Grief 2.0

Grieving in an Online World

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Summary

The way we express grief has changed in the last decade. Many of us turn to Facebook to show our support, to offer condolences and grieve together. Facebook provides us with a platform where it is easy to show that we care. But has it become too easy?

This master thesis aims to investigate how bereaved people experience Facebook after the death of a loved one. I have used a qualitative approach, and interviewed 10 people about their experience with Facebook after losing a close friend, or a family member. The interviewees had different experiences with Facebook; some found it helpful and supportive, whilst others found it complicated and painful.

I present each interviewee and their personal experience, and then I present similarities between them. Findings include differences in user patterns between younger and older adults, the effect of writing in a grieving process, the importance of Facebook on anniversaries, how Facebook helps the bereaved to maintain a relationship with the deceased, and a discussion concerning how Facebook might replace the important face-to-face conversation. I also present some ethical concerns regarding the usage of Facebook for a place to grieve.

The research field is relatively limited, at least here in Norway. I hope my research can provide a different understanding than previous researchers have presented, and thus give a new and wider insight to the phenomenon.

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Preface

I cannot believe that I am finally done! This has been a difficult and rewarding period of my life; I have learnt so much, both academically and about myself. I feel privileged to have been given the opportunity to write this thesis, and lucky to have met all of my interviewees. They each bring something unique and valuable to the thesis, and I cannot thank them enough for participating.

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Content

1. Introduction

When I was 17 years old, a girl at my school was killed in an accident. I remember the astonishment. How could someone my age die? The whole school was in shock, and we wanted a place to come together and talk and to remember her. Facebook became that place for us. Someone created a memorial page for her, and people joined it. People posted pictures, messages and hearts to her. It was my first meeting with these type of Facebook-pages. In a way, it felt safe and comforting to log on to Facebook and click on the page. Many people wanted to say one last goodbye to her. There were so many nice words. It was comforting to see that you were not alone in your grief. Facebook is becoming an important part of so many different aspects of our lives; pregnancies, childbirths, relationships, weddings and deaths, they are all announced on Facebook. It seems like it is not real before "the whole world" is informed via this social network.

The wish to grieve together is not a new phenomenon. The Norwegian king, King Olav V died in January 1991. After his death was known to the public, people started to gather around the castle to mourn together. They lit candles, put down flowers and shared their grief. According to Dagny Regine Rosenberg (2012) this was seen as a new phenomenon at the time, but it was not the last time Norwegians gathered to support each other in grief. On the 22nd of July 2011, Anders Behring Breivik killed 77 people in an explosion in the city centre, and a mass shooting at the Labour Party's youth camp at Utøya (Stang et al. 2015). After the attack, a spontaneous gathering took place in Oslo city centre, where approximately 200 000 people gathered, holding roses and supporting each other. The expression "Shared grief is half the sorrow" becomes more and more applicable in today's society, and it is not only true in big catastrophes as the 22nd of July or the death of the king. In small towns and villages, people get together after incidents such as car accidents, and make shrines by the road. Rosenberg argues that there is a new trend of solidarity and collectivism, which contradicts the more private and individual way of grieving that used to be the norm (Rosenberg 2012:2). This shows us how important it is for people to grieve together and to show support. But sometimes it is difficult to get together and grieve. Sometimes it is too difficult for the bereaved to face people, and sometimes there is a big geographical distance. When this is the case, Facebook offers a place to grieve, which is easy to access, there is no geographical distance, and you do not actually have to face anyone. It is a place where you can get attention

in the forms of likes and comments, you can express what you want, and formulate the sentences carefully before you post anything, and get instant feedback from family and friends.

Although grief has existed for as long as people have lost their loved ones, there are changes in how we express our grief. Modern technology allows the death message to spread at the speed of lightning via for example text messaging, mobile phones and social media. According to grief researcher Atle Dyregrov, it is a problem that the knowledge of a person's sudden death is being spread so quickly that there is no time to send a priest, health worker or relative to convey the message personally. Many people find out the tragic news via information spread on social media or via news sites on the internet (Dyregrov 2014). The way we express our grief has changed during the last decades. Many express themselves through social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram or personal blogs. Dyregrov explains how grief protocols on the Internet, broadcasted or streamed funerals and memorial pages that honours the deceased, are among the changes that have taken place (Dyregrov 2014).

Dyregrov (2014) argues that we have to divide grief from what he calls "sympathy grief". He explains that many people can feel "sympathy grief" after an accident, even if they are not personally affected. An example of this is the rose ceremony after the 22nd of July. This experience can be good for the bereaved, because so many people show their support. When in "sympathy grief", one feel sympathy with the bereaved, but very few feel that our daily life have been greatly affected or that our daily routine is changed. Dyregrov explains that "sympathy grief" makes us reach out to those who are afflicted, it mobilizes sympathetic actions, but it will rarely require any readjustment in everyday life (Dyregrov 2014). He also argues that most of the activities on Facebook memorial pages is "sympathy grief", and that this type of grief is becoming more and more visible in today's media landscape. He suggests however, that one should be careful when doing this. He argues that it may lead to a competition; the deceased's value is measured in how many likes one gets on Facebook. He argues that new ways of grief expressions may cause pain for those who are directly affected (Dyregrov 2014). Facebook is a relatively new place to express grief, and we do not know much about the consequences this may have for the bereaved. Due to Facebook's popularity, we need more information about this phenomenon.

1.1 Placing the thesis in a media context

Facebook is, according to Enjolras et al, the most popular social media platform by far. In 2010 it was used by 91 % of the younger population (2013: 13). It is also a fairly new phenomenon, and it is used by private people, businesses, companies, NGOs and the government amongst others (2013: 12). After the 22nd of July 2011, I noticed that Facebook was being used more frequently to honour the people who passed away. It also became a place for reflection, and many people created memorial pages for their deceased friend or family member. Another phenomenon that occurred, was that people would write comments directly to the deceased on their Facebook profile page, even though this page no longer was in active use. I became interested in this; it was as if the dead person still had an active online life. Social media such as Facebook is often seen as a shallow and fun arena, it is mostly used as an entertainment platform, or a place to share pictures of your food, parties and holidays, and to get the latest updates from your friends. Grief however, has always been personal and perhaps also lonely and serious. Grief and social media are two complete opposite and different things, however these two have converged. Facebook is being used to express personal grief.

As of January 2016, Facebook has passed 1.59 billion monthly active users, 827 million mobile users, and 757 million daily users. (Constine 2016). As of May 2014, there were approximately 30 million dead profiles on Facebook (Varveri 2014). Is Facebook slowly turning in to an online graveyard? The number of dead people whose Facebook accounts still lingers on, will only rise as time passes (Varveri 2014). Since there are so many dead people who still is connected to Facebook either as their profile page is still up, or there has been created memorial pages for them, this phenomenon is something that many Facebook users have a relation to.

Over the last two years, when I have been working on my thesis, there has been given more attention to people who grieve openly on Facebook. There have been a number of newspaper articles and radio shows that have discussed this phenomenon. On the 11th of January 2014 two girls, Tiril (aged 11) and Sara (aged 13) were killed after being hit by a car when they were out training a horse. Both of the girls' parents have expressed gratitude towards Facebook after the accident: "There is much talk about how superficial social media is. For me, on the other hand, it has proved to be a place for very valuable friendships" (Kjersti

Holmedahl Sandsmark, Sara's mother in Vambheim 2014). Tiril's parents explain that writing about their daughter's death has been therapeutic for them: "For us, it is therapeutic to write this blog. We also feel that we do something important. We hope this will help us deal with our grief. This is something we have to deal with" (Thor Åge Bølge, Tiril's father, in Wardrum 2014).

1.1.1 Challenges with Facebook

The examples above suggest that Facebook may be helpful for the bereaved, they find support there, and the experience is therapeutic for them. On the other hand, it is not always easy for people to see the deceased being talked about on Facebook. Rosenberg (2012:1) tells the story of Simon Eriksen Valvik from Kristiansand who shared his grief on Facebook after his mother passed away. It was very helpful for him, but his dad on the other hand, did not agree with him. He thought sharing his private thoughts, his emotions and his grief on Facebook was too personal, and he expressed that grieving should be done within the family, and be kept there, not spread out to the world. While one person feels it is beneficial to grieve openly on Facebook, others might find the experience painful and revealing.

Journalist Kjetil Østli argues that the society has become more interested in death, than it used to be. He argues that one reason for this is media coverage of memorial pages on Facebook. He focuses especially on the death of celebrities, and how people seem to be very fascinated by known people's passing (Østli 2014). Examples of this are the deaths of David Bowie and Alan Rickman who passed away within a week in January 2016. Their deaths were heavily discussed and talked about in social media. Østli explains how well known people have a tendency of receiving a massive amount of media coverage, and thousands of likes on memorial pages on Facebook. The reason for this might be the wish of not grieving alone. Another example of this phenomenon is the death of the Norwegian author and journalist Anbjørg Sætre Håtun. She was diagnosed with cancer in 2003 and chose to be open about this on TV, on Facebook and on Instagram. She has close to 6000 likes on her memorial page on Facebook. Her husband Jono El Grande struggled with being open in the media after her death, and in April 2015 it became too much attention for him, and he decided not to talk openly about her death anymore (Nordseth and Veka 2015).

1.1.2 Researching Norwegians

The Danish researcher Lisbeth Klastrup argues that Facebook has opened up new possibilities to communicate, express grief, and mourn, online. "They [the social networking sites] can, at the time of death, provide both access to – and create a meaning place for – the network of friends and families of the deceased" (2014:1). In her research, she also discovered that the public memorial pages on Facebook mostly is used by strangers, rather than friends and families of the deceased. To be able to understand how the interviewees in my research relate to Facebook and grief, it is important to know something about Norwegians too. Norway is a small Scandinavian country, were violent deaths are relatively rare. When young people die unexpectedly, they are very likely to make headlines in national newspapers, and the family of the deceased can experience a massive media coverage afterwards. In her research, Klastrup explains how most native Danes do not have a personal religion, and rarely attend church, or practice religion at home. Only 5 % of the population answered that they would turn to a religious support group, if they were battling a severe decease (2014:3). Norwegians and Danes are similar in many aspects, including this. The Nordic countries share many valuable aspects such as their way of life, history, the use of Scandinavian languages and social structure (Lane and Ersson 1996: 246). I will therefore agree with Klastrup and argue that the cultural circumstances offer a very different setting for how memorial pages are used in Norway compared to other countries, such as in the USA (2014:3).

Before one can understand how memorial pages on Facebook are used, and how they have emerged, I would like to point out that the understanding of death varies in different countries. Klastrup claims that "the public engagement with death, both our own and that of people close to us, has been removed from the public domain, secularized, and privatized, and delegated to the realms of the home, the hospital, and the nursing homes" (Klastrup 2014:4). Klastrup argues that this is based on the fact that there is no longer any strong religious bonds in the society, which in next instance leaves the bereaved with no, or little guidelines on how to grieve properly (2014:4). She continues to argue that Facebook provides a platform where people can express their grief, and by doing this, they bring death and grief back to the public sphere and everyday life again (Klastrup 2014:4).

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the information above, I will argue that Facebook might provide the bereaved with a platform where they can talk openly about their feelings, receive instant feedback and feel supported in their grief. Yet, there are also possibilities that the bereaved find it too personal to talk openly about their feelings on the social media platform, and finds Facebook revealing and uncomfortable. My area of interest therefore is:

How is social media used in a grieving process after loss of a family member or a friend?

What I want to discuss in my thesis is how Facebook might be helpful for families and friends after the death of a loved one, and in which way it might be difficult. To highlight these questions I have interviewed ten people, and they tell their stories and share their experiences. I have a broad research question, and I therefore need to narrow it down. I will first and foremost look at sudden deaths. When someone dies suddenly, the people around him or her can experience a horrifying shock or trauma because it happens so abrupt (Vercoe and Abramowski 2004: 40). Young and sudden death is one of the most painful things a human being can experience (Goodman 2000). This shock and pain also leaves the one affected with a feeling of hopelessness, disbelief and loneliness.

To narrow down the research question further, I have added some sub questions to help me answer the research question:

1. *Is age a factor in how people relate to Facebook after the death of a loved one?*

I will interview people at different ages to see if they have different experiences when using Facebook after the passing of someone close to them. This will present useful information regarding how different age groups use social media differently.

2. *Have the bereaved had positive experiences with writing in their grieving process?*

I will investigate if the bereaved have had beneficial experiences with writing in their grieving process. This will provide useful information concerning how Facebook can be a platform to

post their writings, and receive instant feedback on their posts. It will also be interesting to see if this type of publicity can be a negative experience for the bereaved.

3. *How important is Facebook on anniversaries?*

Rosenberg (2012) found that Facebook was important for the bereaved on different anniversaries. I will find out if this is the case for my interviewees as well, and possibly why.

4. *Can Facebook be beneficial for continuing bonds with the deceased?*

When someone dies, the Facebook profile page is not automatically deleted, and many people write directly to the deceased, using the profile page. I will find out if this is helpful for the interviewees, and how they experience writing to the deceased on social media.

5. *Does using Facebook replace the important face-to-face conversation?*

It is easy to use Facebook, maybe easier than it is to have an actual conversation. I will investigate whether Facebook is replacing the important face-to-face conversation, and/or if it rather becomes an additional support.

1.3 Structure overview and contributions

To answer the research question and the sub questions, I have looked closely at different theories concerning death, grieving and social media. I will present these more thoroughly in the theory chapter below. I will also discuss previous research, to see what has been done in the field, and to see how I can contribute. Following the theory chapter, I will present my methodological choices. I have decided to use a qualitative approach to get a better sense of how the interviewees feel about Facebook, and how that experience has been for them. Chapter four presents my results and analysis of my research, where I tell each of the interviewee's stories, before analysing their answers. In chapter five, I conclude the thesis, present some ethical concerns I have discovered, discuss limitations and suggest future research.

This study aims to contribute to the relatively limited research in this field. I would like to look at both sides in this research; the people who find comfort using Facebook for a place to grieve, and those who find it complicated and painful. This will provide an interesting and different angle than previous researchers have done before me. I will also present some interesting experiences I had when interviewing my subjects, and present some suggestions concerning how to interview vulnerable people. I will interview ten people, which means I cannot make general assumptions concerning how bereaved relate to Facebook after sudden death in close relations. However, I hope to show some interesting aspects regarding how Facebook might be both helpful and supportive, but also complex and painful for the bereaved. I connected well with the interviewees, and I therefore have honest, rare and interesting information to present in the analysis chapter.

2. Theory

In this chapter, I will present the theoretical framework for my thesis. I will use five different theoretical angles to answer my research questions. In the recent years there has been presented some research on this topic, but the theoretical sources are still limited. I have therefore tried to study theories about grief and death, and theory on social media and Facebook. I will try to combine these different theories, and together they will form my theoretical framework. I will start with discussing different aspects of grief before introducing social media and Facebook. I will then present some theories concerning grief in social media, and I will finish the chapter by looking at previous research. Before I introduce the method chapter, I will look more closely at my research questions in light of the theory presented.

2.1 Sudden death and grieving

Everyone experience grief differently and there is no recipe when it comes to how you "should" grieve. However, there are some differences in grief after sudden death and grief after expected death. In my thesis I conducted interviews with people who are experiencing grief after sudden deaths, and in the following paragraphs, I will look more closely on grieving processes after sudden deaths.

Paul T. Clements, Joseph T. DeRanieri, Gloria J. Vigil and Kathleen M. Benasutti reports that death involving "suddenness, interpersonal violence, trauma, suicide, and most significantly, an act of "human design" are more likely to create exaggerated, and potentially complicated, grief responses" (Clements et al. 2004: 151). They argue that these types of deaths are untimely and unfair, and often lead to shock, disbelief and anger (2004: 151). When the death is expected, the family and friends have time to prepare for the death, maybe they talk to the dying person about death, grieving, the funeral etc. Sudden and traumatic death on the other hand, "allows no anticipation or preparation for the loss, which often results in impulsive and disorganized attempts to regain homeostasis for both the individual and the family system" (Clements et al. 2004: 151). When experiencing a sudden, traumatic death, the family and friends surrounding the deceased are recommended to speak to someone professional about their loss and their feelings around the event in which the death happened. Clements et al. suggest that expressing your feelings can facilitate reinvesting in life. In addition to the psychologist, they also suggests to talk to family and friends (2004: 151). In light of this, I

will find out if the interviewees have chosen to grieve openly on Facebook, and if they have experienced support from their friends and family there. Clements et al. explain that many bereaved do feel lonely. Even if the family members are being supportive, the bereaved still experience the grief like a lonely, isolated journey. Some families also experience that the sudden and traumatic death is too hard for them to talk about (Clements et al. 2004: 149). I will argue that Facebook provides a platform where the bereaved can find the support that might be missing in real life, and I will investigate this further in the study.

In 1969, Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross developed a five-step grief model known as the five stages of grief. The steps are denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance (Rosenberg 2012:8). She originally developed these five steps based on studies of dying people, but after continuing research, she transferred her theory to include survivors and bereaved as well. The five-step model is widely known in the research field, and it has been an important foundation when developing programs for grief support. However, the model is heavily debated and discussed; it has been met with many misunderstandings and has been wrongly interpreted (Rosenberg 2012: 8). As a response, there has been research trying to modify the model, and Zisook and Schuchter concluded that many aspects of the grieving process were unfinished, and a complete detachment from the deceased is not only impossible, but also unwanted (Sandvik 2003:27). Professor Tony Walters (1999) argues that we have more knowledge about grieving today than we had when Kübler-Ross developed the five-step model. His conclusion is that all people grieve differently and in their own individual way (1999: 140). Wortman and Silver also argue that there are huge varieties in how different people grieve in different ways. Their research showed that few bereaved go through the five steps according to the model. They also discuss how the five-step model does not include external factors, which could potentially effect the grieving process (Sandvik 2003: 27). Even if the grieving process is differs from person to person, the model still provides us with guidelines and information about how grief affects us. In the next section, I will present research concerning the effects of writing after sudden and unexpected deaths.

2.1.1 Expressive writing

There have been a number of research reports during the last ten years, showing that writing about traumas might have positive health effects, both physically and psychologically (Frattaroli 2006; Pennebaker and Beall, 1986; Pennebaker and Seagal, 1999; Sloan and Marx,

2004; Smyth,1998). The American psychologist James Pennebaker is a pioneer in this area, and his research has shown that by writing a short text every day, you can see big, positive changes in one's health situation. The theory is mainly applicable for people who have experienced trauma, but might also be transferred to people who grieve as well. The research on grieving people and writing is limited. However, according to Senter for Krisepsykologi, there is no doubt that writing can be an important resource to help recovering after losing someone close to you (Senter for Krisepsykologi). To write about your feelings and emotions is especially important when the thoughts and reactions are difficult to share with others. (Senter for Krisepsykologi). Pennebaker made his participants write stories in which they expressed their innermost thoughts and feelings concerning a traumatic experience. They wrote approximately 15-30 minutes every day for 5 days. Pennebaker's research shows that short writing exercises give a clear reduction in doctor visits, a better functioning immune system, improvement in grades among students, and quicker return to work after leave of absence. The participants had experienced various traumatic events, such as parents losing their children, concentration camp stays, natural disasters, rape and other traumas. Both the physical and the psychological situation had been improved in a relatively short amount of time (Senter for Krisepsykologi).

The Norwegian researcher Bodil Furnes (2008) studied how writing about one's grief might have positive results. Her research shows that writing about your own grief can be challenging and hard for the bereaved. However, the writing process contributes to achieving a better understanding of the situation, and makes you feel like you are more in control of it (Furnes 2008). Furnes argues that writing down positive memories can be beneficial to the bereaved, and by doing so, you contribute to maintaining bonds with the deceased, which is regarded as very important when dealing with grief. Furnes' research suggests that writing in combination with conversation in a grieving group is particularly valuable when processing grief. Writing a diary at home could also be a valuable contribution, but there are indications that writing alone, without feedback from the group, can be destructive for some people. The results suggest that writing can be a contribution as an alternative and/or a supplement in monitoring and caring for bereaved individuals processing grief (Furnes 2008).

According to Austegard and Tobiassen (2014), written language is an important source to establish both order and structure. One can use language actively, because it helps to create control, and because it gives us an opportunity to form a more complete picture of our own

thoughts. We can break the endless cycle of cognitive chaos through the logic of written language (2014:15). The feeling of lack of control is especially present when someone is grieving. When writing your thoughts down in complete sentences, the bereaved would perhaps feel more in control of his or her feelings and that the control has been regained for a little while (2014: 27). When choosing to write on Facebook, the bereaved might experience regained control; they get to express their thoughts by writing status updates, writing to the deceased's profile page or write a memory on the memorial page. At the same time, they also get feedback from family and friends, which means that they do not need to leave the house to go to a support group for feedback. This way they might experience not being alone in their grief. But will Facebook replace the important face-to-face communication?

With Facebook and other Social Networking Sites available at home at all times, it seems likely that many bereaved individuals choose to write on Facebook instead of using their diary or attend an actual physical group. I will investigate this further when interviewing the interviewees.

2.2 Social media and online communication

I will start this section by looking at relevant theories concerning people's usage of Social Networking Sites, concentrating on Facebook in particular.

According to Nicole B. Ellison, Charles Steinfield and Cliff Lampe, Facebook provides you with an online profile where you add friends who can view and comment what you share on your profile (Ellison et al. 2007:1143). Since their research was published in 2007, there has been many changes to Facebook, most notably the "like" button, where you can like the pictures and status updates from your friends. The like button was launched in February 2009 (Kincaid 2009). Facebook members can also join groups, or like pages based on common interests, where they can share their views. Members can learn about "each others' hobbies, interests, musical tastes, and romantic relationship status through the profiles" (Ellison et al. 2007:1143).

Social media has gone from being a marginal phenomenon to being an important part of our life in a very short period of time. Social media is a relatively new phenomenon that is closely linked to the development of web 2.0. in the beginning of the 2000s. Where web 1.0.s main purpose was to share and spread information, web 2.0. gives the user a whole new dimension

where we can create and share the online content (Enjolras et al. 2013:12). The researcher duo Jon Hoem and Ture Schwebs agrees, and claims that social media provides a platform where the member easily can maintain and create friendships (Hoem and Schwebs 2010: 38).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) discuss how social media can be split into six different categories: content cooperation (such as Wikipedia), blogs and microblogs (such as Twitter), content making and communities (YouTube), social networking sites (like Facebook), virtual gaming worlds (such as World of Warcraft) and virtual social worlds (e.g. Second Life) (Enjolras et al. 2014:11). In my thesis I will look more closely on category four, social networking sites, as that is more relevant for my topic than the other categories.

danah m. boyd and Nicole B. Ellison argue that millions of users have incorporated social networking sites (SNS) as a part of their day to day activity (2008). The duo defines social networking sites as:

> (…) web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (2008:211).

Social media is often described as online platforms that invite people to socially interact with each other. They also allow people to create and share content such as texts, images, videos and links to other pages (Enjolras et al. 2013:11). Yochai Benkler claims that social networking sites can be used as a "medium that allows people to connect despite their physical distance" (2006: 359). Social networking sites can also be defined as a platform where one can build and maintain friendships and build new social networks online based on common interests and activities (Enjolras et al. 2013: 11). One of the biggest challenges when researching social media is that social networking sites are in constant change. What was true in 2008 is perhaps no longer applicable in 2016. This also means that my research, which is conducted in 2015, might not be of interest in a couple of years. Nevertheless, I believe it is important to look at these tendencies, because so many people use social media every day, and our knowledge concerning grief and social media is limited. According to Enjolras et al. the usage of internet and social media is relatively large in Norway compared to other western countries (2013:14). That means that research on social media conducted in Norway is interesting and can give an indication on how other countries might use social media in the future. Since Norway is one of the world's leading countries when it comes to using internet

in general and social media especially, an analysis of user patterns and consciousness of social media use in Norway would be very interesting, not only in Norway, but also internationally, as the patterns we find here might also be true in other countries.

