychological Review* 99 (4): 663–88.

Young, Katharine Galloway. 1987. *Taleworlds and Storyrealms: The Phenomenology of Narrative*. Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff.

Sofia Wanström

When the Dam Burst

Perspectives on Genre and Tellability in Testimonies of Rape

Rape is a subject often noted to be wrapped in silence. The cause for the silence may be that it is an experience difficult to verbalize, but the subject is also constrained by perceptions of rape that determine which experiences can be told and how these can be told. This thesis considers how writers present their experiences when being allowed narrative space to do so in their own words. The material is derived from a Finland-Swedish #MeToo campaign titled *Dammen brister*, consisting of testimonies that describe experiences of rape.

The thesis centers on how writers structure and present these stories within a space of broadened tellability. By starting from the concepts of genre and discourse, it is considered how writers structure their stories and what meanings are conveyed through different ways of narration. Central questions are hence how do writers use the space of increased tellability when narrating their stories, and what does it tell us about the narration or experience of rape? How do the audience and the cultural context affect the construction of these stories? What is further questioned is how normative assumptions regarding gender, sex, and heterosexuality are used to make sense of experiences of rape; and how these are interpreted and challenged within the *Dammen brister* campaign.

ISBN 978-952-389-055-8