Enjolras et al. conducted a research in 2011 and 2012 to identify what people used Facebook for. The interviewees got 17 different answer options, but none of them had anything to do with grieving. The most popular ones were "keeping up with what friends are doing" and "Congratulating friends on their birthday". Further down the list you would find "finding information on cultural events" and "participate in campaigns and interest groups". Facebook is more commonly used for leisure and shallow activities such as looking at other people's pictures, keeping up to date on who is in a relationship with whom etcetera. So where does grieving fit into this medium?

Some researchers have expressed concerns that the continuingly increasing use of social networking sites will lead to loss of "real" human contact and support (Turkle 2011, Kraut et al. 1998, Putnam 2000, Nie 2001, amongst others). Sherry Turkle argues that real human interaction and intimacy is about to be replaced by empty, digital and fake relationships (Enjolras et al. 2013:65). She discusses how people expect less from each other and more from technology. Social media provide people with a massive amount of connections that are always available, but despite that, give us very little social contact (2013:65). Already in 1998, Kraut claimed that the internet was designed to ease the communication between individuals and groups. However this may lead to weaker social belonging and participation, and this way the internet may lead to weaker life quality and wellbeing (2013:65). Putnam argues that the more time you spend on the internet, the weaker social capital you experience in the real world (2013: 65). He discusses how the internet gives us less surplus to enjoy activities in real life (2013:65). Norman Nie expresses his view very clearly when he states «Whatever wonderful things the wired and wireless will bring, a hug is not one of them. An issue is whether there will remain in our society the many places where hugs can be given" (2013:65).

On the other hand, digital communication makes keeping in contact with friends and family despite physical distance easier (Enjolras et al. 2013:65). It is easier to send someone a message on Facebook than it is to visit, call or send letters to them. Internet takes away what constricts our ability to maintain contact with acquaintances, namely distance and time. The digitalization of friends and friendships leads to strengthened ties to people you might not see

on a daily basis. Petter Bae Brandtzæg, Marika Lüders and Jan Håvard Skjetne (2010) found that Facebook can make communication between people easier and be socially enriching. Facebook provides a platform where it is easier to stay in contact with people, without using much effort. This again may lead to a feeling of wellbeing and higher self-esteem. When Brandtzæg et al. asked Susan, aged 40, about her Facebook use, she commented:

> It is a quick way of sending messages and things like: "I haven't forgotten you," "I'm thinking of you." So, instead of ringing or texting, in a way you can see the person, and you can write to them, in a way you come a bit closer to them.   (Brandtzæg et al. 2010: 1019)

However, the real life communication between good friends cannot be replaced by online communication. When online communication becomes the norm, it is easier to misunderstand each other, the mood and feelings of the other person might not shine through in an online conversation. It becomes more difficult to read the other person (Enjolras et al. 2013: 66). This can again lead to a weaker communication and indeed weaker friendships. Kiesler, Siegal and McGuire explain that "social, contextual, nonverbal and visual signals that are present in a face-to-face conversation disappears in computer-mediated conversation" (My translation, Enjolras et al. 2013: 67). This can again lead to less intimate, more hostile conversations where misunderstandings are common. Kraut et al. discuss how it is more complicated to converse online, as the physical presence disappears. They therefore argue that you lose the discussion and the level of mutual support decreases (Enjolras et al. 2013: 67). I will find out if my interviewees have experienced different types of communication online, versus offline, and to see which one has been most important to them.

Brandtzæg et al. (2010) argue that Facebook has created a platform where you are too accessible (2010:1007). They explain how being too accessible can become a problem: "people might experience being too accessible, having too much contact, and receiving too much information (oversharing) from too many people" (Brandtzæg et. al 2010: 1007). Because the common Facebook user often has many friends from different parts of their life, the content they share will be spread to many different people. This includes family members, co-workers, people of different ages, exes, teachers etc. The information you share reaches more people than you might think of at first. I will try to find out if my interviewees have thought about how many people they share information with, and if that has affected what they share on Facebook.

2.2.1 Differences in user patterns between younger and older adults

Brandtzæg et al. researched sociability, content sharing and privacy in social media in 2010. They found important differences between younger and older adults and their usage of Facebook. Where younger adults use Facebook for short moments several times a day, older adults use it more seldom, but for a longer time. Young people use it mostly to micro coordinate, post photos, flirt and keep in touch with friends, older adults mainly use it to stay in touch with family, share pictures from holidays and they use status updates and wall posts more often than younger people do (Brandtzæg et al. 2010: 1018). While younger Facebook users are confident in their own Facebook use and have more knowledge about content sharing practices, older adults seems to "think that younger people are more transparent and exposed to a greater risk of having their privacy violated compared to themselves" (2010: 1019). This is very interesting, as the same research show that older adults also feel "less confident in their FB usage, some report accidents related to sharing and asking for help from their children on how to use FB" ("2010: 1019). Even though older adults do not feel as competent in their Facebook use, and are unsure of how well their privacy is kept, they are more worried that the young adults will expose themselves on Facebook than they think about how they are exposing themselves. The research also found that younger adults sometimes find it troubling to be friends with their parents on Facebook, and they often delete pictures and wall posts they do not want their parents to see. The older adults, on the other hand, report that they use Facebook to monitor their children (2010:1019). The younger users in the research reported that they think about what they post on Facebook, because it might have consequences for them later, when they are applying for jobs etc. The older users are not as concerned about privacy as the younger people are (2010:1019). I have chosen to interview both young adults (aged 21-25) and older adults (aged 48-54) and I will investigate if they have different views on what they share, how much they share, and with whom.

2.2.2 Alone together

American researcher Sherry Turkle investigated how people who use social media a lot, become more alone, rather than more social. She explains that people tend to see the computer as a part of themselves. When working with a computer, a part of your mind is also a part of the mind of the computer (Turkle 2011: x). We therefore start to rely on the computer and the technology as a companion and a friend: "We fear the risks and disappointments of relationships with our fellow humans. We expect more from technology

and less from each other" (2011: xii). This could be a reason why bereaved people, who are extra vulnerable and extra lonely, choose to use Facebook as a place to grieve. It is easier to rely on a computer, because it is there for you. Turkle explains how many of us feel lonely and vulnerable: "We are lonely but fearful of intimacy. Digital connections (…) may offer the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship" (2011: 1). When you have lost someone close to you, it is sometimes difficult to face other people. Sometimes you feel like lying in bed and not do anything. Facebook can then be a useful tool to try to socialize, to message people instead of talking to them, and to be social without making the effort. Turkle argues that we hide from one another on Facebook, while at the same time, we keep it touch. She discovered that people would rather text than talk, because this feels less interruptive (2011: 2). I will therefore argue that after death in a close relation, it is easier for people to communicate via Facebook than it is in real life. Turkle has done research on robots and states: "People disappoints, robots will not" (2011: 10). In the same way, we might say that people disappoints, but technology will not. We rely heavily on technology to save us in many situations. Thus, we might say that technology keeps us alive. At least our Facebook and Instagram accounts. They will always be there, almost like an online you, that can live on after you are dead. Turkle argues that our view on technology today is that it will always be there to offer a solution (2011: 11). Facebook provides us with a platform where we easily can talk to each other without meeting face-to-face.

However, when you do not meet face-to-face you end up being alone after all. Turkle argues that when you have Facebook easily accessible, you never feel alone, because you can reach out to your friends at any time, which leads to the conclusion that being alone is a problem that needs to be solved. Being alone is therefore the same as being lonely (Turkle 2012). One can then argue that the bereaved who use Facebook for a place to grieve rather than meeting people in the real world, isolate themselves and end up feeling more alone than they did in the first place. When interviewing my subjects, I will find out if they have experienced being lonely when using Facebook, rather than connected with friends when using Facebook for a place to grieve.

2.3 Social media and grief

What happens to your Facebook profile when you die?

In this section, I will discuss different aspects of social media and grief. After someone dies, the bereaved can notify Facebook of his or her passing. If the family wishes, the profile can be memorialised (Kasket 2012: 63). When a profile is memorialised, Facebook friends of the deceased can continue to write on their friend's wall, view pictures and interact with the person as if he or she is still alive. However, if a family member wishes to remove the profile, their request will be honoured (Kasket 2012: 63). In addition to this, anyone who wishes can create an "in memory-of" group, which is very similar to a memorial page. This group could be private and only used by specially invited people, or public, which means it will be open to anyone wishing to use it. It is common that strangers who have heard about the death of the deceased use this group to express shock, astonishment and condolences (Klastrup 2014). On the memorialised profile it is common that the users show each other support, communicate directly to the deceased, share memories and pictures with the deceased, and "allowing a more 'complete' picture of the person to emerge" (Kasket 2012: 63).

According to Michael J. Egnoto, Joseph M. Sirianni, Christopher R. Ortega and Michael Stefanone there are over 30 million dead "users" whose Facebook profiles are still up (2014: 284), and it is common to write or comment on the deceased person's profile. Activity on deceased people's profile pages and memorial pages is increasing, and according to Brubaker and Hayes, social media provides technology that melts with post-mortem practices, and it creates a place where one can connect with the deceased in new ways, where you can write directly to them, post pictures and share memories. Brubaker and Hayes explain that Social Networking Sites allow the bereaved to maintain contact with the deceased, also over time (2011). Jocelyn DeGroot found that Facebook could be a good place to maintain a connection with the deceased: "These messages served to help the living make sense of the death and sustain a relationship with the deceased" (DeGroot 2012: 208). DeGroot found that it was important for the people who wrote on the memorial pages to maintain a bond with the deceased. In the following paragraph, I will look more closely at Klass et al.'s Continuing Bonds theory.

2.3.1 Continuing Bonds

In 1996 researchers Dennis Klass, Phyllis R. Silverman and Steven L. Nickman introduced a new theory within bereavement research. Prior to this, the importance of continuing bonds with the deceased was often forgotten or overlooked (1996: xvii). They discovered that

bereaved children and adults had a need to maintain contact with the deceased rather than forget them and move on. They discovered that children who had lost a parent developed certain memories, they did and felt certain things to maintain contact and continued a kind of relationship with the parent they had lost. They found similar patterns when researching adults who had lost a child; the parents were talking and writing to the dead child. This was important to the bereaved, because this way the child was still part of their life (1996: xvii). Klass et al. also discovered that bereaved parents found it helpful to share their stories with other people. After talking about it with others and receiving feedback on what they said, many of them found it easier to find resolution. In their resolution, their child was "present" in their mind (1996: xviii). This was different from what researchers before them had argued (Abraham, 1972: Clayton, Desmarais and Winokur, 1968: Edelstein, 1984 amongst others), Klass et al. found that it was possible to maintain a relationship with the deceased, but also be able to move on and find resolution. "It appeared that what we were observing was not a stage of disengagement, which we were educated to expect, but rather, we were observing people altering and then continuing their relationship to the lost or dead person" (1996: xviii). By continuing the relationship both children and adults seemed to cope better with the loss, it provided them with solace, comfort and support, and they were able to return to their present life with more ease than people who were trying to forget (xviii). Prior to this, many researchers (Abraham, 1972: Clayton, Desmarais and Winokur, 1968: Edelstein, 1984: Furman, 1984: Hofer, 1984: Peppers and Knapp, 1980 amongst others) were under the impression that the bereaved needed to put the past behind them, and that this required to let go of the deceased (xix). Klass et al. on the other hand, argues that "the bereaved (…) have to change their relationship to the deceased. It does not mean that the relationship ends, though it changes in a decisive way" (1996: xix). Klass et al. describe how the relationship with the deceased gradually weakens over time, however it does not disappear completely. "We are not talking about living in the past, but rather recognizing how bonds formed in the past can inform our present and our future" (1996:17). They suggest that the bereavement process is a cognitive and emotional process, but it is also social, and it is important that the deceased is part of the process as well. With this in mind, Facebook seems like a good place to try to continue the bond with the deceased. It is a social place where you are surrounded by friends, and you also have the profile page of the deceased available, either as a memorial page, or the persons profile page, the way the deceased left it. It is a place where you can write what you want, and you get immediate feedback from friends and relatives.

Rosenblatt argues that many people simply cannot get over the death of a loved one. He believes that many people all over the world never will stop grieving the loss of a family member or close friend (Rosenblatt in Klass. et al. 1996: 45). Rosenblatt also argues that grieving is a social phenomenon, where the bereaved depends on feedback, attention, sympathy and understanding (1996: 52). Facebook is an arena where the bereaved receive just that from their family and friends, and is therefore a potentially good platform for grieving. Rosenblatt continues to explain how cutting off the bond with the deceased seems impossible for the bereaved, as it is almost like killing the deceased over again, and the feeling of disloyalty can present itself. He argues how the bereaved might feel like they are giving up memories they have with the deceased and it is like saying they do not care about him or her anymore (1996: 53). Rosenblatt explains how memories of the deceased, pictures and places can trigger grief for the bereaved. In fact, many people try to avoid these things, hoping that the grief will be easier to bear (1996: 55). This is particularly difficult in the case of Facebook, where there are different interests that should be considered. Imagine a family who have lost a member. Maybe the parents would like to keep the profile page of their deceased child, whereas the siblings want to delete it. If the parent gets their way, the siblings might experience that messages to the deceased siblings appear on their newsfeed. They will constantly be reminded of the dead sibling on Facebook, when they wish to relax and unwind. Others seek out memories and pictures to try to deal with their loss. Many people feel like this is helpful to them, it becomes a symbol of the importance of what was lost (1996: 55). Facebook is a place for them where they can go when they want to be reminded of the deceased, to look at pictures of them and to see what other people have written to them. Facebook can help them maintain a relationship with the deceased, hold on to memories and pictures of them, and give them quick feedback and support from family and friends.

2.4 Previous research

In this section, I will present previous research conducted concerning grief and social media. There has been more research on the topic lately, but I have chosen to present these six previous research results, because they are most relevant for my thesis.

German researcher Katrin Döveling (2015) investigated children's and adolescents' use of social media bereavement platforms after loss in close relations. She found that the platforms could be considered as an extension of the user's social surroundings (2015: 403). She also

found that it was necessary for the users to use the social networking sites, because they provided support, which was missing in the real world:

> The qualitative content analysis illuminates how one common feature is the verbalization of the fundamental need for social sharing and illustration of missed support in the offline world. The social net platform creates a space for support, for release and for disclosure (Döveling 2015: 412).

I will investigate whether or not my interviewees have experienced more support online or offline. I will try to find out if Facebook provides them with the same amount of support that Döveling found in her research. She investigated more intimate bereavement groups online, whereas I investigate Facebook, which is more public than Döveling's research field. Nevertheless, she found that online support was important for the users, and I will try to find out if my interviewees have the same experience.

Natalie Pennington researched students who wrote on deceased friends' profile pages on Facebook. She found that Facebook could provide a useful place to grieve, as it invites people to communicate more openly about death and grief (2014: 238). After someone dies unsuspectedly, it is difficult for people to know what to say. She argues that Facebook makes it easier to communicate support to the family. On the other hand, she also found that people close to the deceased found Facebook to be the wrong channel for these comments (Pennington 2014: 239). She highlights the issue between the public and private sphere, where Facebook is in the middle; on one hand, it is private, because you can decide who can see what you post. On the other hand, it is public, because most Facebook users have many friends from different periods in life. She stresses that grief is a private matter, and commenting on Facebook is not (2014: 239). Public memorial groups are common, and when posting to one of these groups, it is no longer private. Pennington explains how it can be painful for the closest friends and family to see acquaintances of the deceased commenting RIP, with a heart emoticon next to it, thinking that is caring (2014: 239). Never the less, she concludes that Facebook is indeed a platform where friends and family can get support from their social network, and maintain ties with the deceased (2014: 247). Pennington's findings are interesting, as she finds that different people has different experiences when using Facebook for a place to grieve. I have chosen to interview ten people with different views on Facebook as well, and it will be interesting to see if my results are similar to Pennington's.

Dagny Regine Rosenberg (2012) investigated how memorial pages on Facebook are being used by friends of the deceased. She explains how the memorial groups have been of great importance to the bereaved, especially in the first phase after the death. Rosenberg emphasises the importance of physical contact and communication in "real life", but explains how the memorial pages work as a supplement to that (2012: 86). She investigates how the young mourners use the memorial groups in relation to grief, rituals, religion and its importance for the young people she interviewed (2012: 81). She found that memorial groups on Facebook are of great importance to the users. Young people seek closeness, intimacy and fellowship on the memorial pages (2012:86). She also found out that the memorial pages were of great importance to the users on the birthday of the deceased, at Christmas, and at the anniversaries of the death (2012: 80). She argues that the bereaved need more support in these periods than other days (2012: 17).

Rosenberg's master thesis is an important contribution to the field, as she does a thorough investigation concerning how young friends of the deceased use Facebook in the grieving process. However, she only investigates how young people use social media to grieve, and does not include adults in her research. She justifies this by arguing that social media is mostly used be young people, and they are more active on Facebook than others (Rosenberg 2012:5). That might have been the case when she started her project in 2009, however, people of all ages use Facebook today, and parents and grandparents are among the most active users (Thoner and Løwer 2014). I will therefore interview both younger adults, such as siblings and friends of the deceased, and older adults, such as parents. I will look at differences in what they post, how much they use Facebook in the grieving process and how it helps them in different ways. Rosenberg chose to interview the administrators of the memorial pages, while I have decided to interview others. A Facebook memorial page might have been created by someone outside the immediate family. The administrator has control of what is being posted, and this might not be the family. I will look at how that feels like for the family, that someone else are in control of their loved one's Facebook page.

In her article *"I didn't know her, but…" parasocial mourning of mediated deaths on Facebook RIP pages* (2014) the Danish researcher Lisbeth Klastrup investigates how people

who did not know the deceased write condolences on Facebook memorial pages. She researches six memorial pages, and examines how media publications and activities on memorial pages correlates. Klastrup analysed press coverage from national newspapers and 1015 comments from the memorial pages, and concluded that both the death of the six young people, and their memorial pages themselves, attracted substantial press coverage and media attention (2014:15). Klastrup argues that strangers use memorial pages as spontaneous shrines where they can offer condolences to the family and express sympathy and shock (2014:13). From the comments she analysed, she also found that most of the messages were directed directly to the deceased, in comparison to earlier when messages only concerned the deceased (2014:4). Klastrup explains that Facebook works as a way of maintaining bonds with the deceased:

> Temporally, from the moment of death and years after, SNS [social networking sites] can help construct and maintain the identity and the biography of the dead person trough the provision of personal and shared memories, allowing friends to continue their bond with the deceased (Klastrup 2014: 6).

Seeing that most of the profiles are public, many strangers have access to them, and they can post whatever they like, leaving the family members and close friends without control of the content on the page. This again may lead to family members rightfully feeling…

> …entitled to have the rights to control and express their grief "in peace" on various forms of SNS pages created in memory of their loved ones, while strangers might equally feel entitled to use at least the often public RIP pages as "go-to-spaces" where they can pay their respect and openly express their curiosity, perhaps not always in fact aware how their activity will affect those with intimate relations to the deceased.   (Klastrup 2014:7)

In my research, I will investigate how the interviewees relate to strangers using the Facebook page belonging to their beloved, and see if there are some differences within families in this area too. Klastrup's research gives a detailed description of the way strangers use social media to express sympathy to the family. However, in my research I talk to the family and close friends of the deceased, and I would like to find out how these pages have affected them. Do they appreciate the attention from the memorial page, or not? In my cases, the interviewees did not create the memorial page themselves, and I will try to find out how they feel about other people creating memorial pages for their deceased relative.

In 2014, Egnoto et al. investigated how Facebook users used Facebook for a place to grieve, and they conclude that Facebook is "an emotion and time saving device" (2014: 298). The users can write and communicate to the family and friends of the deceased "without exposing themselves to the physical intensity and commitments required with an offline behaviour" (2014:298). They argue that Facebook provides a meaningful location to grieve and remember the deceased. They found that grieving on Facebook is not a new way of grieving, but rather an "evolution of pre-existing behaviours to accommodate new technologies and facilitate easier interactions while meeting social expectations" (2014: 298). When I interview my subjects, I will try to find out if they have experienced Facebook this way.

Elaine Kasket investigated how important Facebook was for the bereaved (2012: 68). She found that different people had different ways of addressing the deceased; younger people tended to speak directly to the deceased, whereas older people used Facebook to offer their condolences (2012: 65). People who did not know the deceased also wrote on the page stating that they did not know them, and they almost apologised for writing there (2012: 65). Seven percent of the users wrote posts directly to the deceased, whereas 77 percent wrote about the deceased. Some people commented that it felt silly to write on Facebook, because the deceased could not see it, whilst others commented that they were sure the deceased somehow could see what they wrote. Kasket found that Facebook provides an effective way of communicating with the deceased, and making the bereaved feel closer to the deceased than visiting the grave does (2012: 66). She also found that the users wrote about their everyday life on the deceased's memorial page. The users clearly viewed the memorial page as the only part of the deceased they had left. One of the users stated that it would be like losing the deceased all over again if the family should choose to close down the page (Kasket 2012: 66). I will find out if my interviewees have similar experiences to what Kasket found.

2.5 Shaping the research questions

In light of the theory presented above, I have found seven interesting aspects to discuss with the interviewees. First, I will try to find out if Facebook has provided them with support, and/or if it has been a burden. As I discussed in 2.1; Clements et al. found that bereaved individuals need support from family and friends, and since Facebook has become such a big part of our everyday life, I will investigate whether my interviewees have found support

online. I will also investigate how they have experienced support in the offline world, compared to the support they have been given online.

Second, I will look more closely at the interviewees' different user patterns. I will more specifically look at differences between younger and older adults to see if I find any distinctive differences, similar to what Brandtzæg et al. (2010) found in their study.

Third, I will examine whether writing has been important for the interviewees, like Pennebaker and his colleagues found out in their research about expressive writing. I will find out if writing on Facebook has been beneficial for the interviewees.

Fourth, I will investigate if Facebook is important on different anniversaries, and why. Rosenberg (2012) found that Facebook was more important on these days than other, and I will find out if this is the case for my interviewees as well, and if so, why.

Fifth, I will try to find out whether Facebook can be a place to continue bonds with the deceased. Klass et al. found that it is important to maintain a relationship with the deceased to be able to live a normal life. I will investigate whether Facebook provides a place where the bereaved can maintain contact with the deceased, and if this is valuable for the bereaved.

Sixth, I will try to find out whether Sherry Turkle's research regarding the correlation between Facebook use and loneliness concerns my interviewees as well, or if they have more positive experiences when grieving online. Turkle's research does not specifically concern bereaved people, so the interviewees might have a different experience with Facebook.

Seventh, I will investigate how my interviewees feel about strangers writing on the memorial page of their loved ones. Klastrup found that strangers often uses public memorial pages to offer their condolences, and I will look more closely at how the family and close friends of the deceased feel about this.

Before presenting the findings from the interviews, I will present my methodological approach and ethical issues I experienced in the process.

3. Method

In this chapter, I will present the methodological procedure in my thesis. I will reflect on my methodological choice, strengths and weaknesses, and I will discuss ethical issues when using qualitative interviews with vulnerable people. I will start by explaining what qualitative research is.

3.1 Qualitative interview

Qualitative research is, according to Aksel Tjora, often discussed in connection with, or in opposition to quantitative research (2012: 19). Where quantitative research strives to explain a phenomenon, qualitative research goes in-depth, trying to understand a situation. An understanding and closeness to what or whom you are researching is crucial in qualitative research, and an open interaction between researcher and interviewee is vital (Tjora 2012: 20). Tjora argues that as a qualitative researcher you should have a genuine curiosity concerning people's lives, and how their lives are affected by things around them (2012:20). Since the focus in my thesis concerns social media users and their understanding of how Facebook has shaped their grieving process, I find it appropriate to use a qualitative approach in this project. My study does not aim to test hypotheses or to measure collected data, but rather to present an understanding of how people relate to social media during a grieving process. I was considering doing an analysis of the content on memorial pages in addition to the interviews, but after long consideration, I decided that it would not present me with the information I was looking for. I am interested in people's stories, and in seeing whether Facebook has been convenient or inconvenient for them. On the memorial page, one can find information concerning what people write, but not why they wrote it. You also miss the voice of the people who find Facebook being inconvenient, and I am interested in researching both groups. On the memorial pages, you also find many pink hearts and the words "I miss you" or "Rest in Peace". I am not interested in researching this phenomenon, but rather what lies behind the comment, and how the person who wrote it experienced writing on Facebook.

Where qualitative interviews are regarded, there are no standardized procedures in planning and conducting them. I have used a personal, semi-structured interview guide, inspired by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009). I would have preferred to conduct all the interviews face to

face, however; some of my interviewees lived too far away from me. Consequently, two of my interviews are conducted via e-mail. I will discuss the quality of these interviews below.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) argue that the flexibility of using semi-structured interviews is an advantage. I prefer to think of my interviews more as a conversation than actual interviews. The interview guide worked as a reminder of the topics I wanted to examine, but I found it more appropriate to converse with my interviewees rather than interview them. This is mainly because of the circumstances surrounding the interviewees, as they are in a vulnerable situation. Kvale and Brinkmann also highlight the importance of an open dialogue, and argue that you will get lively and unexpected answers from the interviewees if you are able to have a conversation, more than a questioning (2009: 131). When using semi-structured interviews, you are also able to ask follow-up questions to get more in-depth information, or to clarify any misunderstandings. This was more difficult in the interviews conducted by e-mail, but the interviewees were open to answer any follow-up questions on e-mail on a later occasion if necessary.

3.2 Informed consent, anonymization and confidentiality

One important step in the process was to apply for an approval of the project from NSD (Norsk Samfunnsvitenskapelig Datatjeneste, similar to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) in USA). In this project, I am researching people, and according to Grønmo (2004: 20) there are formal rules when it comes to how personal information should be handled by the researcher. I applied for approval at NSD in January 2015, and they approved the research project 24th of February 2015 (See appendix B). I had to think about informed consent, anonymization and confidentiality. I am collecting data concerning a third person; the deceased. When researching people who are deceased, one needs to take extra caution because the deceased no longer can raise any objections. Respect for the deceased and their surviving relatives is important, and researchers must choose their words with care. (Rosenberg 2012:32). I have therefore chosen to share as little information about the deceased as possible, and focus on the interviewee's stories instead.

When conducting the interviews I brought with me the informed consent sheet, as suggested by NSD (Krav til samtykke, NSD). I wrote about my project, why I had chosen to contact them, their rights and what would happen after the interview. I made sure they understood that they could resign from the study at any time, also after the interviews were conducted. I

let them read the letter and sign it. I always bought two copies with me, one for me to keep, and one for them in case they would like to look at it later.

All the interviewees I talked to have been anonymized. I have given them fictional names, and taken away sentences were they reveal themselves. All the interviews, except for one, were conducted in Norwegian, and I have done all the translations. I have tried to maintain the sentence structure the best I can, and as a result, some of the quotes may have a Norwegian sentence form. When the interviewees revealed themselves, either with use of words or when sharing recognizable information, I chose to leave it out of the thesis, or rewrite it so their anonymization is maintained.

All the data I collected using a tape recorder was safely stored on my personal computer. I am the only one with access to the computer, which is protected by password. Because only I can access the raw data, all the quotes have been translated and the interviewees have been given different names, I will argue that the confidentiality is well preserved. I have been given instructions from NSD to delete all the audio files when the project is finished, and I will comply to their instructions.

3.3 Preparations

To prepare for the interviews with vulnerable people about social media and grief, I decided to talk to Hege Fantoft Andreassen, who is the leader of the social media department at Kreftforeningen (the Norwegian Cancer Society). She explained that the number of people wishing to blog about loss of a family member or friend is increasing rapidly. She specifies that one should be careful about posting too much personal and detailed information on social media, as this might lead to regret after a while.

> People in shock or deep grief sometimes write too personal things on our Facebook-page, and it is important to us that this is deleted quickly. We always contact them and offer them another place to talk. We actually have people who watch Facebook closely to minimize the risk of people exposing themselves. (Andreassen, 2015)

Andreassen explains that they employ people to ensure the bereaved a safety net on Facebook. If they write something too private, the posts are deleted, and they are offered help outside of Facebook. But this is not the case for everyone. If you write too much private information on your own profile page, or on a memorial page, there might not be anyone there

to delete it, or to offer you the help you need. In my thesis, I will investigate if people have regretted anything they posted when they were in shock, and what they did to it later.

Before I started conducting the interviews, I also decided to meet and talk to a psychologist about my project. We talked about grief, social media and difficulties when interviewing vulnerable people. She explained how it could be very difficult to let go of the deceased, and that Facebook can be a bond holding the bereaved and the deceased together. She explained that before Facebook, it was common for mourners to write letters or diaries to express their thoughts, but that it can be difficult for young people today to relate to that. Facebook is therefore, according to her, a good place to express your thoughts, and get positive feedback quickly. She compares Facebook with spontaneous rituals such as flowers and pictures on the roadside after a car accident. It is a place where you can go shortly afterwards and express your feelings. She argues that one might go back and regret what you wrote in retrospect. This is one of the reasons I wanted to interview people whose loved one past away a while ago. That way they would have had time to reflect on their social media use. When it comes to talking to vulnerable people, she advised me to remember that they are not sick people, nor different. They are just in a complicated and sad situation, but it is a situation that humans have always been in, and will continue to experience. By this, she meant that I did not have to treat them differently, and I did not have to take much extra consideration when talking to them. She advised me to say to my interviewees that it was ok to cry, take pauses or cancel the interview in the middle of it. She also said that I should use long time conducting the interview and create a safe atmosphere for them. This I tried to do, and I will explain more detailed below.

Both Andreassen and the psychologist argued that social media have played an important role in visualizing death and grief in society. It has helped communities see grieving people better, and can, according to both of them, provide better help to people who need it.

To prepare myself for the interview situation, I decided to run some test interviews with friends. Some friends of mine have lost people near them, and even if they have not been active on Facebook afterwards, I could try the interviews on them to see how they reacted to each question. We discussed whether any of the questions were too personal, and I got a good chance to see if the questions gave me the information I wanted. After the interviews with my friends, I altered the interview-guide according to their feedback, and I added some questions

as well. This way I was sure that my questions would not be too psychologically challenging for my interviewees, and I would still get the information I needed from them.

3.4 How to find interviewees

When choosing whom I wanted to interview in this study, I made some criteria. According to grieve researcher Atle Dyregrov, many people have a good experience using Facebook as a place to grieve. He believes that the memorial pages can be described as "electronical graveyards", that one can visit, pay respect, and show how the deceased affected their lives (Karlsen and Marthinussen 2015). However, he believes that all families should consider how long they should keep the Facebook profiles up. He argues that the profiles may prolong the grief reaction. According to him, it is necessary to create a distance between the deceased and the bereaved in order for the family to proceed. Crisis psychologist James Inge Kristoffersen (2015) agrees with him and argues that mourners may get stuck at the profile page and the memories there of the deceased, especially the first year (Karlsen and Marthinussen 2015). He compares visiting the memorial page or profile page of a deceased person to calling the deceased's cell phone to listen to their voice from the answering machine, or keep the deceased's clothes in the closet. These are ways to maintain the memories, and holding on to what is left of the deceased person. He argues that there is nothing wrong with doing these things, but that these activities should pass after a while, and that the family should consider to shut down the profile page after a year or two (Karlsen and Marthinussen 2015). Because of Kristoffersen's research, and the research I looked at in the theory chapter concerning Kübler-Ross' five-step model, I wanted to interview people who had lost someone close to them more than a year ago. This way, the interviewee would have had time to process the loss, and would be able to look back on their Facebook use and make reflections. They would not be in phase of shock, denial or anger, but rather try to live with their grief, and move on. I was also interested in whether or not the Facebook profile of the deceased was still up and if they still used it after a year. My interviewees had therefore lost someone close to them between 1 year ago and 6 years ago.

It was also important to me that the interviewees were comfortable talking about this, as it is a sensitive topic, and I did not want to pressure them, or stir up too many emotions by talking to them. I was therefore more comfortable asking people to participate if they had been talking about their loss in the news media or somewhere else. After my conversations with the

psychologist and with Andreassen, I decided that I also wanted to talk to people who had purposely chosen to stay away from Facebook in their grieving process. For me it is very interesting how people belonging to the same family use Facebook in so many different ways. I also wanted different age groups, so I decided to interview siblings, close friends and parents of the deceased. My youngest interviewee is 21 years old, and the oldest is 54. I wanted to investigate how adults use Facebook as well as younger people, as there might be a difference here. Rosenberg wrote about grief and social media in her master thesis from 2012, but she focused more on young friends of the deceased, whereas I wish to look more closely at family members, and different age groups.

I was under the impression that it was going to be easy to find interviewees for my thesis; after all, the people I wanted to interview were very open about their personal life on social media. I just assumed they would be open, and willing to talk to me as well. But I was wrong. It turned out to be very difficult to find people who were willing to participate. I sent out approximately 45 e-mails to potential participants, but in the end, I only managed to complete ten interviews. Out of my ten interviewees, there is unfortunately only one man. I will discuss consequences of this below. This being such a sensitive topic, made it difficult to approach people I wanted to interview, and I was not sure how to start. In the beginning of the process I googled words such as "grief and social media" and "grief and Facebook". I contacted the bloggers who wrote blogs about the topic, but few of them replied, and I understood that if I wanted to find an adequate numbers of participants, I would have to do things differently. I asked all my friends if they had friends or acquaintances who had experienced loss of friends or family members, and I got some suggestions concerning whom to contact. However, when you contact someone you do not know via Facebook, it often happens that your message ends up in the "other" inbox, and not in your actual inbox. Many of the people I contacted via Facebook have not yet seen the message I have sent. I did, however, get positive replies from some of the people I contacted, but it was not as many as I had hoped for. I therefore started contacting people I had read about in the newspaper, because as I was writing my thesis the topic got more and more attention in the media. I was not able to get 15 people as I had initially hoped for, but I believe the ten people I did get the chance to interview, gave me sufficient amount of information.

Even though I tried hard to recruit more men, I only ended up with one, and I would have liked to have more than that. However, I do not know how I could have done anything

different. According to Klastrup (2014:12) gender division is common on memorial pages. Her research showed that 70 % of the people commenting on the different memorial pages she investigated were women (2014:12). Walter (2011) found that only 4 % of the people actively using memorial pages in his study were identifiable as men. Klastrup argues that women tend to grieve more openly, and that expressing their grief becomes a natural part of the grieving process. According to her, Facebook is a natural place to express those feelings, and it is also easily accessible for them. Bugge (2003:46) agrees with Klastrup, and splits the grieving process in two different categories: emotional grieving and instrumental grieving. She considers most women to be emotional grievers, while men on the other hand, tend to more instrumental grieving (Klastrup 2014:12, Bugge 2003:45). Bugge explains that men often grieve more silently, and can sometimes be accused of not grieving enough or the wrong way. They are not as open about their grief as women are, and it is therefore natural to believe that they are not as open about their grief on Facebook. Bugge characterizes the instrumental griever as a person who would rather seek advice and information about his or her grief, than to seek emotional support. The instrumental griever would also be more comfortable talking "face to face", rather than converse in bigger groups (Bugge 2003:47). This shows that finding men to interview would be harder, because there are not as many to choose from. In retrospect however, I would argue that this weakens the thesis, and it would have been interesting to investigate men and their relationship with grief and social media in more detail than I have been able to.

3.5 The interviews

I decided to let the interviewees decide the location of the interview. Since this is a very sensitive topic, it was important to me that the interviewees felt comfortable. I ended up conducting the interviews in various places, such as cafés of their choice, offices and in small classrooms at their school. They all chose places that were known to them, which was important to me, as I wanted them to be comfortable. According to Rapley (2004) it is important to take the place where the interviews are conducted into consideration as the environment may affect the interviewees' behaviour. The interview should therefore be conducted in a place where the interviewee feels safe (Grønning 2009:30). Goffman (1963) suggests the interviewees might be affected by people around them, and he recommends the interview to be conducted somewhere private (Grønning 2009:30). I conducted some of my

interviews in cafés, as that was what my interviewees preferred. Even though cafés can be quite busy, I did not feel that they were disturbed by the surroundings. The cafés they chose where thankfully not very crowded, which led to a relaxed atmosphere. Repstad (1993) suggests that when interviewing people on a sensitive topic, it might be beneficial to do so in their home. This way the conversation may flow better as they can bring artefacts and things that is important to them whilst talking to the interviewer (Repstad 1993). I suggested to my interviewees to meet them at their place, but they preferred to meet me elsewhere. I did not feel that I struggled to keep the conversation going, but on some occasions, the interviewees needed more time to feel comfortable before they started to talk about grief and Facebook. Facebook is also something almost everyone bring with them on their phones, so whenever I felt that the interviewees felt stuck, I would ask them to give me some examples on what they would normally write on Facebook, and they would find it on their phones and read it to me. After that the conversation would normally flow smoothly again. Some of the recordings from the interviews I conducted in cafés where disturbed by noise from the surroundings. I was, luckily, still able to understand what they were saying afterwards when transcribing the interviews. However, I would like to advise other researchers to be aware that the noisy coffee machine in the background might be an issue when transcribing the interviews.

When arranging the interviews, I told the interviewees that I wanted to have a casual conversation with them rather than an interview. However, as a researcher, it was my responsibility to ensure the conversation was flowing and that I got the information I needed. I did bring my interview-guide to all the interviews, but I only used it on occasions where I felt stuck. It was important to me that the interviewee felt like we were having a conversation, rather than a questioning. I was prepared for the interviewees to talk about other aspects of their grief than Facebook; after all Facebook is not the most important thing in someone's grieving process. It would have felt unnatural for me to constantly ask questions about Facebook when the interviewees were talking about other aspects of their grief. Because of this, some of the interviews I conducted were quite long, some of them lasted 70 to 80 minutes. Some of them needed longer time to warm up, and others had more digressions.

3.6 Interview guide

I made an interview guide, which I split up in different categories (see appendix A). I started with "warming up" questions that were easy to respond to, such as age, work, day-to-day

activities, etc. In the end of the warm up phase, I also asked them questions about Facebook, and how they used Facebook in their daily lives. These questions were not necessarily of interest to my topic, but served to get a connection with the interviewees. When feeling the interviewees were comfortable with the situation, I started with my actual questions. I tried not to ask any yes or no questions, but rather start them with "Can you explain…?" or "Will you describe…?". I also asked follow-up questions if necessary. In the beginning, I felt some of my interviewees did not want to talk openly about the topic. This is understandable, since death and grief are so personal, and they did not know me. However, after some time, I experienced that my interviewees only needed two or three questions during the entire interview, and they talked through my whole interview guide using an hour or so. Some of them only needed a little hint here and there, and they were back on track.

After the "warm up" questions, I asked them to tell me about their relationship with the deceased, and asked them to tell me how they experienced Facebook in the aftermath. After that I would ask them about their Facebook use in more detail, and how they used Facebook after the death of their loved one. I would ask them if writing on Facebook was something they planned carefully, or if they just wrote whenever they thought of something, and whether or not they had limitations for what they posted. After we talked about their Facebook use for a while, I would lead them into talking about feedback from their network on Facebook. We would talk about comments and likes and if this was important for them or not. We would also talk about different feedback on Facebook compared to the feedback in real life. The next topic in the interview guide was openness in society, and how they experienced being open on Facebook contra real life. I was interested to see if it was easier for them to be open about their grief on Facebook, and why. We moved on to talk about regrets, and if they had experienced regretting anything they had previously posted. In the end, we discussed different issues concerning Facebook, if they had any negative experiences and if they planned to use Facebook like this in the future. To close up the interviews, I asked them if they wanted to add anything, and I made sure to tell them how grateful I was.

I was afraid that there would be questions my interviewees found too personal to answer. I made sure, before the interview started, that they did not have to answer anything they were uncomfortable with. However, they did not seem to mind any of my questions, and they happily answered the questions I asked, and told me a lot more than I expected. I did experience that some of my interviewees had not reflected over the topics I asked, and when I

asked them about it, they really had to think for a while. I asked, for example, if the interviewee had talked to the rest of the family before writing about the deceased on Facebook, and a couple of them had never thought of doing that. They got a bit concerned about it when I asked, and were distracted for a while. I did not mind this; on the contrary, I found that interesting as well. According to Håland (2008:32) it is ok not to get an answer, but to integrate the interviewee's reactions to the question as well. I am trying to tell the stories of the interviewees, not to cover a certain truth, which makes the reaction interesting to me.

After we talked about the different topics in my interview guide, I started asking easier questions to finish the interview. According to Tjora (2009: 97) this is important, in order to normalize the situation between the interviewer and the interviewee. The two people who have just spend approximately an hour talking about personal things, do not really know each other, and it is important to normalize the situation. I explained to them how the process would go on after the interview was done, how I would transcribe the interview and how the interviewee could access the thesis when it is published. I also thanked them for participating and expressed my gratefulness. Normally I would have finished the interview with humour; that way the situation is normalized quickly, but in this case, we had talked about death and grief, and humour was not appropriate. I therefore tried to calm them by talking about the process, and how they had contributed to the thesis. In the beginning of the interview, many of them expressed that they were afraid they could not contribute with anything of interest to me. I therefore made sure that they knew they did by the end of the interview. All of the interviews I had were useful, and each interviewee contributed with something of interest, so I made sure they knew that at the end of the interview.

3.7 Interview by e-mail

In addition to the eight face-to-face interviews I conducted, I interviewed two people via e-mail. This was because of geographical distance. There are both advantages and disadvantages when interviewing via e-mail. One positive aspect is that you can interview people who live far away from you without having to travel. I would argue that an interview via telephone or Skype would be beneficial in these circumstances, but my two interviewees were not comfortable doing this, and I did not want to force them into a situation they were not comfortable with. We could have used a chat forum to do the interviews as well, as they are more synchronous in time (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009:149) which would be closer to a

face-to-face situation. However, the topic of my thesis can be difficult to talk about for people, and I believe that time to think about their answers might make the situation safer for the two interviewees. Another advantage of e-mail interview is that the interview already is transcribed once it is done. However, both researcher and interviewee should according to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) be skilled in written communication (2009: 149), as you get no clues from body language, facial expressions and the opportunity to ask immediate follow-up questions. The answers you can receive might be without any depth and reflection (2009:149). In my case, I did not get as much information from the two interviewees as I had hoped. What was beneficial with the interviews conducted on e-mail, was that the interviewees felt safe, and they got time to formulate their answers, but it was difficult to ask follow up questions, and they seemed reluctant to give long, detailed answers. They answered all my questions, but I did not get the same amount of information from them as I did from the interviews I conducted face-to-face.

3.8 Recording and transcription

I recorded the interviews using an audio recorder, and thereby was not busy taking notes while the interviewees were talking, and I could easily ask follow-up questions if necessary. When using an audio recorder you get everything they say, pauses and how they formulate themselves on tape, and you can go back to listen to it when needed. I decided to transcribe the interviews immediately after each meeting, as Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) recommend. By doing this, you minimize the risk of human errors and misunderstandings. However, I transcribed all the interviews myself, and since transcription is an interpretive process, one has to take into consideration that I might have misunderstood sentences and meanings. I tried to reduce the risk of these misunderstandings by transcribing the interviews in as much detail as possible, including short sounds and noises, pauses and filler words. This way, the transcription is as precise as possible. I found the transcribing process long and sometimes tiresome; on the other hand, I learned a lot about my interview style, and I felt it was a good way to start analysing my material.

Transcribing interviews involves ethical issues. My interviews contain sensitive information, and it is therefore important to protect the confidentiality of my interviewees (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009:186). I was careful when saving the interviews that no name was mentioned in the file, and not on the actual recording. I saved the recordings and the transcribed

interviews on my personal computer, where I am the only one knowing the password. I also erased the recordings on the audio recorder once they were saved on my computer. By the end of my project, I erased all of the recordings from my computer. I will discuss more ethical concerns in the next section. Because many of my interviewees wanted to read the finished product, I chose to rewrite the transcribed interview, so it is reader friendly. According to Kvale and Brinkmann, some interviewees can get shocked when they see their own interview in written form: "Oral language transcribed a verbatim may appear as incoherent and confused speech, even as indicating a lower level of intellectual functioning" (2009: 187). I therefore took their advice, and rewrote the transcribed interviews in a more fluent style in the thesis. I conducted all of my interviews in Norwegian, even though I am writing my thesis in English. Everything I transcribed has therefore been translated to English afterwards. Kvale (1997) argues that some of the information in the interview might disappear when transformed from oral to written language, and I am concerned that some of the information might have been lost in my translations as well. I therefore listened to all the interviews many times, to make sure that the meanings were still there, and that even though they are translated, everything comes across the right way.

3.9 Ethical issues

In the upcoming paragraphs, I will discuss ethical issues when interviewing people, especially vulnerable people, which I have done in this thesis.

Paul Connolly (2003) rises several important ethical considerations in his article *Ethical Principles for Researching Vulnerable Groups.* In the following paragraph I will discuss some of his concerns. He explains how some interviewees are left feeling used, and he describes how this can occur. Participants can have this feeling for a number of reasons, Connolly lists the following:

1. Being asked to participate in detailed interviews or focus group discussions while being told very little about the precise nature or focus of the research;
2. Not being shown any appreciation or recognition for the amount of time and effort they have given to the research;

To prevent this from happening with my interviewees, I made sure to tell them exactly what they were participating in. By giving them the informed consent sheet I had made, and by

letting them read through it before the interview, I gave them a chance to read what the thesis was about, I made sure they had all the information they needed about the project. I also told them about the project when we met and talked, and I made sure they knew their rights. I told them both in written and spoken form that it was ok for them to withdraw from the project whenever they wanted, even after the interviews were conducted, without giving any particular reason. Most of my interviews were conducted in cafés, so I decided to buy them a cup of coffee or some food when we had the interview as well. I hope this showed a bit of my appreciation for the time they spent with me. I also thanked them properly and told them how much I appreciated them taking the time.

Other participants have reported to Connolly the feeling of powerlessness after an interview. Connolly argues that these feelings also can arise from a number of reasons including:

3. Having no say about the way they are expected to participate in the research;
4. Being asked to participate in one study after another and yet seeing nothing change in their lives as a result of this.

I tried my best to inform the interviewees what I expected from them. I tried to calm them by saying that no matter what they contributed, it would be helpful for me, and that all I wanted was their personal story about their use of Facebook after the loss of a friend or family member. I told them that nothing they said would be wrong, and that their story in itself was interesting. I specified before the interview started that I was not capable of providing any professional help for them. Many of my interviewees expressed gratefulness after the interview, and felt that it was nice talking to me, so I do not think any of them were left feeling powerless.

Connolly also reports that participants can end up feeling that the research was in fact harmful. The reason for this could for example be that the interviewee is

> asked to revisit and recount extremely stressful or traumatic experiences they have had and yet being offered no help or support in terms of dealing with the distress that this may cause them; (Connolly 2003:6)

Some of my interviewees had experienced traumatic events, and I have to admit that I was very nervous when interviewing them. However, all of them had talked about this before, both to journalists and to other students, so I was relatively certain it would be ok. Seeing that they had spoken openly about their loss on other occasions, I do not think our interview left

them feeling hurt or overwhelmed. I also spent a great deal of time talking to them after the interview was conducted and the audio recorder was turned off. This way I made sure they were in a good state when I left them.

Experiences like the ones Connolly describes above are a concern for two main reasons. First of all, "they lead to increasing levels of mistrust of and antagonism towards researchers among the groups or communities concerned" (Connolly 2003:6). Because of this, future researchers might experience difficulties when wanting to investigate this group again. Connolly goes on to add: "Second, and more importantly, it tends to reinforce the sense of vulnerability and marginalisation of precisely those groups and communities that the research is supposed to be helping" (2003:6). I wanted to research this topic so the people who are grieving and using Facebook to express themselves could get better insight into whether this is a helpful thing to do or not. I also wanted to direct this research to people who help bereaved people, such as psychologists and psychiatrists. It would be a shame if the people whose situation I tried to improve were left feeling hurt, used and powerless. I am, however, pretty sure that most of them found the interview interesting and rewarding, and if not, I do not believe they were hurt by it.

Qualitative research, especially interviews, "involve different ethical issues than questionnaire surveys, where confidentiality is assured by the computed averages of survey responses" (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009:72) According to Kvale and Brinkmann "…interview research is saturated with moral and ethical issues" (2009:62). It is therefore reasonable to raise a question as to whether the research will give results that will benefit the people interviewed, and the group they belong to, when the project is finished. Research should benefit both scientific and human interests, and "ethical problems in interview research arise particularly because of the complexity of researching private lives and placing accounts in the public arena" (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009: 62). I was interested in talking to people who had experienced death in close relations. These people are especially vulnerable, and I had to think about ethical issues in all part of my project. The first thing I had to think about was how I should recruit my interviewees. I was uncomfortable with sending messages on Facebook without knowing them, or knowing someone who already knew them, as I thought I might appear as a stalker. When contacting someone unexpectedly, whom you do not know, and who is grieving, you might accidently ruin their day. Then again, I wanted to write this

thesis to improve the situation of the people investigated, so I did end up with contacting some of my interviewees via a message on Facebook.

The next thing to take into consideration was possible consequences these interviews might have on the interviewees. I therefore decided to interview people where the passing of their close relation was more than one year ago. That way the possible consequences were smaller than if the death had recently happened. Some of my interviewees wanted to see the questions beforehand to be prepared, which I found reasonable and understanding. At the same time, I did not want them to plan everything they were going to say, so I ended up sending the topics of my interests to the interviewees who wanted to see the questions. That way they could come prepared, but did not have the chance to plan their answers in detail.

According to Tjora, it is of great importance that the interviewee is not left upset, offended or hurt (2010:141). He specifies that if the interview concerns sensitive information, it can be difficult for the interviewer to help the interviewee in a therapeutic manner if this is necessary. My interviews could at times be very difficult for the interviewee, because it brought old memories alive. Some of them laughed, and some of them cried. I experienced my role as a researcher to be challenging at times, I found it difficult to balance between being a caring human being and a professional researcher. I made sure they knew that they did not have to answer all of my questions. However, even if the interview took some time, none of my interviewees cancelled, and they answered all my questions. When the interviews were done, we sat and talked for a little while, to calm down. It was nice to do so for me as well, as I could be quite overwhelmed by the stories they told me. When I look back at the interviews, I can see that even though they could be upsetting for both the interviewee and me, the process was relatively undramatic.

Some of my interviewees asked a lot of questions about how I would anonymize them. I offered them to read the transcription of the interviews to guarantee that they were anonymized. They said no, but asked some questions about how I would anonymize them, and what I would include or exclude about their personal characteristics. I explained to them how I planned to do it, and they seemed satisfied. Some of them were not even worried, and said that they did not mind being recognized. Nevertheless, I did anonymize all of them. To anonymize successfully however, proved to be more difficult than first expected. I therefore try to give out as little information as possible concerning how they lost their friend or family member.

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I found it difficult to interview vulnerable people for several reasons, one of them being that the interviewee sometimes got carried away when they had a chance to talk about something of great interest for them. At some occasions, they forgot what I asked them, and they kept talking about all aspects of their grief, and it was sometimes difficult to get the answer I was looking for. I thought it rude to ask the same question over and over again, as a researcher one should be careful, especially when interviewing vulnerable people. I wanted to make sure that the interviewee was comfortable. When I was talking to them about death and their loved one, they sometimes wanted to tell me all about how great their brother, sister, child or friend had been instead of answering what I really asked. It was difficult to ask the question again, without the interviewee feeling stupid for answering the wrong question or for misunderstanding. I did not want them to think that I was not interested in their story, by asking the question again. This sometimes resulted in very long interviews, were we talked about a lot of things that was not of interest for my thesis. Nevertheless, I found it helpful to be patient, and to take their whole story into consideration, rather than to rush them along. This proved wise, as the information I ended up with was very personal and resourceful, they opened up to me, and we ended up talking a lot about Facebook and grief in the end.

3.10 Reliability, Validity and Generalization

In the following sections, I will discuss the quality of my research, and I will do this using four different aspects: objectivity, reliability, validity and generalization. Before I discuss how I have secured these, I will explain each criterion.

Objectivity is used to describe an ideal where the researcher is objective, precise and unbiased. It is also important that the researcher is honest concerning how his or her own belief might colour and affect the presented research (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009: 242). It is close to impossible to be fully objective as a researcher. The researcher is often interested in, and has knowledge about the research topic, and full objectivity is therefore difficult to attain (Tjora 2010: 176). The researcher should explain what kind of unavoidable prejudice that already exists, and write about them when called for, and this will lead to objectivity in the research (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009: 242).

Reliability is used to describe whether we perceive a clear correlation between empiricism, analysis and results in the research, and that this is not governed by personal, political or other

factors not accounted for (Tjora 2010: 201). To secure reliable research, it is important that the researcher has knowledge of the field being researched, and that the researcher explains how personal and political opinions might affect the research.

Validity is used to describe whether the answers we find in the research are the answers we are looking for. It can be complicated to do this, but Tjora argues that comparing your own research with previous findings will help you maintain the validity (2010: 179). He claims the validity of the research is improved by being open about the choices we make, the theory we use and the comparison with previous research (2010: 179).

Generalization is used to describe whether your results can be transferred to other situations, or if it is mainly of local interest (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009: 260/324). It is more complicated to generalize qualitative interviews than quantitative surveys, because the number of interviewees is much lower in qualitative research. Tjora argues that the goal of qualitative research is to develop insight about a phenomenon rather than generalize the results to other groups (2010: 181).

Objectivity, reliability, validity and generalization can be difficult to attain when doing qualitative research. This research design aims to go deeper into the material than quantitative research does. I find this to be the strength of the method, but at the same time it is a weakness, as it is difficult to secure generalizability and representativeness (Tjora 2010: 14). Nevertheless, qualitative studies contribute to research with rich and fruitful insights. In the following sections, I will discuss how my role as a researcher might have affected my findings, what type of people I have interviewed and general information about what I struggled with, and how the interview process evolved. I have explained all aspects of the process thoroughly below, to increase the quality of the research as much as possible.

3.10.1 Objectivity

According to Tjora, it is close to impossible to stay objective as a qualitative researcher (2010:176). It is important to be aware of my role as a researcher, and how I might lead my interviewees into saying what they thought I expected them to say, or colour them with my view on the topic. Before I started working on this project I did not know how I felt about being so open and personal on social media. I believe one should be very careful before posting something on Facebook, and personally I am very formal and "professional" on my Facebook profile-page. I walked into this project with the thought of trying to map the field of

grief and Facebook, by interviewing both sides, the ones who write about grief on Facebook almost every day, and the ones who have decided not to. Since I am not sharing much personal information on Facebook myself, I was afraid that my views would shine through, and that I would agree more with the people who had decided not to write anything. However, when conducting the interviews, I thought it was easy to understand where the other group was coming from as well. The more interviews I conducted, the more I understood the people who share very personal information online, and in the end I ended up not siding with any of the two groups, I simply understood where they both came from. My personal views might have been visible in the first four or five interviews, and that might be reflected in my interviewee's answers. However, I have experience in working as a journalist, so I have some training and experience that helped me in conducting interviews with different types of people. I have also had training in how to ask the right questions, and how to ask good follow-up questions. I believe the journalist experience has helped me stay more objective when working on this project, and for these reasons, I would argue that the quality of the conducted interviews is good.

3.10.2 Reliability

Tjora stresses the importance of knowledge of your research topic (2010: 176). I have no personal experience with using Facebook after the death of a close friend or family member. I have however, been reading most of the previous research conducted on the topic, and I have read about different responses when grieving, as well as how different people use social media differently. Even though I do not have first-hand experience with grief and social media, I believe that I was sufficiently prepared for the interview situation. I will also argue that when studying a topic as sensitive as this, it is beneficial that I have no first-hand experience on the topic, as this may have led to a greater impact on me as a researcher. Because I have a Facebook-account I use actively, I can easily understand what the interviewees talk about, and I do not believe first-hand experience is crucial to be able to investigate this topic.

I worried that my role as a relatively young researcher might lead to some of the interviewees not taking me seriously. After all, they have so much life experience; some of my interviewees had experienced losing a child. I am much younger than they are, and I do not even have a child, and I was afraid this could lead them to not open up to me, and that they might think I was too young to understand. However, I did not experience that. All the people

I talked to seemed happy to be able to talk about their lost loved one; some even expressed that it was nice to talk to someone who were interested in their story. They explained that the loss was sometimes occupying their minds, and that it could be difficult to talk to friends, so they actually enjoyed talking to me. I had also done a lot of reading on the topic, and as noted above, I also talked to a psychologist about how to talk to mourners, and it seemed like my preparations were reassuring for the interviewees.

I was also concerned they would misunderstand me, thinking I was a psychology student. I was very specific in my e-mails that I was a media researcher, but I experienced on two occasions that my interviewees expected me to reply them with advice about their problems, which is something I am not qualified to do. I also experienced that one of my interviewees found it so nice to talk to someone about this and kept calling me after the interview was conducted. I did not foresee this, and I would remind other researchers who are interviewing vulnerable people to be prepared for situations like these. Eventually the interviewee realised that I could not help, eventually stopped calling me, and reached out to someone else.

Another aspect I was trying to be aware of was that many of my interviewees were girls my age, and the interviewees can, according to Tjora (2010) expect a researcher, with the same gender and age, to take certain things for granted, and are able to understand things they only indicate (2010:95). I experienced that I connected well with my interviewees; they opened up to me and talked about very emotional things. I did get the feeling from time to time that they tried to seek for a confirmation that I understood how much they missed their brother or sister. They would for example ask me if I had siblings, or if I had experienced loss in the family etc. They would say *"Do you understand?... You know how it is"*. When this happened I would try to ask them what they really meant, or ask follow up questions, so that I was sure of what they meant.

Interviewing people with the same gender and age as yourself can on the other hand be beneficial (Tjora 2010: 95). I connected well with my interviewees, and they opened up to me. In the beginning, I explained to them that I knew that what we were about to talk about could be difficult for them, and I explained that if they needed a break it was ok. It was important to me that they knew I was interested in their story, and that they were comfortable talking to me about it. What I found most challenging, was perhaps to balance between being understanding and patient with the interviewee, but at the same time get the information I needed from them without spending several days together. On one hand, it was important to

get the information I needed, and on the other hand to let the interviewee decide what to talk about at what time in the interview. I felt this problem was solved by my interview guide. If we moved far away from the topic, I could easily look at the interview guide and slowly get them back on track again.

I also experienced that the interviewees were concerned with wanting to answer the questions "correctly". They asked if other people I interviewed had answered equally, if I thought their answers were weird, or if their answers were normal. I also felt they sometimes answered what I wanted to hear, but after we had talked for a long time, their answers became more honest and truthful. After a while, they also trusted me more, and were not so concerned about being different from the other people I had interviewed.

As I have mentioned before, I struggled to find interviewees who wanted to participate in the project. I also believe that the ones I have got might be different from the people who did not want to take part. Almost all of my interviewees have been in Norwegian or international media and talked about their grief before. The people who said no did not have any experience talking to the press or others, and it would therefore be interesting to hear their stories. One has to take into consideration that people who agree to participate in research are different from the people who do not want to take part. This might give an incorrect understanding of the situation one is trying to investigate. On the other hand, my interviewees are very different from each other, and because of this, I believe that I was able to investigate and present different sides of the researched topic. I do, however, feel like I have missed an important aspect of the topic, because so many people did not want to participate. It would have been insightful to see how all these people could have contributed.

I think what surprised me the most was the differing level of reflection my interviewees presented. Even though they were open with me, and told me their stories about how they experienced grief and Facebook, I found myself surprised by the group who had used Facebook a lot. I could ask them deep and reflecting questions, and they would answer them, but many of them had not though about the things I asked. They had simply written a lot of very personal thoughts and information on Facebook, without thinking much about it since. The other group, on the other hand, had thought very much about why they *did not* want to write on Facebook, and their answers are in general more detailed and comprehensive than the other group.

3.10.3 Validity

To improve the validity of my research, I have spent considerable time reading previous research and theories. I wanted to be as prepared as possible for the interviews, and I wanted to see what researchers before me had experienced when researching the field. In chapter 4 and 5: Analysis and Conclusion, I compare my findings to previous research to increase the validity. In this chapter, Chapter 3, I have tried to be open about my choices and decisions, so other researchers can see what I have experienced, and learn from this.

3.10.4 Generalization

It is difficult to generalize results when doing qualitative research. I have interviewed ten very different people with different experiences. I will present their stories, analyse and conclude, and by this present insights in this phenomenon. I cannot however, state that their answers are representative for other people and their Facebook use. People use Facebook differently depending on multiple reasons, including personality, experiences, age, gender and environment (Enjolras et al. 2013). This is also the case for people who have experienced loss in a close relation. Their Facebook use and their experience with Facebook is unique to them, and cannot be generalized to the population. My research aims to present how complex grief and social media can be, how it can be helpful and how it can be difficult for the bereaved.

In this chapter, I have presented my methodological choices, and how I have experienced the interviews. I have discussed ethical concerns, and my experienced when interviewing vulnerable people. I have discussed my role as a researcher, and how my views and opinions might have affected the results. In the next chapter, I will present my findings and analyse the interviewees' answers.

4. Results and analysis

In this chapter, I will present my interviewees. I will tell their story and present their thoughts and opinions. After that, I will present my analysis and conclusion. I have split the analysis into five different categories. First, I will present the differences I found in each interviewee's story. I have called this category "Mapping the field". Then I will present four different topics that all of the interviewees touched upon: "New acquaintances", "Differences between younger and older adults", "Expressive writing" and "Anniversaries". The interviewees' names are fictional.

	Gender	**Age**	**Interview**	**Who they lost**
Lily	Female	48	Interview	Daughter
Katie	Female	25	Buddy	Close friend &
Alice	Female	25	interview	Aunt
			(Sisters)	
Sophie	Female	21	Interview	Sister
Zoey	Female	24	Interview	Close friend
Talia	Female	24	Interview	Close friend
Mia	Female	24	Interview	Brother
Elisabeth	Female	25	Interview	Brother
Aron	Male	54	E-mail	Child
Bianca	Female	52	interview	
			(Married)	

Lily

Lily lost her daughter in 2009. Lily has chosen to write a lot on Facebook, both on her daughter's memorial page, and on her own personal profile page. Her daughter's friends created the memorial page the same night she died. She feels that her daughter still is a big part of her life, and it feels natural for her to write about, and directly to, her daughter on Facebook.

Katie and Alice

Katie and Alice are sisters, and they lost both their aunt and one of their best friends at the same time. I met them in a restaurant where we talked about their experience with grief and Facebook. Whereas Alice found comfort and support using the memorial pages on Facebook, Katie experienced the complete opposite. She wanted to use Facebook for entertainment and fun, and did not appreciate being reminded of grief and death every time she logged on. She also struggled with the fact that her sister had a different view on this.

Sophie

Sophie lost her sister in 2011. She found it natural to use Facebook directly after her sister died. She experienced a massive support from both friends and strangers. After a while, Sophie felt that Facebook became a shallow place to grieve. People would tell her that they were there for her, but she did not experience this in real life. For her, the Facebook-world full of support became very different from the world around her. She gradually stopped using Facebook, and has since gone back and deleted or hidden the posts she wrote.

Zoey

Zoey lives in Norway now, but has lived abroad for most part of her life. She lost one of her best friends to suicide. He was staying abroad, and she had not seen him for a while. One day she discovered that many of their mutual friends changed their profile picture to a picture including him. She thought that this was a weird coincidence that he should be on so many peoples profile pictures, but she did not give it any more thought. The next day however, she saw that people had written "Rest in Peace" on his wall, and she realized he had passed away. She was informed of one of her best friends' suicide on Facebook, and this was hard for her. She would look at his Facebook memorial page and find some comfort in what other people had written, but did not write anything herself. She also felt that many people who did not know him wrote messages on his page, pretending to know him well. She was annoyed by this, and decided not to look at his Facebook page very often.

Talia

One of Talia's closest friends committed suicide in 2010. They had been friends for a long time, and they were studying at university together. She was shocked by the news of his death, and turned to Facebook for support, as many others did. After a while, she experienced that people writing on his page were not people who had been close to him, it was people who barely knew him. She experienced that people did not write about memories they had with him, they wrote how sad they were because he was dead. She thought this was strange, as they had almost nothing to do with him while he was alive. She felt it turned into a pity contest of who was most sad of his passing, and not a memorial page to appreciate him. She therefore moved away from Facebook, and decided to spend time with his family and his real friends.

Mia

Mia lost her brother in 2012. He committed suicide after suffering from depression for a long period. She has been using Facebook actively since his passing, where she writes to him or about him on his memorial page, or her own profile page. She has however, some negative experiences connected to Facebook. When her brother died, several of her closest family members learned about his death through Facebook. Her brother's friends were so eager to express their sympathies on his profile page, that his **family**, who not yet had been notified, saw it there first. She felt helpless in the situation, there was nothing she could do to stop the friendly meant comments from his friends popping up in everyone's Facebook feed, and this seems to have impacted her a great deal. On the other hand, she has found comfort in using his profile page later on.

Elisabeth

Elisabeth lost her brother in 2014. Her family has since then used Facebook to remember and honour him. Elisabeth on the other hand, does not like this. She is tagged in pictures and in posts about him by her parents, and she truly finds it frustrating. She is concerned about how she presents herself on social media, and has done hard work on all her social media accounts. She does not feel that death and grief belong on Facebook, and she is concerned about her family's use of the social media platform.

Aron and Bianca

I conducted the interviews with Aron and Bianca via e-mail. They lost their child in 2011. For them, Facebook has been a place for comfort and support. By using the memorial page, they feel attached to their child, and that attachment has been helpful for them in the process of recover. Likes and comments have been important for them, and they express that Facebook is a good platform to write down their thoughts. Like Lily, they did not create their child's memorial page; they did not even know who did, but they explained that they are appreciative.

4.1 Mapping the field

After the interviews, I found four different ways bereaved people use Facebook after the death of a loved one. Some of my interviewees used Facebook actively and wrote on the memorial page or their own profile page several times a week. Others used it passively, and logged on to Facebook to read other people's posts to the deceased. All of them had both positive and negative experiences, but I found four clear groups; active users with mostly negative experiences, active users with mostly positive experiences, passive users with mostly negative experiences and passive users with mostly positive experiences:

Groups 1: Active users with negative experiences	Group 2: Active users with positive experiences
Group 3: Passive users with negative experiences	Group 4: Passive users with positive experiences
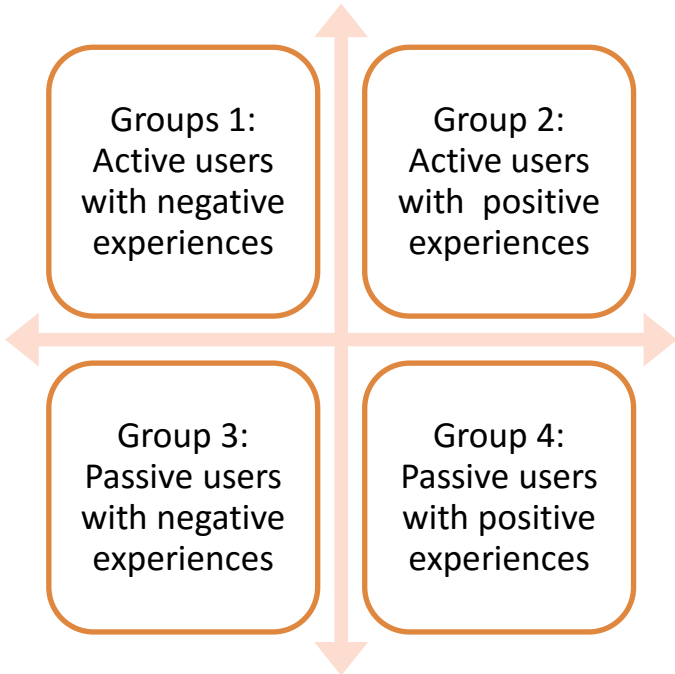
Some of my interviewees are somewhere in the middle, but the four groups were quite clear. I will now present each group, and explain more thoroughly.

4.1.1 Group 1: Active users with negative experiences

Sophie

Even though Sophie is an active Facebook user, and did post a lot of messages and pictures to her deceased sister, she did not use the memorial page that was created right after her sister's death:

> I've never used the memorial page that was created. I don't even know who created it. But I thought it was weird, I mean to create a memorial page for someone who has died without asking for the family's permission first. I'm sure they were just trying to be nice, but I don't like that someone is in control of a Facebook page with her name one it, and that they post things there when no one in the family knows who it is. There are also a lot of posts on that page that has got nothing to do with her, and I think that's very disrespectful. I'm just wondering, (pause) who has got the rights to a memorial page like that. (Sophie 2015)

As we can see in the above comment, Sophie had a negative experience when the memorial page was created. She was uncomfortable that someone had created a page in her sister's name without asking for the family's permission, and she felt overrun by it. She believes the people who created the memorial page were just trying to be nice, but this is something people ought to consider, before creating a memorial page for someone. Anybody can create a page like this, and the family might not know about it, and for some, like Sophie, it turned out to be a burden. She felt she did not have any control of what was happening online, which was both stressful and confusing for her.

When someone young dies suddenly, their friends can experience a shock because death suddenly becomes real to them. You do not have any time to prepare for it either, and the whole experience can be traumatizing for both friends and family of the deceased. If a person is killed in a car accident, friends of the victim often create a roadside shrine, or memorial. This becomes a place where friends can gather around and grieve together. After Facebook became popular, these shrines have become popular online too. Friends of the deceased can meet and grieve together on Facebook, and find comfort and support by doing this. Many memorial pages on Facebook is created by friends of the deceased, not the family, and as

Sophie explained, that was very difficult for her to deal with. Lisbeth Klastrup (2014) found that families of the deceased sometimes felt entitled to be the administrator of the memorial group on Facebook, at the same time as strangers felt entitled to use the memorial page to pay their respect and openly express their curiosity (2014: 7). In Sophie's case, the family was not in control of the memorial page, and that lead to Sophie not being in control of the situation. She reacted negatively towards strangers writing to her sister's page.

Sophie kept posting on her own profile page, and to her sister's profile page as well, but after a while she experienced a huge difference between Facebook and the real world:

> The difference between Facebook and the real world is so significant! On Facebook you can just press the "like" button, and you have showed people that you care, or when someone like something I've posted I feel that I've been given attention and recognition, like a comfort from a lot of people. But in real life it doesn't work like that. I have intentionally been trying to move away from Facebook and be more focused on real life. The people who liked all of my posts on Facebook might just look down and not even say hi when I pass them on the street. They find the situation uncomfortable, so they don't even bother to try.   (Sophie 2015)

Sophie felt that Facebook quickly became a superficial place to be. It was easy for people to like the things she posted and wrote, but that was it. Even though she was comforted by people's likes, it became fake when they did not say hello to her on the street an hour later. As Sherry Turkle (2011) argued, we hide from one another on Facebook while we keep in touch at the same time. Most people do not call each other anymore, they text instead. According to Turkle that feels less interruptive, people would rather text than talk (Turkle 2011:1,2). This is what Sophie experienced. The people around her found it difficult to face her, and chose instead to comment and like her posts on Facebook. Instead of feeling supported, Sophie felt alone:

> I don't think Facebook is good for you, even though it might feel good the moment when you post something, and get a lot of attention. The attention you get on Facebook also fades away, and that hit me quite hard. The first couple of years, I received a lot of attention, but every year after that I got less and less likes and comments on my posts. And you can really see that, it gets so visible for you, because there are actually countable numbers, you know, number of likes. It became so clear to me that the support was decreasing, and that was difficult to handle. It becomes so clear. It's not that I count my friends in how many likes I get, but you do realise it when there are 100 likes less this year than it was the year before. But in real life, you know, my real friends didn't fade away, and the support from them was just as strong as it

used to be. That, for me, that was the main reason to start focusing on real life, instead of living on Facebook. Real life is much more, you know, real.   (Sophie 2015)

After experiencing that the number of likes decreased, Sophie realised that she had to quit leaning on Facebook. She explained to me that it was hard for her to handle the decreasing amount of attention. Turkle argues that on a "social network, people are reduced to their profiles" (2011: 18). It became important to Sophie not to be just her profile, but to be a person again. She realised the attention she needed was in real life, not on Facebook. She did however, feel that Facebook could be helpful for her, especially directly after the death of her sister:

> You feel less alone with your thoughts. Facebook has been helpful that way. But then people write things like "I'm here for you", but when you look around they are not really there. It's just on Facebook and that's not really real. I don't trust people when they write me on Facebook saying that they're there for me, because they're not. A lot of people, like my own family, thinks that we should write on Facebook, because you will get a confirmation that you're not alone in your grief, but no. I don't think it's for me.   (Sophie 2015)

Sophie recognises that it might be helpful for her family and that they find strength and confirmation in Facebook, but she concludes that it is not for her. After reading the messages from her "friends" on Facebook, she realised that those people writing there were not really her true friends, and she actively decided to stop using Facebook as a place to grieve. She also explained how her sister's profile page seemed old and outdated:

> I haven't used her memorial page in ages. It's not that I don't think about her anymore, I still do, every day, but everything on her page is written a long time ago, you know, when she was alive. It still says that she works at the store she used to work in, it is weird to see. She doesn't work there anymore obviously, you know, it just feels like the information is wrong and outdated.   (Sophie 2015)

This might be another reason for Sophie not to use Facebook anymore. Her sister used to be an active Facebook-user and it is hard for Sophie to see that her profile is not up to date. She also explains that when people write on the memorial page now, they do not write long personal messages like they used to, but only post a little Facebook heart. She expresses that she does not understand why people do this instead of writing long, more personal messages, and it is making her angry:

> A lot of people are posting little pink hearts, I don't know if that's helping them or what. Maybe it's just to show me and the rest of the family that they still think about her, or maybe it's like going to the grave and put down some flowers. You shouldn't really be angry at people for doing that, I'm sure it's just to be nice, but I can't help it, I think it's strange. And lazy. It's like "I couldn't be bothered to buy flowers and walk to the cemetery, so I just used Facebook". Like, I don't know.   (Sophie 2015)

Even though people post the hearts to be nice and friendly, Sophie finds this shallow and superficial. Rosenberg (2012) found that the heart emoticon; "<3" which transfers to a pink heart on Facebook, is commonly used in memorial groups, especially by girls (2012: 53). She also found that members of the memorial groups she studied wrote heart emoticons as a way of expressing "we will never forget you" or "I feel your pain". The last one is directed to the family of the deceased (Rosenberg 2012:65). As Rosenberg discovered, the hearts are meant as a nice gesture, but that is not how Sophie sees it. She sees it as a lazy gesture, or a shallow way to express feelings. Even though this is the way she sees it now, she did find comfort in using Facebook directly after her sister passed away:

> It actually helped me a lot to use Facebook in the beginning. A lot. It was very nice. People were so friendly, and I got a lot of attention. It was like receiving hundreds and thousands of little postcards with nice and friendly messages on them. In the beginning it was a huge comfort for me. But now I appreciate my "real friends" more. I was really afraid that I would be addicted to the attention I was given on Facebook, because I was dependent on those comments and likes on Facebook for a while. That was why I intentionally stopped using it for those purposes. For me it was an active choice to use Facebook less, but that really helped me, because I was "forced" to talk to my real friends about how I was actually doing. It is so, so, so different to get an actual hug than it is to get a like or a heart on Facebook.   (Sophie 2015)

After a while, Sophie became aware that Facebook was not good for her. She explained that it was an important support in the beginning, when she was shocked, frustrated and needed what she refers to as "hundreds and thousands of little postcards". She was however, afraid she would be addicted to the attention she was given there. She realised the importance of being open about her feelings in real life, when she started talking to her friends again:

> It is so different to talk to them, cry in front of them and just lay there with my head on their lap, than to look at her memorial page to see if someone has written anything there that day. I was hiding on Facebook before, when I posted things there, I didn't have to talk about how I was doing. It was comfortable being on Facebook, I didn't have to face people's reaction

> when I talked about this, that was really hard for me to face. On Facebook you don't see the people you're talking to, so it gets less scary. But I worked really hard to quit relying on Facebook, and to start living in the real world again.   (Sophie 2015)

What Sophie experienced, correlates with Turkle's findings. Turkle explains: "… one of the things that comes to feel safe is using technology to connect to people at a distance, or more precisely, to a lot of people from a distance. But even a lot of people from a distance can turn out to be not enough people at all" (2011:280). Sophie had a positive experience with Facebook in the beginning. She received a lot of attention from friends and acquaintances, and that felt comforting and safe. After a while she felt the attention she got was not enough, just like Turkle explains, even though she got a lot of attention, it did not turn out to be enough at all. According to Turkle, Americans brag about how many Facebook friends they have, yet when asked, they report that they have fewer friends than they used to have. Most part of the people they feel they can confide in, happen to be family, rather than friends (Turkle 2011:280). Hundreds of friends on Facebook do not necessarily mean hundreds of close friends you can rely on. Sophie experienced this first hand when she was walking in the street, and the people who had been writing to her on Facebook could not face her when they passed each other. She therefore decided to quit using Facebook for grieving purposes, and started talking to people around her instead. Sophie explained how she was afraid of relying too much on the attention she got on Facebook. She was slowly becoming used to the attention there, and expected it to continue. Turkle explains that we easily rely more on technology than on each other. She argues: "We defend connectivity as a way to be close, even as we efficiently hide from each other" (2011: 281). This is what frightened Sophie, and she decided to use Facebook for pleasure rather than talking about her grief.

Elisabeth

When Elisabeth found out about her brother's passing, she immediately experienced an unpleasant encounter with Facebook:

> I found out about it when my mother called me. They had to call me quickly, because people had already started posting things on my brother's wall. And it wasn't even close friends of his, it was acquaintances, people I hadn't seen in years, or never even heard of. When I think about that now, I get really annoyed. He had only been dead a couple of hours before they started writing "Rest in Peace" on his wall. They should think more, I mean, the whole family hadn't been informed yet.   (Elisabeth 2015)

Although Elisabeth describes herself as an active Facebook user, she quickly decided that she would not write about her brother's passing on Facebook. Her family on the other hand, chose to write a lot about him on Facebook, and they also posted pictures of him with Elisabeth, as well as tagging her in status updates and in poems and posts written on his memorial page:

> The whole family received massive response from everyone, we got hundreds of likes and comments, lots of hearts and stuff. I didn't write anything. Many people changed their profile picture to a picture with him in it. I didn't do that either, I was tagged in a lot of pictures because there were posted a lot of pictures with me in it as well as him, but I thought it was uncomfortable. It wasn't that I wanted his death to be a secret, it was more that (pause) I don't know. I don't know why I didn't want to see it there, but I didn't want to share his death like that. I mean I don't mind talking about him at all, but when I talk about it, I know who I'm talking to. If I write things on Facebook, I don't know exactly who I'm talking to. I have so many random friends there, like my old boss and random acquaintances I haven't talked to in years, and why should they know about it?   (Elisabeth 2015)

Elisabeth was afraid that the news of her brother's passing would reach people beyond her control. She explained that she has many acquaintances on Facebook, and she did not feel that they needed to know how she felt. It was too personal for her to share. Researchers Brandtzæg, Lüders and Skjetne (2010) found that Facebook users are "readily available and visible to a lot of people. Facebook is increasingly an "all friends in one place-solution". (2010: 1007). This is what Elisabeth is experiencing. The design and purpose of Facebook is currently helping you keep up with acquaintances rather than be close to family members and actual close friends. Elisabeth therefore found it too personal to share her inner thoughts and grief with all these people she does not have weekly contact with. She also stresses that her grief is not everyone's business:

> I think it is too personal to write things there. I get really vulnerable in situations like these, and I would never increase that vulnerability by posting personal things on Facebook. I'm an active Facebook-user and I post a lot about politics or things I have written, links to things that interest me and so on. But I'm not very personal. I would for example never write "happy anniversary to the best boyfriend ever" or anything like that, I think I like to keep my personal life out of Facebook, any aspect of my personal life really.   (Elisabeth 2015)

Elisabeth is clearly very aware of her online personality; she has worked with social media before, and is aware of how people use Facebook in different ways. She told me a lot about how she would try to control the amount of information people could find out about her

online, and was more aware of her movements on Facebook than any of my other interviewees were:

> I have worked with social media, so maybe I have a more professional view on Facebook. I have never considered Facebook a private platform. I have never seen it as a type of diary. I feel like I have spent a lot of time creating a profile that defines me, maybe more professional than personal, and writing about my brother and my grief there, compromises the person that I am online. The online me is not who I am completely, but it's the part of me that I'm comfortable showing other people online. If I posted about grief and very personal things, I would also think more about the number of likes I'm getting. Now it's not that important to me, I mean I obviously think about it, you want people to like the things you post, but I think it would be so much more important if I shared things that was truly important to me and close to my heart. (Elisabeth 2015)

Elisabeth raises the same issue as Sophie did, that the number of likes they get on their posts, is becoming increasingly important to them. Sophie was afraid that she would get dependent on the likes she got on Facebook, and Elisabeth is afraid that she would care too much about the number of likes she would get, if she decided to write about her brother's death on Facebook. She argues with herself saying that she cares about it now, but should she choose to post about her brother on Facebook, she would care more. She is afraid that her life quality would be dependent on how many likes she would get from other people, so she states:

> I think that one of the reasons I chose not to post about my brother, was that I'm afraid of getting stuck in the grief, and relying on Facebook and the feedback there. I'm afraid to let Facebook define me and my feelings. And you know, the number of likes you get on a post decreases after a while. I have seen that with my parents and my sister. In the beginning they got hundreds of likes, and now they get like three, and it's mostly from family members. That has to be hard for them, and it is dangerous how much you rely on those likes, I mean you are dependent on online attention from other people, that's scary. It must hurt so much when you post something about your grief or something that's really close to your heart, and you get three likes or something. And I wonder if that is something I could talk to my family about. I wonder how they are dealing with this. It must be difficult for them, it must be. They got so many likes last year, when he had just passed away, and they have come to depend on that attention, and now they don't have it anymore. I can imagine that they have some thoughts about that. (Elisabeth 2015)

Elisabeth explains above how she is afraid of being stuck in her grief. This is something that grief researcher Atle Dyregrov supports. He explains that grieving on Facebook can be supportive in the beginning, but can prolong the grieving process after a while (Karlsen and Marthinussen 2015). He suggests that one eventually should delete the deceased's Facebook profile, so you do not get addicted to the page. Elisabeth was afraid that her family might be struggling to let go of her brother's profile and memorial page, and she explains that she is thankful that she chose not to grieve publicly on Facebook herself.

Just like Sophie, Elisabeth experienced that her friends would write on her Facebook wall to tell her that they were there for her. Elisabeth did not see this as a nice gesture, even though it was probably meant like that. She started questioning their intentions by writing to her, as she explains:

> What I experienced a lot in the beginning was that people wrote to me on Facebook and said things like "let me know if you need anything" or "I'm here for you!" but they weren't really there. It felt very shallow. And I wasn't really comfortable calling around to let people know that I needed to talk to them at the time either. The people who wrote to me probably needed to tell me that they loved me, but for me it's completely incomprehensible that you can't put that in a private message, or even call. For me it just, it makes me question why they write it to me publicly, is it to show other people that they care? It puts another element in there, that I don't quite understand. What's motivating them to write what they write? I don't like it. (Elisabeth 2015)

Elisabeth started to question the friends who were posting to her. Now, after a year, she is still uncomfortable with people posting on her wall, but she has a better understanding of why they do so: "Maybe they are just trying to show me love, and think everyone should see it" (Elisabeth 2015). Even though Elisabeth states several times that posting about her grief on Facebook is not something for her, she sometimes contradict herself, and admits that she has considered it, and that she finds it tempting at times. She told me that her sister posts private things on Facebook, and that they are very different people in that aspect:

> Even I considered writing something about him on my own wall at the anniversary. But then I didn't. But I did think about it. My sister posts lyrics, poems and pictures and stuff. She also wrote like "I can't believe it has been a year since we lost you, I miss you every day", and she would get likes. I remember my mum sent her a little pink heart.   (Elisabeth 2015)

Even though she clearly states that Facebook is not something she would want to use as her sister does, she envies her family for the fact that they are able to use Facebook for that purpose. When she talked about how her mother sent her sister a pink heart, it was clear that she was envying her a little. When I asked her about it, she explained:

> There is some kind of courage in writing things there too, it's just, (pause) it's not that I think people would like me less, it's more… I'm afraid that, I'm a little bit of a coward, I'm afraid that people would think it was stupid. I'm more afraid that they think I'm being childish and silly if I started writing things about my brother, than that people would think I was mean or stupid, but I'm afraid that they would think less of me.   (Elisabeth 2015)

I find it both surprising and sad that Elisabeth feels like a coward for not writing about her brother on Facebook. When I talked to the psychologist, she argued that Facebook has helped the society open up about death and grieving. It is more common to talk about death now, than it was just a couple of years back, and this is good. However, it should not be mandatory to be open on Facebook. We are talking about personal thoughts and feelings, and if it helps people to share it, then it is great. You should not, however, feel that you are a coward when choosing not to.

Mia

Mia's eldest brother went missing during the night, and the next morning she woke up to many texts and missed calls:

> People had heard what had happened, they had seen it on Facebook. But I had no idea what was going on. I checked Facebook, and I could see that he was missing. People had been looking for him all night. It's ironic, I had turned off my phone that night, because I really needed to sleep. I called my other brother, they lived in the same town, and he told me that they'd found him, and he was dead. My youngest brother found out about it before we had called him. He was only 13 at the time, and he found out online. He was home alone and he had to read it on the internet. People had begun writing rest in peace on his page. People can be so thoughtless. It was all over Facebook before the family knew that he was dead. They found him dead in the morning, and after only an hour, everyone knew, except my family. It spread so fast. It was horrible. And scary. And it was nothing I could do to stop it. (Mia 2015)

Mia experienced how fast news travels on Facebook. Friends and acquaintances of their brother had started writing Rest in Peace on his wall without thinking that his family not yet

had been informed of his death. As Mia explained above, there was nothing she could do to stop the information flowing online. That left her feeling powerless and frustrated:

> After a year I wrote a post about it on Facebook. I said that people should be ashamed. They had a need to be the first ones to offer their condolences on Facebook, to show everyone how much they cared. It was (pause) it was distasteful. The need to be first, the need for attention, it was like everyone felt so sorry for themselves. They needed to scream out about it. It was (pause), I was so frustrated. I remember thinking: This can't be on Facebook now! Mum doesn't even know! It wasn't ok, not at all. I couldn't stop it, it was nothing I could do. I didn't know his password, I couldn't go in there and fix it. It was a mess, everything was out of control, and I just had to sit there and see it happen in front of me. (Mia 2015)

As a result of the news about her brother's death spreading so fast on social media, several members of the family found out about his passing on Facebook. Mia expresses frustration and sadness that the family did not have the opportunity to be informed of his passing by a minister or a relative, but rather through Facebook. Naturally, this was a horrible experience for them. Because of the family's traumatic experience in the hours after his death, Mia's dad decided that he wanted to delete Mia's brother's Facebook profile. This, however, was hard for Mia to hear:

> Because Facebook became such a burden for my family, dad decided to delete his profile. And then I freaked out. He was dead, gone, and his profile was the last piece of him that was left. Without his profile he would be completely gone. I didn't want that, and after a while my dad came around as well, and we kept it. (Mia 2015)

Even though Mia had a horrible experience with Facebook, the thought of deleting her brother's profile was unimaginable. She explains how she felt her brother's Facebook page was the last piece of him that was left. This is in line with what Elaine Kasket found in her research from 2012, concerning how friends of the deceased feared losing the profile. One of her interviewees stated: "His profile is the one last thread of him that I have. If we lose it, it would be like losing him all over again" (2012: 66). What Mia states above, and what Kasket found in her research proves how important these profile pages are. It is a place where family and friends can come together and support each other, and it is a unique platform where the content is created by the deceased, as well as people in the deceased's network. Although Mia and her family wrote on her brother's profile page a lot, it eventually became painful for them. Mia explains:

The first year we used his profile a lot. People wrote messages to him there, but many people, including me, found it painful to see his profile appearing in the news feed every time we logged on to Facebook. So we decided to make a memorial page for him instead. His profile still exists, but we don't use it like we did before. The memorial page is better, because you can decide when you want to visit it, and when you don't. It was hard on everyone to constantly be reminded of him on Facebook like that. His picture kept popping up, so my sister created the memorial page.   (Mia 2015)

Mia found it difficult to see her brother's profile appear in the news feed every time she logged on to Facebook. They therefore decided that they should create a memorial page. That way, the people who wanted to visit the page could do it every time they wanted too, but his page would not pop up in people's news feeds when they did not expect it. When one decides to keep the deceased profile page up, and does not notify Facebook that the person has passed away, the deceased person's birthday will keep appearing in the news feed, and his friends will get notified when he is tagged in pictures, or someone has mentioned him in a comment. This can feel intrusive, as Mia explained above. Mia was more comfortable with the memorial page:

I often look at his memorial page, the pictures of him, all the nice words. And now, after a while, people still write things there. It's really nice to see. I can see how much he meant to people. So now I appreciate Facebook more. It was in the beginning (pause) I hated it in the beginning. So many people knew about it before me, that's not how it is supposed to be. It was really hard on me.   (Mia 2015)

A memorial page is different from a profile page, as birthdays, posts and pictures do not appear in people's news feed. One can visit the memorial page when one wants, but you have to search for it in the search field, you will not get notifications or posts from the page in the newsfeed. The memorial page is less intrusive, as the users have to actively search for it, and are therefore prepared for seeing pictures and posts about the dead person. The memorial page was easier to use for Mia and her family.

Mia felt, similar to what Sophie and Elisabeth explained above, that people who wrote on her wall did it to show everyone else that they cared, rather than actually caring about her. She explains:

People wrote a lot directly on my wall in the beginning, so I chose to block my wall, so that people couldn't write on it. It felt fake that they wrote to me there, I would've preferred if they

had told me instead. I felt that it wasn't to comfort me, it wasn't for my sake, it was to show everyone how much they "cared". It felt like they really wanted attention, and it wasn't personal. I noticed that after he passed away, people (pause) it was almost like a competition. Like, people screamed "feel sorry for me!". It was almost like a competition of who was most sad about his passing. So for a while it was about getting most likes and hearts. I didn't like that.   (Mia 2015)

Even if Mia's friends meant to be nice and caring, Mia experienced something else. She had a strained relation with Facebook after people started writing "Rest in Peace" on her brother's wall before the family knew about his death, so she had a hostile attitude towards Facebook at the time. This could be the reason that she felt the friendly meant comments being something else. However, both Sophie and Elisabeth explained that they felt the same way about it, which leads to a possibility that more people might feel the same. Facebook is an easy way of communicating, and it appears that it might be too easy when we talk about death and grieving. If you, as a friend, want to show the bereaved that you care, Facebook might not be the place to do so. Sophie, Elisabeth and Mia felt that the people who wrote their condolences on their walls did it to show everyone they cared, rather than actually care about them. The three girls also explained that it was people who did not know them very well who wrote on their Facebook walls, and it was people they do not have contact with today.

Even though Mia had several negative experiences with Facebook in the beginning, she uses it actively today. One reason for that might be that the family regained the control on Facebook, she explains how:

> Facebook was, you know. Even after a while, it was (pause). We wrote on Facebook that we didn't want to see pictures of his tombstone on Facebook. Our family lives far apart, and we didn't want Facebook to be the place where we first saw it. And people respected that. That was a good experience, we were prepared, and we were able to take control. That was a good feeling compared to the one when we discovered he was dead.   (Mia 2015)

This time, the family was ahead of the situation, and was prepared for what might appear on Facebook. They were able to make an announcement, telling people not to post pictures before the family had been there and seen it in person. This good experience with Facebook resulted in Mia turning to Facebook for a place to find support:

> I use Facebook a lot. Prior to his death I didn't use it that much, but after he died it has become important to me. I have always been open about what happened. When I write to him

or about him, I try to focus on the good memories I have with him, what I liked about him and you know, positive things. I'm not one of those people who are looking for sympathy on Facebook. I never think about how many likes or comments I'll get. (Mia 2015)

As opposed to Sophie and Elisabeth, who were concerned about how many likes and comments they got, Mia states that she does not care about that. The main thing for her is that Facebook is a channel where she can write directly to her brother. She does not do it to get sympathy, as she explains above, but it comforts her that she is able to write down her thoughts, to speak directly to him, to look at his pictures and wall posts and focus on the good memories she has with him. She explained that she in the beginning thought it was stupid of people to write to her brother, because she did not understand that anyone else had lost someone close to him or her. She said that she was so self-concerned that she did not understand that others might need the support on Facebook as well:

But then it hit me after a while. I'm not the only one who is suffering a big loss here. This guy for example, lost his best friend. I didn't think about that. All I thought about was how I'd lost my brother. In a way, it was all about me for a while. I thought I was in most pain, and that I was the one who should be posting on Facebook, all these other people think they are upset, but they're really not. But after a while I understood that it wasn't like that. They were also upset, and they had the right to be upset too. In the beginning it was a sensitive topic, people didn't want to talk about it, but now it's much better. People can talk about it without freaking out. It's like Facebook has helped people realise that it's ok to talk and write about it. (Mia 2015)

As we can read above, Mia feels like Facebook has helped people understand that death and grief is something that is ok to talk about. This is in line with what the psychologist and Hege Fantoft Andreassen explained when I discussed my thesis with them. Facebook has become an important platform in our everyday life. If it is ok to talk about death on Facebook, then maybe it is ok to talk about in real life to. We care about what we read there, we get inspired, encouraged and stimulated. We are part of interest groups and we like different pages. We care about what we see on Facebook. Not very long ago, death and grief were something no one discussed or talked about. Klass et al. found that prior to their research concerning continuing bonds with the deceased, the continuing relationship with the deceased was considered unhealthy and symptomatic of psychological complications (Klass et al. 1996:4). Mia experienced that Facebook helped the people around her understand that death and grief was ok to talk about, which is a positive development for the society.

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On the other hand, Mia has an understanding that her grief and talking about her brother's death can have a negative effect on people:

> At the same time I feel like I can't write too much about him on Facebook either, it's one of those topics that if you write about it too much, people get uncomfortable. It is like you share too much information. It's uncomfortable for people to read about. I have to find a balance. I try not to be the girl with the dead brother who can't write about anything else but him, I try not to let it define who I am, I'm still the same person I used to be, you know, before he died. (Mia 2015)

Mia raises an interesting issue above. It can be too much grief and death on Facebook as well. Enjolras et al. found that people mostly use Facebook for pleasure, fun, entertainment and to relax (2013: 48). Too much talk about death might not belong on Facebook. As Mia states above, it might be uncomfortable for people to read about. She is aware that her Facebook use can be too much for people, and she stresses that it is important for her to find a balance where she, and her social network, are comfortable with how much is being posted.

The fact that Mia's brother committed suicide is something she has thought about a lot. She explained that she chose to be open on Facebook because there are some stigma connected with psychological diseases and suicide. She explains why it has been important for her to be open about her brother's suicide:

> I think it is important to be open about it, I don't see a reason why I shouldn't. I think it is natural to talk about. My brother was very interested in helping people who needed it, and he didn't hide his psychological problems, so why should I? It feels like I'm being open about it for his sake, I'm doing it for him. He wanted to help people who were struggling, so if I can help others by being open about it, then that's what I want. It's for him. And I'm not ashamed, I think, when it comes to suicide, people can be ashamed to talk about it, but I don't think we should be. Facebook is something you use in your everyday life, and the grief is a big part of me, so it would be unnatural not to write about it there in a way. It's a big part of who I am. Some people feel like they don't want to talk about it, especially the fact that he killed himself. But on his memorial page, people can talk openly, and there is no shame there. It's easier to be open. (Mia 2015)

Mia explains that there is no stigma on the memorial page, and people are not afraid to write about their thoughts and feelings there. Mia finds support on the memorial page, yet she also finds it absurd:

I sometimes think it is absurd to post on his Facebook like this, I mean, he can't see it, wherever he is now, I doubt that he's checking Facebook. My sister has chosen not to write to him on Facebook anymore, she writes letters to him which she keeps in a box she has called an angel box. She feels like it is completely absurd and stupid to write to him on Facebook. People write directly to him, both on his profile page and on the memorial page. I do it too, but I think it's a little silly, he will never see it, but I don't know. (Mia 2015)

Mia raises an interesting question above. She explains that most people, including herself, write directly to her brother, but they know he will never see it. Several times during the interview she explains that she feels silly sometimes for writing to him there, but at the same time it is comforting to her. She explained above that it felt like the last piece of him she had left, and it is comforting for her to see his pictures and posts. She also finds comfort in what other people write to him. Yet, the memories from the chaos on Facebook directly after his death is still strong in her memory, and she finishes the interview saying:

Facebook is helpful to me now, but in the beginning, it was really hard. The priest didn't come to let us know he was dead, there was no time for that, it was all over Facebook. I remember thinking that I wished it didn't exist. I was so disappointed. Why didn't they think? That was very unnecessary. (Mia 2015)

4.1.2 Group 2: Active users with positive experiences

Lily

Lily had a completely different experience than Sophie, Elisabeth and Mia. As mentioned above, she lost her daughter in 2009, and she quickly discovered that Facebook was a place to be open about her daughter's death:

My experience when using Facebook for a place to grieve is that it's a comfort for me to see that grief is not only a personal matter, but also a social thing. I experienced that Facebook was turned into a resource for me as well as for others. It can be difficult for people around the one who's grieving to reach out and contact you. I realised that if I was open about her death, other people around me would feel like it was ok to contact me. In a way I became more approachable for them. If you have experienced death in close family or have a serious illness, people around you can sometimes find you frightening, like it's a risk talking to you. I believe the people around me experienced me as less frightening because I was open about it. Because

I wrote so much on Facebook, people were not afraid to ask me questions or approach me. I feel Facebook can contribute to more openness in society, because it should be natural for people to talk about death, but I feel like it isn't. I feel that after posting about my daughter on Facebook, it is no longer only my loss, I can share it with others. That's why I decided to use Facebook actively, both her memorial pages, and my own profile page.   (Lily 2015)

As Lily explained above, she found using Facebook both supportive and helpful. She realised she was not alone in her grief, as she experienced many condolences from friends and acquaintances. This is in line with Klastrup's findings from 2014. When researching Danish memorial pages, she found that 36 % of the comments on the memorial pages were messages expressing sympathy with the family (2014: 13). Lily found this supportive, and it encouraged her to be more open on social media. She has only experienced positive feedback when writing about her daughter on Facebook, and she has a feeling that people are grateful she writes there:

I try to balance my profile page, so I'm not too private but still let people know how I feel about different things. I believe there's a strength in showing people that you're vulnerable. I discovered that when she died. I realised how important it is to be open and not shut yourself down and get lost in your own head. I haven't received any negative feedback when I've been open about her death on Facebook. I felt that people were happy that I did.   (Lily 2015)

What Lily explains above is very interesting. Close to all of the interviewees expressed that people did not know what to say to them after the passing of their loved ones. Lily's theory is that once she was open on Facebook, she was also easier to approach for others. She invited them in, and told them how she was really feeling. That way she experienced more support, and she did not feel alone with her grief. Yet, she has thought about whether or not it is morally right to write so much about her deceased daughter on Facebook were everyone can see it, and she has faced people who have questioned her about who owns the rights concerning the deceased. However, that did not stop her from being open about it on Facebook:

I've faced people questioning who own the rights to a dead person, but for me it's important to let people in. We went to see a psychologist, and he said something that stuck with me. He explained that when you lose someone close to you, a really important person in your life, the loss, it becomes a part of you, and of who you are as a person. If you want to have a good relation with other people over time, they have to be involved in what's happened to you, and if they don't want to have anything to do with that side of me, I don't wish to have a relation

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to that person anymore. I believe the same thing goes for Facebook, and the friends I have there. If they cannot accept that this is a part of me, and are willing to be friends with that part of me, they cannot truly be a real friend of mine. I think grief is easier to carry if you carry it together, and that's just what happens on Facebook, you get instant feedback on what you write.   (Lily 2015)

What Lily explains above is how the death of her daughter is always going to be part of her life, and it is important for her that her friends know that side of her as well. She argues that Facebook is a good platform to talk about her deceased daughter, because that is where many of her friends are. Even though she has met scepticism from people questioning whether or not she should post about her daughter on Facebook, she feels it is an important part of who she is, and it is important for her to communicate this. Another aspect of Lily's Facebook use, is that she wants to help people in similar situations. Immediately after her daughter died, people who had been in her situation contacted her on Facebook, and she was grateful for this. Now she hopes she can give the same comfort to others who lose their child:

And now I believe that I can be that person, to tell others in a similar situation that it can, even though we have experienced something so horrible, it will eventually be ok again, you can have a happy life. I feel like it is very comforting for me to know that I can give that to others. When people comment on Facebook it becomes a dialogue, and it is very comforting for me to see that people still write to her, that they have not forgotten about my daughter. They still care about what happened to her. When you lose someone who is very young, it would be such a shame if people forgot about her. If she just disappeared from everyone's memory. (Lily 2015)

Because Lily experienced support from others in similar situations as herself via Facebook and found that helpful, she now wants to return the favour. She explains that being a support for others also helps her to recover from her own grief. She explains:

Before Facebook, it was easier and more common to hide your grief inside, but this is so much better. I feel like I have a mission when I write on Facebook, and it really helps and comforts me as well. I feel like I am processing my grief by being open on social media, and that I'm also making the society better prepared to help others in a similar situation.   (Lily 2015).

The thought of being able to help people in a similar situation is an important reason to be open for Lily. She wants to be able to help others, and wants to make the society better

prepared in these situations. At the same time, she explains that it helps her handle her own grief.

Aron and Bianca

After their child's death, Facebook became an important resource in Aron and Bianca's life. Prior to the death, they were not accustomed to using Facebook:

> We both had a Facebook account, but we didn't use it much. We only wrote there to congratulate our children on their birthdays, but that was mostly it. (Aron and Bianca 2015)

After their child passed away, Facebook became an important part of their recovery process. They use Facebook to remember and honour their child's memory.

> When we log on to Facebook and see pictures, we are reminded of all the things we did together. Facebook is a nice place to remember our child. When people ask me how many children we have, we include our deceased child. Our child will always be alive to us. (Aron and Bianca 2015)

For Aron and Bianca, the memorial page is a portal were they can communicate with their deceased child. They express that they appreciate the messages people write on the wall, and that they are glad Facebook can contribute to help them in their grieving process:

> Our child will always be in our hearts and our thoughts. It's a comfort for both of us to see and use the profile page on Facebook. We can see pictures there, and we get comfort from seeing other people posting things about our child. The Facebook memorial page is a way we can keep in touch, even though our child isn't physically here. It is also really nice to see that people post messages in line with our child's vocation. It's nice to see that people remember our child that way.   (Aron and Bianca 2015)

Aron and Bianca's need to maintain the relationship with their deceased child is in line with what Klass et al. found in their research about continuing bonds with the deceased. They discovered that bereaved children and adults had a need to maintain contact with the deceased, rather than forget them and move on. They discovered that children who had lost a parent developed certain memories; they did and felt certain things to maintain contact and continue a kind of relationship with the parent they had lost. They found similar patterns when researching adults who had lost a child; the parents were talking and writing to the dead child. This was important to the bereaved, because this way the child was still part of their life

(Klass et al. 1996). Klass et al. also discovered that bereaved parents found it helpful to share their stories with other people. After talking about it with others and receiving feedback on what they said, many of them found it easier to find resolution. In their resolution, their child was "present" in their mind (Klass et al. 1996).

Aron and Bianca use Facebook to write messages of support to other people. They sometimes use their child's memorial page to write about issues and interests they know is in line with their deceased child's vocation:

> We visit the memorial page often, just to write something to our child, or to see if anyone else has written there. Sometimes when awful things happen in the world, we write a declaration of support to the affected people. We do this because it is in our child's spirit. (Aron and Bianca 2015)

Aron and Bianca appreciate that they are able to communicate causes through their child's memorial page that they know was important to their child when being alive. They also explain that they find it easier to write on Facebook than it is to talk about how they feel. They can be braver online:

> You can write a lot more on Facebook than you would say in real life. It feels like a safe place to express your thoughts, and you get instant feedback. It is nice for us to get many likes and comments on what we write on Facebook. It feels like our child isn't forgotten. (Aron and Bianca 2015)

Aron and Bianca experienced that they felt braver online. They were able to express themselves better, and they dared to tell people how they really felt. This goes to show how Facebook can be a useful tool for bereaved people. They do not need to go out and talk about how they are feeling, but they can express themselves online. This is useful because it can be very difficult to talk about grief in real life, and Facebook provides Aron and Bianca with a platform where they can "talk" openly about how they feel.

4.1.3 Group 3: Passive users with negative experiences

Talia
After Talia's best friend committed suicide, she visited his profile page a lot, but she was not comfortable with writing there herself:

> I did visit his page a lot. I actually think I went to his profile daily, just to feel a bit closer to him. You know, he died very suddenly as well, no one knew what was going to happen. I did think it was a little bit annoying though, I felt like people were using, or more like abusing, the fact that they could pretend they knew him. It was almost like a popularity contest for some people, I got quite annoyed. I do find it really strange that people would pretend to know him just to get attention. Maybe they were so shocked about his death that they needed some comfort, and when using his profile page, people would see how upset they were, and they would get the comfort that they needed. Some people would like try to describe how well they knew him in their posts, like emphasize the amount of time they spent with him, sometimes it didn't come across as very genuine. It came across like they were trying to say to people "look how well I knew this guy", and like they were using him to get a bit of support. But maybe it was because they were genuinely sad about it. I don't know.   (Talia 2015)

Talia felt it was too personal for her to write on his page after he passed away. She explains how several people who did not know him posted on his wall, which is similar to what Sophie and Elisabeth experienced. Nevertheless, she visited his page daily to feel closer to him and this was important for her:

> His profile was so personal, I would go in and listen to one of his favourite songs or to look at his pictures, of course it made me feel like a bit closer to him. I think I considered writing to him as well, but I don't think I ever did, not that I can remember now anyway. (Talia 2015)

From the citation above it becomes clear that it was not writing to her deceased friend that was important to Talia, it was to see the memories they had together. She explained that she would look at his pictures, listen to the music he had shared on his page and see what he had written before he died. Facebook provided her with all this in one place. However, she was disturbed by posts from people who did not know him as well as she did. Even though she explained that grief was too personal for her to share, she also felt that writing on his page was not personal at all, because the people who did, did not write personal things. She does on the other hand, understand why people chose to write there:

> I think grieving online is just the modern way of grieving, you know? If he had like a voice message on his phone, you would preserve it and listen to it, and I think writing on someone's wall probably felt like they were connecting to him in some way. And even if they know it's just for their own sake, I think, yeah, they probably just got a degree of comfort. It's like having a conversation with him again. I think that it would be worse, because we wrote a lot back and forth when he was alive, and I think it would be worse not to get a response. Like, it would be very one sided, but I suppose others would, you know, I guess that some people would feel that maybe he could be seeing it somehow.   (Talia 2015)

Talia and her friend used to write back and forth on Facebook when he was alive, and she therefore believes it would be painful for her not to get a response from him. Yet, she comments that Facebook has become a modern way of grieving. It is a way to hold on to the memories of him and to maintain a type of contact with him. Before Facebook you would probably listen to the voice message on his phone, like Talia commented above. Now that you have Facebook, you move your grief from the real world to the cyber world. I would argue that the grief has not changed, but Facebook provides you with a different, more social place to do so. However, it is not for everyone. Talia chose instead to deal with it by talking to his mother:

> I spent a lot of time with his mum, so in a way I dealt with it through actually talking about it. And like I said I did go to his profile a lot and just listened to the music he had on there and you know. I am not sure whether that helped or not. I think for the people who didn't know him, it helped to write on his wall, because, you know they couldn't quite, (pause) maybe they couldn't quite understand why they were so upset, so writing to him might have been therapeutic for them. But I can't imagine that writing to him there would help me. I think it would've been a lot worse for me to write something, you know, to not hear anything back. It just wouldn't have felt very genuine either. It might help a lot of people to write to him, but for me, the silence would be worse, especially since we did talk online when he was alive, so to have a moment when that stopped, right after. I don't know, I don't think that would have helped at all. But yeah, thinking about it, the only people who wrote on his wall were people that didn't know him that well.   (Talia 2015)

What Talia is explaining above is in line with what Danish researcher Lisbeth Klastrup (2014) found when researching Danish memorial pages. She found that the public memorial pages appeared to be a useful place for strangers to show support, and to show how shocked they are that a young and healthy person has passed away (2014: 15). She argues that comments from

close friends and families were largely absent (2014:2). For Talia, this became impersonal and she believe Facebook provides a good place to grieve for the people who did not know the deceased very well, but still had a connection with them:

> There are so many people now, especially because of social media, who you have a connection with, but if you die, they would never come and speak to your family. They would never have a chance to speak to your close friends about it, but they would still be affected by it, they would still have a connection to you, so it is a way for them to grieve. I think this situation only will be getting more common because of social media.   (Talia 2015)

Talia expresses that it is important for people to reach out and offer sympathies when something shocking happens. She compares it to how the world reacted after the terror attack in Norway on the 22nd July 2011. People from around the world changed their profile picture to a Norwegian flag, to show support. Recently we saw the same again, when Paris was attacked in November 2015. This shows that you do not necessarily need to be directly affected to want to reach out and show that you care. Talia explains:

> I remember that people, after he passed away, changed their profile picture, and I remember in England after the 22nd July, that people changed their profile picture to a Norwegian flag shaped as a heart, even though they didn't know any Norwegians. It was a way to show support, which shows that you don't have to have a connection to someone to want to reach out, it's human nature to care. I also think that when my friend died, a lot of people that wrote, for some of them it might not necessarily have been that they were sad that he died, but rather shocked that someone their own age died. That brings up a lot of emotions that you have to channel somehow, and even if you didn't know the guy, maybe you're not going to feel like you can talk to your friends about it, because "why are you sad?". So it does provide a platform for people to grieve where they have a voice and they are able to express themselves. (Talia 2015)

Talia acknowledges that Facebook might be useful for people who were not that close to her friend. Although she understands why people wanted to use Facebook for a place to grieve, she was not comfortable doing so. One of the reasons might be that she had an unpleasant experience on Facebook directly after he passed away:

> I remember that some people got nasty, I remember they sent me stuff in the inbox. It was people who did go to the same college, they would message people and say like "oh, he deserved it haha" for no reason. Just like, they just, that is something I find very (pause), like

why would they? It's just strange, and I have seen people go on the memorial page and write horrible things for no reason, and they didn't even know him, they just wrote horrible things. They only wrote to me once. And he just like, he was a very weird guy like he had a lot of problems, anyway, and I just remember one evening he wrote like a really long horrible message about my friend and that he was glad (pause). I don't know, that's something I find really strange. I was really, really upset, it was absolutely devastating, and it was really soon after. I think I spoke to one of my friends about it, but I didn't tell anyone else because you know, it was such a horrible thing, I just wanted to ignore it.   (Talia 2015)

This could be a reason why Talia was not comfortable with writing on her friend's page after he passed away. Rosenberg (2012) found that some of her interviewees had experienced so called "trolling" online, where strangers post terrorising comments to provoke angry responses (Rosenberg 2012: 27, 74). She argues that this is one of the risks you have to take, when choosing to be open on Facebook. However; it is a very serious issue that is traumatic for the bereaved. Talia found the message deeply shocking and upsetting, and this can indeed have affected her when choosing not to write on her deceased friend's profile page.

Like Sophie and Elisabeth explained above, Talia found it annoying when strangers wrote on her friend's wall. She too, experienced it like a popularity contest, where people wrote to get attention rather than to support each other, or because they genuinely missed him. She explains:

But I still feel like, I don't know, I know this isn't very considerate of me, and I know it's not always the truth, but I feel like it's quite attention seeking. I'm aware that that's not always the case, but it's how it comes across at first. When someone has just died, and people who doesn't know that person is using the profile, even though I understand there are reasons for it, it still feels a little bit like they are looking for attention.   (Talia 2015)

Talia felt that the people writing to him did not mean it, or that they did it to get attention from other people. This experience led her to deal with her emotions connected to her friend's passing outside Facebook. She would rather talk to her friends and his family, because the comments on Facebook did not feel real and supportive to her. She is glad that she chose not to write on Facebook now, when she looks back at it:

Facebook is beneficial for some people, but I think it can also get unhealthy. They can easily get stuck in a cycle and the only place that they can go for support is Facebook, it can turn into a vicious cycle.   (Talia 2015)

This shows that Talia is glad that she chose not to grieve on Facebook. She decided it was not for her. She was afraid of being stuck in that pattern, as she explains above.

Zoey

Zoey found out about the death of her friend on Facebook. They had been close friends for years, but because they now lived in different countries, the contact had mainly been through Facebook in recent years. Zoey explained how she learned about his passing:

> One day I realised that so many of our friends had changed their profile picture to picture with him in it. They also wrote on his wall (…) people were writing «hope you are well, wherever you are now» and then I understood that something had happened to him. I wrote to some of our mutual friends on Facebook chat, and they told me that he had committed suicide. (Zoey 2015)

Because they were living in different countries, Zoey found out all about his death from mutual friends via Facebook. This was very painful for her:

> It was really uncomfortable to find out about his death on Facebook. It was really hard to hear what had happened to him via Facebook chat, that is not the right place to communicate something like that. And how do you respond to that? Usually I use a lot of smileys when I write to people on Facebook, but that felt wrong now. And I tried to support my friends and say supporting things like "how are you doing, I hope you are coping" but everything I wrote seemed so fake, when it was written in a Facebook chat you know. And to talk about a thing like that, without being able to see the person face to face, or hug them and just be there, it was horrible. (Zoey 2015)

Being far away from the chaos, Zoey was able to look at the situation from afar. Many of their mutual friends used Facebook actively after his death, and posted messages and pictures to his profile page. Zoey found it uncomfortable to see that people were writing to her deceased friend as if he was still alive:

> Just to see people writing to him, and posting pictures of him, it's almost like he's still alive a little. But I know he isn't, and I find it, a little bit, almost creepy in a way. It is really uncomfortable for me to see. I think it was because I've been living in another country for a while, I was able to see the situation from afar. I wasn't in the middle of the chaos with the rest of them, and I think that was why I decided not to write on Facebook. It was uncomfortable. (Zoey 2015)

Because he committed suicide, some of his friends felt guilty about not helping him enough when he was alive, and Zoey explains that they wrote a lot on Facebook. Some of them wanted to apologize to him, and used Facebook to say their final words to him:

> I can understand that it was different for them, the people around him, they were in a chaotic situation, and it might have been more comforting for them to use Facebook. They had conversations with him only hours before he died, and he did it himself, and then you think, was there something I could have done? Or said? Is it my fault? And I think they needed Facebook at the time, maybe they needed to see there was a part of him that wasn't dead, so they could say the things they wanted to say to him which they didn't have the chance to say when he was alive. But to me it was more scary, I didn't feel as if death and grief belonged on Facebook. (Zoey 2015)

What Zoey explains here, is that their friends needed to reach out to their deceased friend and say some final words. This is in line with Normand et al.'s research on bereaved people, and how they communicate with their deceased loved ones. Their research is mainly on bereaved children, but I believe it relates to all people who grieve. They explain that bereaved children talk or write to their deceased loved ones "either by sharing their feelings, jokes, or events of the day" (Normand et al. in Klass et al. 1996: 91). Having a place to turn to like Facebook can be comforting. Like Zoey explained above, her friends needed to reach out to him and apologize. For Zoey on the other hand, this was not necessary. She felt, contrary to her friends, that it was weird to see his profile in use, just like when he was still alive. Even though she found it weird in the beginning, Zoey now likes to look at his Facebook profile page occasionally:

> What is so special about Facebook is that it is personal, you create the content yourself, and you can add whatever you like there. After someone has passed away, it is a nice place to go and see how that person was. You know, sometimes after a while you forget what the person looked like, or how he would phrase things, even if it is a close friend. You can just go to their profile and be reminded of what he looked like and who he was, it is the deceased person himself who created the content. That is very special about Facebook, and it makes it more genuine and real. It is like the last piece of a deceased person. (Zoey 2015)

Even though Zoey visits his profile occasionally, she is not comfortable with his presence on Facebook:

> I think it's nice to look at his page, it makes me think of all the good memories I have with him. At the same time, I feel uncomfortable doing so. It feels like a "cold" way of remembering someone, just because it's online, it's digital, it's a limited way of showing emotions. You can just like something, and that's it. (Zoey 2015)

Zoey argues that grieving on Facebook is a cold way of remembering someone. Because it is digital and you do not meet the bereaved face-to-face, it becomes is a limited way of showing support. On the other hand, Zoey has a different experience with Facebook. When she was in high school, a boy in her class got killed in a car accident, and Zoey used his Facebook page to grieve after his death:

> I remember that we used his page to write condolences to his parents, and posted pictures and memories about him. And one day I went to post something there, and his family had shut the page down. And I remember that as being, I don't even know (pause). It was like he died all over again. And that's strange, it shouldn't be like that really. (Zoey 2015)

What Zoey explains above, might be another reason why she is sceptical to use Facebook for a place to grieve this time. She experienced that her friend's Facebook page was deleted by his parents without her knowing, and she comments that it felt as if he passed away again. This is similar to what Mia experienced when her dad planned to delete her brother's Facebook page. The experience Zoey explained above might affect her more than she is aware of, she might be afraid that her friend's Facebook page might be deleted too, and that she has to relate to this issue again. As we can see from the citation above, Facebook is becoming increasingly important to people. I am not sure if it is healthy to get so connected to an online profile that you feel like the person dies all over again when the page is deleted. Zoey agrees, and explains that when she looks back on the relationship she had with Facebook at the time her first friend died, she finds her reaction strange and scary, and that it should not be like that. She has a very different view on Facebook now, after her second friend passed away:

> I think it is creepy, imagine how many profiles belonging to dead people there are on Facebook. It's like an online graveyard floating around on the internet. And it is so common to keep the profiles up as well, I don't think it should be like that! It creeps me out. (Zoey 2015)

Zoey now find the profiles scary and creepy. This is a big contrast to how she used to see Facebook after her first friend passed away. There might be many reasons for why she is more uncomfortable with using Facebook this time, and one of them might be because she

found it uncomfortable to see strangers write on her friend's memorial page. This is similar to what Sophie, Elisabeth and Talia experienced. Zoey explains:

> I didn't like it when hundreds of people, you know, who maybe knew him from a party, or only had exchanged a few words with him. If they, you know, I think I was angry that they had the rights to be just as upset as me. I thought, "You can't be this sad, I am the only one who knew that person properly, you don't have the rights to post things on Facebook about him. This is my grief, not everyone else's".
>
> (Zoey 2015)

Similar to Sophie, Elisabeth and Talia's experiences, Zoey felt that the strangers commenting on her deceased friend's wall, did not have the rights to do so. She felt that they were not genuinely upset about his passing, and this was painful for her to see. Because she felt it was annoying and painful for her to see strangers commenting on his page, she also chose not to write on his page herself. She explained that even though she was close to him, she was afraid that their mutual friends would find it annoying if she wrote on his wall because they had not seen each other in a while:

> I know that's how I felt a little, even though he was a close friend of mine, I hadn't actually seen him for quite some time, we mainly kept in touch on Facebook. I didn't feel like I was entitled to grieve on Facebook, because I was afraid that his friends at home would think it wasn't in my place to do so. That they had suffered a bigger loss than me, and that I should let them grieve in peace. There were so many people around me that were affected, even though I was devastated, it felt wrong for me to take part in the whole Facebook grieving thing. I almost felt bad for being upset about it, I felt like the people who saw him every day had more right to write on his Facebook page and to mourn him than I had. I sometimes walked around with a bad conscience for even being sad about his death. I don't know why really, I just didn't feel part of it all, they had their own thing going on, on Facebook which I wasn't part of.
>
> (Zoey 2015)

Zoey's statement above explains why she chose not to take part in the online grief after her friend passed away. She was annoyed with strangers who posted messages on his wall, and she was afraid that her friends back home would be annoyed with her if she wrote there too, because she had not seen him for a while. Because she found it painful to see strangers posting on his wall, she did not want to make her friends feel the same way she did by posting on his page.

Even though Zoey is annoyed with strangers writing on the memorial page, and feel uncomfortable with writing there herself, she believes that Facebook contributes to more openness about death in the society:

> I think Facebook contributes to a better understanding of death. People talk about death a lot more now than before, and I think Facebook might have contributed to that development. There are many more newspaper articles and TV-programmes about death and grief, and it seems like there is a better understanding of the fact that we will all die someday. And it is good that we can talk about it, and accept it. I think that after the 22nd of July, Facebook became a more common arena to talk about death, and it has opened up the society a little. Norwegians are not very good at showing emotions, but it seems like Facebook is a place where we are comfortable doing so. (Zoey 2015)

What Zoey is commenting above is interesting. Facebook is helping people to understand that we are mortal, and that we will die one day. Many young people have not yet realised that death is coming for all of us, but Zoey argues that with death being so common on Facebook, people get more used to the thought of dying. It is also more talked about in the media, like Zoey mentioned. An example is NRK's TV Series "Venn i døden" (Friend in death), which is a TV Series that talks to young people who have lost someone close to them, and their experiences concerning death and grieving . Rynning refers to the TV programme, and comments that Norwegians are reserved people who might not be comfortable talking about their emotions. Facebook provides them with an opportunity to "talk" bout their feelings without saying anything. Perhaps they feel safer writing about their thoughts, than talking openly about them.

At the end of the interview, Zoey concludes that even though she finds it uncomfortable to see her deceased friend's Facebook page, she is glad it exists:

> But I like that I still have his profile available, it's like a part of him is still alive, even though it's digital. I think what people want most of all is to be remembered after their death, and Facebook is a good way of remembering them. (Zoey 2015)

Zoey finds Facebook to be a good place to remember the deceased. It is a place where you may share memories, look at pictures and write messages directly to the deceased to say some final words. You may also write messages of condolences to the family, and support them. Even though Zoey sometimes finds it uncomfortable that her friend is almost alive online, she appreciates the possibility to remember him that way.

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Katie

Even though I interviewed Katie and Alice together, I have decided to place them in different groups. Sometimes they say "we" when they talk, and I will keep that in the quotations that I use. Sometimes they talk to each other in a harsh tone, this may sound worse when it is written down, and it is important for me to stress that they are sisters, and sisters sometimes talk with more affection than friends do. When interviewing them, we had a good tone, and even though they at times strongly disagreed, they always laughed about it shortly after. After both a friend and an aunt of Katie and Alice passed away around the same time in 2013, Katie felt obliged to write on Facebook, because everyone else around her did. She was however, not comfortable doing this, as she explains:

> To me it really feels like you have to be open these days. It's compulsory you know. If someone close to you die, it feels like you don't have a choice. And it is probably a good thing, for most people, to be open, I mean, but maybe not on Facebook. And maybe it's not right for everyone. And people around you encourage you to write down what you think, and publish it so you get instant feedback, but what if you're too tired or don't feel like doing so? I felt like I had to do it, and when I didn't want to do that, I felt weak, you know, not as strong as the people around me who did write a lot on Facebook.   (Katie 2015)

What Katie expresses above, is something I find very important. It has become so normal to be open about your feelings on Facebook, even about your most private feelings, such as grief, that Katie felt weak for not wanting to post there. She felt that the people around her expected her to share her feelings on Facebook, and that if she did not, they would automatically assume that something was wrong with her. She explained that she got very frustrated by this: "It's important to me that just because you choose not to write all your feelings all over Facebook, doesn't mean that you're a weak person" (Katie 2015). Katie is also very careful about what she posts online. Just like Elisabeth, she is not comfortable with sharing too personal information on Facebook:

> What you write on Facebook will always be there, it will always define you. And I mean, the grief will always be a part of me anyway, but people will always be able to see it on Facebook. It depends on how you want to use social media I guess, I would like to use it more professionally than personally. I feel like Facebook represents the "perfect me", it's the version of me that I want people to see, so I am very careful, almost too careful, about what I post there. I choose not write about, or directly to, my deceased friend on Facebook because I don't feel like it belongs there. My thoughts about her, and my aunt for that matter, belong

somewhere else. Facebook is very public for me, and grief and death is very personal. I can't find a way to combine those things. (Katie 2015)

For Katie it is not just the fact that she is careful about what she is posting, she also finds the presence of a deceased person on Facebook uncomfortable:

I don't like the profile page of our deceased friend. Like, in my news feed, I get birthday notifications and once a year it says that it is our deceased friend's birthday. It says like: she is turning 26! Wish her happy birthday! But she isn't 26, she won't ever be 26. And I really don't like that. (Katie 2015)

Katie is also worried that people, like her, feel pressured to write about their feelings on Facebook. When Alice suggests the fact that Facebook provides an arena to discuss death and grieving, Katie objects:

But you can't just take for granted that everyone appreciate it. To be so open on social media isn't right for everyone. Especially not like it was with our aunt, when it was someone outside the family who posted about her, without checking with the family first. (Katie 2015)

After the death of their aunt, Katie and Alice experienced that an acquaintance of their aunt wrote a heartfelt post about her, and how upset she was about her death. Both of the two sisters reacted to this, because no one in the family had written anything on Facebook yet, and this happened only a couple of hours after she had passed away. The two girls felt it was a huge violation to the family and their privacy:

When not even our cousins had posted anything about their mother, I thought it was strange that other people, not even her friends, more like acquaintances, wrote a lot. It felt like a violation of the closest family. I remember thinking, I don't know, but it felt more like she was showing off, you know, like "I knew her really well, feel sorry for me!" Or that she was trying to show everyone how caring she was. That she wanted people to talk about her and how good that post was, and that she was such a wonderful person for writing that. And at the funeral a lot of people did talk about her and her post, and they tried to persuade our cousins as well, they asked them like "did you see that post on Facebook? Wasn't it wonderful? You also think that, right?» But I know that they didn't think it was wonderful. I really don't think it was in her place to write something like that, when they weren't even close. (Katie 2015)

Katie reacted strongly to this because she felt it was an invasion in the family's private grief. Someone outside the family had posted about the death of Katie's aunt publicly, without

asking for the family's permission and this was painful for both Katie and Alice, and for many other members of the family, according to them. This is a complicated situation, where people involved have different needs and different reactions to what is being posted on Facebook. The dead person is not around to control what is being posted about him or her anymore, and that complicates the situation for the people who is left behind.

Katie is concerned that being open about your grief on Facebook has become so common that people do not think about what they post there anymore. She is also concerned about how easy it is to be open on social media, and worries that people will replace real friends in the real world with Facebook friends:

> I guess there is no right and wrong when it comes to grieving. I am only concerned that the people who want to use Facebook overrule the ones who prefer not to. Because being open in today's society is seen as the better way. But I'm just not sure if Facebook is the best place to be open. I also think it's important that you don't use Facebook as a substitute for real conversations. And when I check our friend's profile now, I see that everyone writes to her as if she's still alive, as if she's going to come back and check Facebook one last time, and I don't like that. It feels like Facebook has become a new online graveyard. It is a place you go to remember someone, and talk to them. The only difference is that on Facebook you have an audience. It's as if, if no one sees what you've written, it doesn't count. And that's the same with other aspects in life. If you go to the gym and forget to post your results, it is like the whole workout was a waste.   (Katie 2015)

Katie is concerned about people's reason to post on Facebook. Above, she compares memorial pages on Facebook with graveyards, the only difference being that you have an audience when you post on Facebook. She is worried that people post there to get attention from others, rather than to help themselves, or show support to others. She also raises the issue of Facebook being too easy, that people post a pink heart on the memorial page, thinking that is all they need to do to show support. When her sister Alice says that she did not know what to say to the family of their deceased friend, so instead she posted a heart, feeling that she had shown support, Katie replies:

> But to me that's too easy. You can't just post a heart thinking that's it! I don't mean that it wasn't a nice gesture from you Alice, but if everyone thinks like that, then that's all the attention they'll get. And they need more than that, preferably not on Facebook. And most likely they'll get it, and the Facebook comments are just an addition. And then I can agree that it's a good thing. If you have a good support system around you, Facebook might be an

additional thing that's good. But if Facebook is your only source of contact, then I think it is a problem. (Katie 2015)

The issue Katie is raising is interesting, that when you lose someone close to you, you need a good support system around you. Many people who use Facebook actively are, according to German researcher Katrin Döveling, in need of extra attention and emotional support than they get in the real world (Döveling 2015:406). She stresses the importance of social support, stating that bereaved children and adolescents need reassurance and understanding to be able to cope with their grief. When the bereaved share their grief with others, and receive support, it becomes easier for them to live with their grief (Döveling 2015: 406).

The attention you get on Facebook after losing someone close to you can be helpful, as for example Sophie explained above, but like Sophie, Katie worries that the likes might become too important:

I am only afraid that it can lead to an addiction. You know, you get addicted to that kind of attention, you get many likes, many comments, but it won't last. After a little while, maybe even a year or two, the number of likes and comments will decrease, and then you really have nowhere to go, if you are relying too much on the attention given on Facebook. (Katie 2015)

This is in line with what Sophie explained before. The number of likes on her posts decreased, and she felt more alone. Katie expresses that she is uncomfortable with grief on Facebook for many reasons. In addition to what she has explained above, she finds it uncomfortable, because she mainly logs on to Facebook to relax, not to think about death and grief:

I think it can get too much on Facebook. I usually log on to Facebook to relax and see if there are any new relationships, and you know (laughs) check these sorts of things. And then I'm just hit in the face with grief and death. It pops up on my feed and I can't stop it. It feels like I'm faced with grief there every day, when all I want is to relax a little. Something I find very tricky with Facebook is that when people I don't know very well post about death and grief, I feel like I have to read it. I can't just scroll past it, I have to read it. It's like I'm taking part in someone's personal tragedy without being able to help, and it just ends up with me feeling bad about it. It's like I'm, you know, without wanting to be, I'm a part of someone's grief. (Katie 2015)

Katie prefers to deal with her feelings offline, in the real world, rather than on Facebook. She prefers to use Facebook for more professional purposes, or as a way to relax. She raises an interesting issue when she mentioned that she feels like she is taking part in someone else's

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grief, that has not got anything to do with her. Writing about grief on Facebook is currently very common, which leads to the issue Katie raised above. She explains that she does not feel like she can scroll past it, but when she reads it, she is confronted with someone else's grief, which is painful for her. Alice, on the other hand, found support, using Facebook to grieve, and Katie has difficulties understanding why. When Alice tried to explain why she found it resourceful, Katie states:

> I just felt that for me, it was forced. I felt like a weaker person because I didn't want to be open about it. Just because we have the possibility of being open, using Facebook, and all the other social networking sites does not mean that it should be mandatory to be open about death and grieving that's very personal. You expose yourself to a great extent. (Katie 2015)

Katie explains that she felt weak because she chose not to write on Facebook, whereas her sister Alice had a different experience. I will present Alice in the coming paragraphs.

4.1.4 Group 4: Passive users with positive experiences

Alice

Above we could read about Katie and her relation to Facebook. Her sister Alice had a very different view of the social networking site:

> The way I see it, Facebook is the last part of the deceased person you have left. That person chose what he or she wanted to have there, it is like their own personal diary in a way. You can still see what they wrote, what they liked, commented, what they were interested in and what music and films they liked. It is all there. I mean, had it been a diary, you wouldn't want to throw it away. I felt it was very comforting to go to our friend's Facebook page; it was like we were all supporting each other. We gave each other attention, and the ones who were most affected, like her family, I mean, it was nice to give them some attention too. Just telling them stories about her, sharing memories of how she was as a person. It feels good to talk to so many people who are in the same situation as you, and it really felt like we connected on Facebook, because we shared that.   (Alice 2015)

In contrast with her sister, Alice found great support in visiting their deceased friend's profile and memorial page. She describes the page as the last bit of the deceased person that is left, which shows how important Facebook is to her. She compares Facebook to a diary, which is a place you would write intimate and personal things. This goes to show how Alice looks at

Facebook in a different way than both Elisabeth and Katie, who has a more professional view on Facebook. Yet Alice is conflicted when it comes to Facebook and grief:

> When our aunt died, I felt very conflicted, because I thought it was nice to see her profile page on Facebook, and it was so nice to see what people wrote to her, but I knew that not everyone in the family was ok with that. Especially not our cousins, her daughters. And I mean who owns the dead person's social media accounts? (Alice 2015)

The question Alice raises above is important, who owns the right to the deceased person's profile page? In February 2015, Facebook launched a new policy, called the "legacy contact" where the user can choose a person to be in charge of their account when they die (Linshi 2015). Neither my interviewees nor I knew about this when I conducted the interviews in February 2015. Alice's question is still relevant, as it is still common for the friends and family of the deceased to create a memorial page, which has nothing to do with the actual profile page of the deceased. Anyone can make a memorial page on Facebook, which makes Alice's question interesting.

Alice found valuable support in her friend's profile page:

> I think Facebook can be very helpful. When our friend died, there was a lot of questions concerning what had happened, and there was a lot of talk. When her parents chose to post about it on Facebook, everyone was informed, and knew what was going on. That was very helpful for all of her friends. Then her parents didn't have to tell what had happened over and over again. After posting it there, everyone knew. (Alice 2015)

Alice explains how Facebook is a useful channel to inform many people of what has happened. She goes on to explain how she used Facebook in the beginning, and how that helped her care about her friend's family, in a situation where she did not know what to say:

> But it is easier, especially in the beginning, when no one knows what to say. I just commented a heart on her wall, and I meant it almost like a hug to her family. I wasn't sure if they wanted to meet, but I wanted to say that I cared about them, so I commented that little pink Facebook-heart, you know. It was just meant as a "I'm here for you when you want" sort of thing. It's easy to show someone that you care about them on Facebook without having to say much. (Alice 2015)

Alice explained that when she did not know what to say, she used Facebook to communicate with the family. Both Sophie and Elisabeth raised questions concerning why people wrote

pink hearts on their deceased sibling's wall. Alice explains why she did it. It was to show the family of the deceased that she cared about them. She wanted them to know that she was thinking about them without being intrusive, she wanted to let them know that she was there for them. She wanted to be part of a bigger support system, as she explains:

> I don't think you need a big support system around you, if you have a small, but good, support system to take care of you. But on Facebook, you have a big, maybe more superficial system, that can provide you with attention, comments and likes. But your main support system should consist of something different than Facebook, something in real life. (Alice 2015)

Alice debated with her sister Katie, and they agreed on what Alice states above. They both believe you need a good support system in the offline world, and that Facebook can be a place to get more attention and support, but they agree that the support given on Facebook could be somewhat shallow and superficial.

Alice feels that Facebook has influenced the society to talk more openly about death and grieving. It is not that long ago when death was not talked about:

> But I mean, not that long ago, you shouldn't talk about death. You were allowed to cry at the funeral, but that was it. But I feel now, after so many people use Facebook and other social media, it's more common to talk about death in general, and I think that is a good thing. It feels like it creates an understanding in all of us, that death actually is a part of life. I think Facebook makes it easier to talk about death, and even makes it easier to understand that death is actually natural. No matter what you do in life, you will die eventually. I think when you're our age you don't understand that you're going to die. At least not yet. And it can be a huge shock when people around you die, because you don't expect it. I think Facebook might be good in a situation like that. It also makes death more visible to us, we can get used to it in a way. Facebook puts death on the agenda, and helps us face it. (Alice 2015)

Alice argues that Facebook puts death on the agenda, and that is a positive result of people posting about their grief. This is also in line with what the psychologist and Andreassen concluded in my conversations with them. Facebook is making it easier for us to understand that death is real; it is something that will happen to all of us.

4.2 Differences between younger and older adults

Despite the four contrasting groups presented above, the interviewees agreed on many things concerning Facebook and grief. In the coming section, I will present four issues brought up by them, and discuss them more thoroughly.

Something that strikes me when my interviewees are concerned, is that all the people in group 3, active users with positive experiences, are people above the age of 40. Lily, Aron and Bianca all lost their child, and they are the ones with exclusively positive experiences when using Facebook. The other interviewees, who are all in their twenties, had mostly negative experiences by doing so. One thing the younger people reacted to in particular, was that many people who did not know the deceased wrote on the memorial pages. Zoey explains how she felt it:

> I don't like it when strangers or distant acquaintances write on my friend's memorial page. I don't know why, but it feels fake to me. The people who are really close to the deceased person needs a lot of attention and comfort, they are grieving and that is absolutely necessary. And it feels like a lot of people follow that trend, wanting attention and comfort, so they write on Facebook to show people how upset they are .   (Zoey 2015)

Sophie feels the same way as Zoey; she also reacted to the way strangers pretended to know her sister, when she knew they did not, so she comments:

> I find it strange however, a lot of people just wanted to you know, almost brag or something. I experienced it like a pity competition, everyone had the right to express their "grief" on social media. Almost to show off how sad they were. And I am sure it was only meant like a nice gesture, but it was hard for me to see people who I knew didn't know her write things like "I miss you so much, you were a wonderful person". They might have experienced it that way too, but they wrote that to her as if they used to be best friends, and they did not know her at all. I think that is strange.   (Sophie 2015)

Talia also experienced that strangers wrote on her best friend's wall after his death, pretending to know him, which in the end led to a situation where none of his real friends actually wrote to him. His paged filled up with messages from strangers:

> A lot of people wrote to him, people who didn't even know him would write messages on his wall saying like "you were such a good guy" and "I'm thinking of you". But what I did notice was that the majority of the people who wrote on his wall, didn't know him, and he was

actually one of my best friends, and so I would've known if he had known these people, and they didn't know him at all. And a lot of them sort of pretended they did, which was (pause) I think a lot of people, pretended to be sad about him dying because they wanted attention. And of course, even if you don't know someone who has died, it can affect you a lot, especially when you're young and someone your own age dies. But yeah I think actually the people who knew him tended not to message him there. I think it could have been partly because so many people who didn't know him would use his page. It ended up with me wanting to keep things private. It felt, for me personally, far too public to write on his wall.   (Talia 2015)

Katie and Alice also remembered a situation that occurred when their friend passed away. They experienced that a lot of people that did not know their friend wrote on her wall. Katie did not like this at all, whereas Alice seemed to think it was ok:

But I feel that many people who didn't even know her that well posted to her, and I feel like they only did it to get attention. Like "feel sorry for me, my friend just died!" but then they were not really friends in the first place, and it seems fake, we talked a lot about that in the beginning, all of her friends who were close to her. That it was strange that so many people wrote to her on Facebook when they didn't even know her.   (Katie 2015)

Her sister Alice disagrees and explains:

But I think you know, that it is ok to be upset, and it is ok to show your sympathy to the family even though you're not that close! It's very upsetting when someone really young dies, and maybe people just wanted to express how shocked they were?   (Alice 2015)

What Alice states above is interesting, because that is perhaps why many people write on the memorial pages in the first place. Even though they might not know the person, they want to express shock and show the family some compassion. This is in line with Klastrup's research concerning why strangers choose to write on memorial pages belonging to people they did not know. When Danish researcher Lisbeth Klastrup investigated memorial pages in Denmark, she discovered that personal messages from friends of the deceased were largely absent (2014:2). According to her, only 6 % of the people commenting on the memorial page "make explicit references to the deceased as a friend or an acquaintance, which is an unexpectedly low number (2014:15). She suggests that the memorial pages is a place where strangers go to offer their condolences to the family, and to express shock and astonishment. Klastrup found that these pages are commonly used right after the incident that killed the deceased, and most commonly by strangers. She suggests that close friends and families of the deceased prefer to

mourn elsewhere, such as the more private profile page belonging to the deceased (2014:15). This is in line with what Talia explained above; she chose not to use her deceased friend's memorial page, because so many strangers used it, and it did not feel right for her to write to him there.

Whereas the people in their twenties saw it as annoying when strangers wrote on the memorial page of their loved ones, my interviewees above 40 saw it as a nice gesture when people they did not know posted messages on the memorial page. When Lily lost her daughter, it was not her, or anybody she knew, who created the memorial page, but she appreciates that they did, and she appreciates when people she does not know post there:

> I thought it was a really nice gesture. I feel the same way about people visiting her grave, it is not up to us to decide who goes there. I do not feel that grief is a private matter, I am happy that people care, that they visit the grave, that they write on the memorial page. (Lily 2015)

The same can be said for Aron and Bianca, who only saw it as supportive when people who did not know their child wrote on the page. They explained that they liked it when strangers liked their posts, and found it supportive:

> It is nice for us to get many likes and comments on what we write on Facebook. It feels like our child isn't forgotten.   (Aron and Bianca 2015)

All of the examples above insinuate that there is a difference between the people above 40 years old and the people below 30 years of age. I have not interviewed enough people to be certain, but we can see that the younger people seem to be more sceptical toward strangers who post messages to the deceased. It seems like they believe the strangers are only there to get attention themselves, whereas the older adults seem to find the messages supportive, no matter who wrote them. This can probably be related to how different age groups use Facebook differently in the first place.

A reason why Lily, Aron and Bianca find Facebook more supportive than the younger people in my research do, might be because they have lost a child, whereas the other interviewees have lost siblings or close friends. According to Kreicbergs et al. "Parental grief has been recognized as more intense and longer lasting than other types of grief" (2007: 3307). They argue that losing a child is one of the most painful things a human being can ever experience, and they suggest that some parents who lose their child, never fully recover from it. They continue to argue that parental grief is not only agonizing and unbearable, but has also "been

shown to increase the risk of psychological and physical illness, and even mortality"
(2007:3307). I am not trying to trivialize the grief the other interviewees are experiencing; I
am only trying to find reasons for why the parents who have lost their child seem to find
Facebook more helpful than the others. It might be that Lily, Aron and Bianca simply needed
the support they experienced on Facebook more than the others did. Lily comments:

> So the fact that I chose to be open in social media, isn't bravery, it's necessary for me to be
> able to move on. If you are trying to be strong, you have to use the support from others, and to
> get that support, you have to be open (…) You know, when something like this happens,
> people don't really know what to say, they're not used to this situations, and they might say
> something stupid. My husband said that we should try to see it as support no matter what
> people said. It was their way of showing us support. So we opened up our house and we
> opened up on Facebook, and we talked about how we felt and how we were doing on our own
> initiative.   (Lily 2015)

Lily expresses above that it was necessary for her to be open in real life, as well as on
Facebook, about the death of her daughter, to be able to move on. She experienced so much
love and support on Facebook that it became natural for her to write there.

According to Brandsæg et al., there are also differences in the way younger and older adults
use Facebook. Their results "indicate that younger people, compared to older adults, are more
skilled Facebook users" (2010: 1018), which again also indicates that younger adults have
more experience using Facebook, and take extra care when they consider what to write about.
The younger adults are also more concerned about their privacy online (Brandsæg et al. 2010:
1019), and it is therefore natural that the older adults post more about their feelings related to
grieve, than the younger adults do.

Another reason why younger adults are more careful when posting on Facebook, could be that
potential future employers might be looking at their Facebook page before hiring them, whilst
the older adults are already in a job, and do not see Facebook as a potential place employees
might find information about them. Elisabeth explains how important it is for her to be in
control of her online self, and how she is trying to control what other people can see. When I
asked her if she had any limitations concerning what she posted on Facebook, she replied:

> My online identity is really important to me. I think about it a lot, how I come across on
> Facebook I mean. Future employees might check out my profile, I usually check what comes
> up if you google my name. I like to be in control of what other people can see when they

google me, how I look like to people who don't know me. There are all these online platforms to think about; Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, and it's important to me how I appear on these pages. I don't want grief and my brother's death to be part of that. I don't think anyone would have thought I was stupid or silly for posting things there, I don't think people would have liked me less, but it is not the way I want potential employees to see me for example. (Elisabeth 2015)

Elisabeth is concerned that future employees will look at her Facebook profile page, and choose not to hire her because of how she portrays herself online. Older adults are already in jobs where they have been a while, and they might not be used to the thought that people actually look at their profile to find that kind of information about you. Your online identity is the first thing a future employer might look at to get an impression of whether or not you are suited for the job.

4.3 Expressive writing

All of my interviewees, whether they have chosen to write on Facebook or not, expressed that writing was important to them. Some of them would write in a diary, and others would write on Facebook. It became their way of continuing the relationship with the deceased:

What is ironic is that it actually helps writing. I write a lot, I just don't post it, unlike my family. The grief was occupying my mind, it was in my head all the time, and I needed to do something about it. I started to work on an essay about him and about me and just about the whole situation, that I was supposed to present at school. (Elisabeth 2015)

Elisabeth explained that the essay was hard for her to write, as she tried to make it personal, funny and sad at the same time. She was also very nervous, and practised reading it several times. At the day she was reading it in front of 400 people she explains:

My family didn't want to come, because it was too hard for them. But then, when I was standing on the stage, I saw my mum and my sister, they were there! And I read it, and people laughed and nodded and understood, and it was an amazing feeling. And when I was done I just ran out and cried my eyes out. But it was such a good experience for me to do that. So I totally understand people who post on Facebook, they probably experience something like I did every time they post, and it's a really good feeling. What I did when I was reading that, was looking for confirmation from other people to be able to confirm the value of my own grief, and that's something my family do on Facebook. I am a bit of a hypocrite, I see that now

(laughs). I chose to do it in the real world, and maybe my experience was so explosive, so intense, that I didn't need Facebook after that. It was almost like writing a really long status update, and then, that was it. I have never thought about that before. Maybe that's why I don't need Facebook. It seems plausible.   (Elisabeth 2015)

Elisabeth's experience with writing and performing her text might have helped her in her grieving process. She told me this story at the end of the interview, and she concluded that this might have been an important experience for her. As she stated above, she had never thought about it before. She also gets a better understanding of the people who choose to write about their feelings on Facebook, because of her good experience when performing her text.

Lily, who lost her daughter, expressed a need to keep communicating with her after her passing. She explains why it is important to her to continue the relationship:

I had to be able to talk to my daughter even though she was dead. If I couldn't speak and communicate with her, then it feels like she is even more dead in a way. If you cannot talk about them, they are even more gone.   (Lily 2015)

Lily's statement correlates with Klass et al.'s research and continuing bond theory. "The end of grief is not severing the bond of the dead child, but integrating the child into the parent's life and into the parent's social networks in a different way than when the child was alive" (Klass et al. 1996:199). This is exactly what Lily is doing; she is integrating her deceased daughter into her life. She uses Facebook, amongst other platforms, as an arena to do this. When she writes about and to her daughter on Facebook, she feels more connected to her.

Katie did write about her friend after she passed away, but she felt it was too personal to post it on Facebook, so she chose to keep it for herself:

I think it's good to write about it, I felt better after writing about it, but for me it just wasn't right to broadcast it to the whole world afterwards.   (Katie 2015)

Katie experienced that she needed to put her feelings into words, but she thought them too personal for Facebook. Sophie has a similar experience, although she did choose to publish her posts. Sophie wrote many posts containing personal feelings on Facebook in the beginning, and explained to me that she needed to write down her feelings, and get them out, so that people could hear it. She regretted how personal she had been after a year, however,

and decided to hide the posts from Facebook, so that she was the only one who could see them. Still, she thought it was important for her to write them down:

> I have deleted or hidden the posts I have posted about my sister on Facebook. I am the only one who can see them, I didn't want to delete them, they are very heartfelt and honest. I wrote about how I felt, and how my life used to be perfect, and I did not even know it. I understand that the best years of my life are behind me, and I didn't appreciate it. And now I have to live without her, I didn't have time to enjoy the time with her. I didn't know that this was the best time of my life. I would write about things like that, so it was very personal, but I needed to get it out there. Now I have hidden it from Facebook, so I am the only one who can see it. (Sophie 2015)

Sophie did not regret what she had written. However, after two years, she felt that what she had written still was important to her, but she did not feel it was important for others to see. She chose to hide the posts rather than delete them. That way she can still see and read them, but she is not as exposed as she was before. She explained that Facebook was a safe place for her to write in the beginning, because she did not have to face the world, but she still got the support and attention she needed:

> On Facebook you can't see facial expressions, it is easier to write than talk about it. I like to write, it is a good way to process things. I used to blog too, but I don't anymore. It was good for me to write that blog I think, but I stopped publishing things there. I still write though, sometimes when I'm about to go to sleep, and feel really sad but I can't cry, I sometimes write it all out, once I put my thoughts into words, the tears just won't stop. And when I'm done, I don't have to think about it anymore. Afterwards I just delete it. I should probably save them and read them again later, but when it's deleted, it feels like it's gone. All the sad feelings. And then I can finally go to sleep. It actually really helps. (Sophie 2015)

What Sophie says above correlates with, amongst others, Pennebaker and Seagal's research about expressive writing were they found that people who wrote about their thoughts and emotions after experiencing stressful or traumatic life events, experienced improved psychological health (Frattaroli 2006, Pennebaker and Beall 1986, Pennebaker and Seagal 1999). Lichtenthal and Cruess (2010) found that "directed meaning-making interventions were perceived as more helpful than non-directed writing and may be particularly useful in facilitating bereaved individuals in finding positive meaning in their loss experience" (Lichtenthal and Cruess 2010). By "meaning-making interventions" the research duo refers to writing positive experiences the bereaved have had with the deceased (2010: 491). Sophie

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explained to me that she needed to write to enable her tears and feelings to come. After she had deleted what she wrote, she was able to forget the sadness for a while and remember the good memories of her sister.

Mia, who lost her brother to suicide, has also found comfort in writing. She posts long comments on Facebook, and sometimes she writes it and chooses not to post it:

> Most of my posts have been thought through before posting them. It really helps me to write. I've written a lot, just for my own sake, I don't want to share everything I write on Facebook. Now I don't really use Facebook as much as I used to, but when I do, I post long comments, where I really explain how I feel, or I post poems, lyrics etc. (Mia 2015)

Mia explains that it helps her to write long texts about her brother. Sometimes she posts them on Facebook, and sometimes she does not. She explains that it helps her to put her feelings into words. If she chooses to post what she writes on Facebook, she usually gets positive feedback from family members and friends.

Even though Talia did not write on her deceased friends profile page, she found comfort visiting his page. She felt closer to him when she could see his picture, listen to songs he had posted, and reading what he had written before he passed away. This shows that you do not necessarily need to write to find support on Facebook:

> His profile was so personal, I would go there and listen to his favourite songs and look at pictures of him, of course it made me feel a bit closer to him. I actually think I went to his profile probably daily, just to feel closer to him. I think it is just the modern way, if he had had a voice message on his phone, you would preserve it and listen to it. The profile is something that belongs to them, so I think writing to them probably felt like they were connecting to him in some way. And even if they know it is just for their own purpose, I think, they probably just got a degree of comfort, feeling like they're having a conversation with him again, and reaching out even if they know (pause) maybe they feel like he could be seeing it somehow. (Talia 2015)

What Talia is experiencing is in line with what Klass et al. discovered in their research about continuing bonds with the deceased. It is important to accentuate that when they published their results in 1996, Facebook did not exist, so their theory has nothing to do with social media. However, their results may be useful in today's context as well. They conclude that a person never fully recover from their grief, but rather that the grief becomes a part of who you

are. According to them, the bereaved creates an inner representation of the deceased, and keeps communicating with them in different ways. "We suggest that these relationships can be described as interactive, even though the other person is physically absent" (Klass et al. 1996:349). Talia experienced that through Facebook, her friend was still present even though he was dead. She could look at his personal profile page, and be reminded of him. In their book, *Continuing Bonds*, Klass et al. recap different ways of continuing bonds with the deceased, from multiple researchers:

> Balk developed an Attachment Scale, which primarily describes activities that keep memories of the deceased alive- that is, thinking or talking about him or her. Hogan and DeSantis describe the continuing connection in terms of an ongoing conversation that the bereaved sibling has with the deceased: expressing their regret about what happened, asking why it happened, bringing them up to date and asking for their help (…) Activity or passivity of the deceased (…) does not seem related to age or other demographic characteristics of the survivors.
> (Klass et al. 1996: 350)

All of the findings above might be seen in relation to Facebook today. Talia, for example, used her deceased friend's Facebook page to keep the memories of him alive, while Zoey expressed that many of her friends wrote on their best friend's Facebook profile to apologize to him for not being there, and to bring him up to date on their lives:

> Some of them wanted to apologize to him, others just wanted to talk to him, and you know, just say that they loved him. People would write very personal messages to him, almost like a letter. They would write about what they had been up to lately and how things were going. They would also write about him, and how they missed him, and post pictures of them together.
> (Zoey 2015)

This shows us that Klass et al.'s research from 20 years ago is still relevant today. The same can be said about Pennebaker and Seagal's research about expressive writing. On Facebook, you get a unique opportunity to remember the deceased person, looking at pictures, writing "directly" the him or her, and it is a place where you can meet other people who grieve, and you can find cohesion and support.

A consequence of expressive writing could potentially be that the bereaved posts what he or she has written on Facebook without thinking about the consequences. When interviewing some of the interviewees who have written a lot on Facebook, I discovered that some of them

were not conscious of what they chose to write about. When I asked Lily if she had set limitation for what she posted, she answered:

> I'm sure I have (pause) but I, (pause) I would never, I would not, like, I would not (pause) tell people in detail about how she died. Or, I would never write very personal things. I think I have a norm inside me, so I don't sit down to think about what to write or not. It's just something inside. I don't know, I haven't really thought about it.   (Lily 2015)

I found it interesting that she had not thought about what she decided to post, and what she did not want on Facebook. Lily is an active Facebook user, and has posted about death, grief and private feelings, and I was surprised by her reaction when I asked her about this. I had expected her to be more self-reflective of what she posts. However, she stresses that she has a norm inside her, that she would not cross, and that she knows her limit. She says she can be open and personal on Facebook, but will not cross a certain line.

When I asked Mia about whether or not she had regretted any of the things she had written on Facebook, she thought about it for some time, before picking up her phone, starting to scroll down on her brother's memorial page. Eventually she explains:

> I never felt I was in a state of shock, but when I look at what I've written now, I (pause) wow. I was on another planet. I don't even remember writing this (looking at her phone). Poems and lyrics and stuff. I have no recollection of this whatsoever! Even when he had been dead six months, I still don't remember writing this. The posts are very long, very personal. I used it in a very therapeutic way. I don't do that anymore.   (Mia 2015)

What is interesting about Mia's statement is that she is discovering now that she has been in shock without knowing, and she has posted long, personal statuses on Facebook without realising what she has actually written.

When asking Aron and Bianca the same questions they simply answered: *I don't know.* I asked them if they regretted anything they had written, if they had set limitations for what they were comfortable writing about, if writing on Facebook was something they wanted to continue doing, if they had experienced any negative feedback from strangers or from friends; the answer was the same. It is interesting that they have not thought about this before, especially since they use Facebook actively on a daily basis.

It strikes me that the interviewees who write the most on Facebook have not really reflected on what they post there. They have all shared maybe the most private and personal emotion

you can have; grief, to hundreds of people on Facebook, and yet they have no clear vision of what they like to post there, and what they like to keep private. This was an unexpected finding that I was quite surprised of. However, it seems as if they have "something inside", as Lily explained. They would not write anything too personal, even though they have not set clear limits; there is something inside them that tells them where that limit is.

4.4 Anniversaries

Whether my interviewees wrote a lot on Facebook or not, they all expressed that they found Facebook important on the anniversary of their loved ones death, their birthday and at Christmas. Rosenberg studied memorial groups, and found that they were especially important for the users on anniversaries (2012: 80). I found similar results in my research. Mia explains how important Facebook is to her on anniversaries and holidays:

> I remember the first Christmas without him. And his first birthday after his death. I had a huge need to write to him, so I did. A lot. Especially at Christmas. Now I don't write a lot on Facebook anymore, but I still feel the need to write to him at Christmas, his birthday, and the day he died. On his birthday I post longer, more personal texts and messages than I normally do. I especially remember New Year's Eve in 2012. The year he died. Do you remember the movie 2012? The world was supposed to go under, and it didn't. But for me, it kind of did. And I remember writing a lot to him on Facebook on New Year's Eve, explaining how I felt. (Mia 2015)

The anniversaries are clearly important to Mia, and Facebook provides her with an opportunity to write to her brother on the days she misses him the most. She also receives support from others who miss him as well, which is comforting for her. Mia is not the only one of my interviewees who finds comfort in using Facebook on the anniversaries. Aron and Bianca, who lost their child, agree:

> We especially write a lot to our child in the holiday season, on the birthday and the anniversary of our child's death. We express our love and write that our child is an angel whom we are missing every day and never will forget about. (Aron and Bianca 2015)

Sophie, who does not use Facebook to find support anymore, still visits her sister's page on her birthday. She explains that she misses her more on the anniversaries, and that Facebook sometimes helps her on these occasions. However, it is also hard for her to be there:

> You can see that a lot of people wrote to her on her first birthday after she was dead. This birthday, it was only three of her friends who wrote to her. I didn't even write myself. (Sophie 2015)

Sophie explained above that likes and comments were starting to become important to her, too important, so she intentionally stopped using Facebook the way she used to. The importance of likes and comments might be even more important on her sister's birthday, because Sophie misses her more than usual on that day. It was hard for Sophie to see that her sister only got three messages, when she got over a hundred for her first birthday after her death. Mia has a similar experience, only she feels like she has nothing to post herself:

> What I write and when depends on a lot of different things. The first year, on the anniversary of his death I wrote a lot, but this year, three years after, I think I actually just posted a picture of him. Two pictures. I don't know, sometimes I feel empty, like I have no words, nothing to post. (Mia 2015)

It is clear from the statements above that the anniversaries are especially important for some of the interviewees, but it is also difficult for them. On one hand, they find support by writing on Facebook on these days, but on the other, they experience that they have nothing to say, that they feel empty, or that the numbers of greetings from former friends of the deceased are decreasing. It can be hard for them to handle, but it seems that Facebook gives them support on these days, more than worries.

Zoey, who lost one of her best friends to suicide, does not usually visit her friend's profile page, but on his birthday, she likes to visit the page, and read what other people are writing to him:

> I visit his profile page occasionally. But I only do it when someone reminds me that it exist, for example if I get a notification about his birthday or if a message to him pops up the news feed, or if someone has commented on a picture of him. I wouldn't write to him myself, I only read what other people post, and I sometime "like" what other people post to him. (Zoey 2015)

Alice, who lost a good friend and her aunt, has a similar experience to what Zoey explains above. She also finds it comforting to look at her friend's profile page on her birthday:

> I especially like to go look at it (the profile page) around Christmas or on her birthday. I wouldn't write anything there myself, except for maybe a heart, but it is nice to see other people writing about her. It means she isn't forgotten. (Alice 2015)

What Zoey and Alice explain above, is that even though they do not use the memorial pages, or the profile pages actively, they both find comfort in their existence, and they feel like they pay respect to the deceased by visiting the page on an anniversary.

4.5 New Acquaintances

Many of the interviewees, whether passive or active users, or whether they had positive or negative experiences, explained that Facebook had helped them, by achieving contact with other people in a similar situation. For Aron and Bianca, Facebook proved to be very helpful after their child passed away:

> Facebook has been really good for us after we lost our child. We have experienced a lot of support from friends and also from people we don't know. We made contact with people who had experienced something similar. We found them through groups on Facebook. It has been a good platform for keeping in contact with other parents, who've also lost their child. (Aron and Bianca 2015)

Aron and Bianca explain how easy it is to find people in the same situation as yourself, and how easy it is to keep in touch with them. This has been helpful for the couple after they lost their child. This coincides with Minister Kari Mangrud Alvsvåg's experience when she was grieving. She found comfort in other people's grief. "Others' grief, others' despair and others' stories helped me to move on" she explains (Kari Mangsrud Alvsvåg 2015). This shows that people in a similar situation can provide comfort for grieving people, and Facebook is, according to many of my interviewees, a good place to find those people.

Sophie also experienced that strangers reached out to her:

> I think what has helped me the most [on Facebook] is messages from people who have experienced something similar. In the beginning I thought "How can I possibly live again after this?" but people, strangers who now are my friends, reached out to me via Facebook and told me that things would get better. That was really good for me to hear. My friends at school had never experienced anything like this, they could not comfort me and say that things would get better after a while, they couldn't possibly know that.   (Sophie 2015)

Sophie experienced that her friends could not understand what she was going through. They tried to give her friendly advice, but as Sophie stated above, they could not possibly know anything about it. Via Facebook, she got the chance to connect with someone who had

experienced something similar, and who could tell her something about the process. She trusted these people, even though she did not know them. They talked on Facebook first, but decided to meet in person as well:

> It really helped me to hear that from people who had experienced something similar. If they hadn't contacted me, I'm not sure that I would've you know, pulled through it, I would probably have quit school and everything. But they told me to hang in there, to go out, be social, go to school, and that I would feel better after some time. And I wouldn't have known that if it had not been for Facebook. It's a really good place to make connections. I experienced that a lot of people that I didn't know reached out to me. They had experienced something similar and they wanted to meet up and talk about it. That was really nice. To meet people who could understand all my thoughts and feelings. (Sophie 2015)

Like Sophie, Mia had a similar experience. She believes that the opportunity to meet people in a similar situation is one of the best aspects of Facebook:

> People have written to me on Facebook, people I don't even know. That has been very supportive and nice. And I think it's easier to write than it is to talk about things like this. Meeting new people who could relate to my situation is one of the best things about Facebook in all this mess. (Mia 2015)

Lily explained that she chose to be open on Facebook because she realised that she could not cope with her grief on her own. To be able to get the help she needed, she had to tell people how she felt about things. She reached out to people via Facebook, and she got some of the support she needed from strangers:

> On Facebook you also get in contact with people who have experienced similar things. In the beginning I didn't understand how I could possibly live on, and how I could ever feel happiness again, and I had a need to talk to people who had experienced something similar, just to hear that it is possible to have a real life again, that it's possible to move on. And now I believe that I can be that person, to tell others in a similar situation that even though we have experienced something so horrible, it will eventually be ok again, you can have a happy life. I received messages of support from people I didn't know. There was a woman in Washington for example, who reached out to me after reading my story on Facebook. She recognised herself in my story and we messaged back and forth. She even sent me Christmas cards. (Lily 2015)

Even Katie, who was very reluctant about Facebook, could see something positive about getting in touch with people who have been in a similar situation. After her friend died, the family found people to talk to via Facebook, who had experienced the same:

> Her parents have met other people in the same situation, who also lost their child, and I understand from Facebook that they are good friends now. I think that is very good for them. Not many people in their network had experienced something like that, and they needed to talk to someone who could understand them. (Katie 2015)

All of these stories suggest that it is easier to reach out to someone online, than it is in real life. Facebook is clearly a platform where people are not being the stereotypical Norwegian who avoids contact with other people. It seems that approaching people via Facebook is acceptable, in contrast to walk up to them on the street. Even Katie and Sophie, who are sceptical using Facebook, understand that this can be beneficial. Sophie even goes as far as saying that some of her best friends today are people who reached out to her via Facebook after the death of her sister.

In this chapter, I have analysed and discussed some of the issues my interviewees brought up in the interviews. In the next chapter, I will make a conclusion, and answer my research questions.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I will make a short summary of the interviewee's stories. I will try to answer my research questions, and answer the questions that arose in the theory chapter. I have split the conclusion into different topics: First, in "Mapping the field", I look at the interviewee's different relations to Facebook to see what they experienced. In the second section, "Differences between younger and older adults" I debate the different user patterns I found when interviewing my subjects. In the third category "Expressive writing", I discuss whether writing on Facebook has helped the interviewees when dealing with their grief, in the fourth section "Anniversaries", I examine Facebook's importance on different anniversaries. In section five "Continuing Bonds" I investigate if Klass et al.'s theory about continuing bonds with the deceased is representative for Facebook as well. Then, I will look more closely at category six "Online vs. Offline support" where I discuss where the interviewees experienced more support, online or offline. After that, I will present some unexpected findings and ethical concerns, before I discuss limitations and future research.

5.1 Mapping the field

Everyone grieves differently, and it is difficult to place the interviewees into groups. However, even though they are different and have different experiences with Facebook, I found four different ways the interviewees use Facebook after their loved ones passed away: "Active users with negative experiences", "Active users with positive experiences", "Passive users with negative experiences" and "Passive users with positive experiences". The first thing I wanted to find out was if Facebook had been supportive for the interviewees after the death of their loved one, or if it had been a burden. The different interviewees experienced this differently. Sophie, Mia, Elisabeth, Talia, Katie and Zoey found it complicated and painful to use Facebook, whereas Alice, Lily, Aron and Bianca experienced support and comfort. There are different reasons for this, as I have explained above; age, size of social network and need of support may be significant factors here. I believe the use of Facebook after the passing of a loved one reflects the Facebook use prior to the death. To look professional on Facebook has always been important for Elisabeth and Zoey, both before and after the passing of the loved one. Lily was always personal on Facebook, also before her daughter passed away. However, when a person is grieving, they are more vulnerable than

usual. Mia did for example write statuses on Facebook she could not remember when seeing them now. They were very personal, and it shocked her to see how much she had posted there. Sophie decided to delete or hide her posts and comments when she looked back at what she had written. In retrospect, she found the comments too personal for Facebook.

The wish to grieve together is strong for all the interviewees, whether it is on Facebook or in real life. Zoey felt alone in a foreign country when her friends were grieving together. Facebook provided her with the opportunity to participate and connect with her friends back home, but she was not comfortable using it, and felt more alone. Sophie explained how she needed her friends outside Facebook, and how they helped her to deal with her emotions. Lily explained how it became important for her to grieve openly, so all her friends, on Facebook and outside, might have an understanding of how she felt. It also became important to her to help other people in similar situations later on. Aron and Bianca started using Facebook after their child passed away, and found it helpful and supporting. The more common way of grieving is to gather with the closest family and friends and grieve together, but the way we grieve is changing. When King Olav V of Norway died, people gathered outside the castle to grieve, and after the 22nd of July 2011, people gathered in the city centre with roses, comforting each other. To meet in big groups and show support, even with people you do not know, is becoming more normal. Facebook has become an extension of this, and Lily, Aron, Bianca, Alice and Mia found support on Facebook, which has been very beneficial for them.

The wish of grieving together after a tragedy is strong, but for Talia, Katie, Sophie, Zoey and Elisabeth, Facebook became a too public place to share their grief. The people who wrote on the memorial pages did not know the deceased, and the interviewees experienced this as people being fake. In the introduction, I discussed the differences between grief, and what Dyregrov (2014) refers to as "sympathy grief". Talia, Katie, Sophie, Zoey and Elisabeth experienced that Facebook was more helpful for the people in "sympathy grief", than it was for themselves. It was not the deceased's closest friends and family who used Facebook the most; it was people who knew of the deceased, or had heard about what had happened. Some of the interviewees did not feel supported by this, even though they understood that strangers wrote hearts and messages on the memorial page to support them, and to show their sympathy.

In the following sections, I will answer and discuss my research questions. Even though the interviewees were very different, and had different opinions, there were several similarities,

which I will look at. I will also compare my findings to previous research and the theory presented in Chapter 2.

5.2 Differences between younger and older adults

In this section, I will try to answer my first research question: *Is age a factor in how people relate to Facebook after the death of a loved one?* Similar to what Brandtsæg et al. (2010) found in their research, I found differences in the patterns of Facebook usage between the younger and older adults in my research. This is most clear concerning the different ways of reacting to strangers writing their condolences on the memorial pages belonging to their loved ones. Lily, Aron and Bianca, the parents who have lost a child, have only had positive experiences with using Facebook as a place to share their grief. They experienced support and comfort when people wrote to them, shared stories with them and offered their condolences, even though some of these people did not know their child. The younger adults I interviewed, however, had a different opinion on the matter. They all explained that they found it annoying and painful when strangers wrote on the memorial page. Many of them explained that they felt it was fake, and that it became a popularity contest, rather than people showing their support. As I discussed in the previous chapter, there could be several reasons why this is the case. Like Brandtzæg and his colleagues suggest, the two age groups have different patterns of Facebook usage in the first place; younger people are more confident in their Facebook use, they think more about what they post and why, while older adults are less confident in their use and are more likely to make mistakes than younger users are (Brandtzæg et al. 2010: 1019). The younger adults in my study reported that they are very self-conscious when posting on Facebook, and they worry about future employees gathering information about them via Facebook. They also think more about what their friends think of them when they write on Facebook. Mia for example states that she does not want to post too much about her brother's death because it could potentially be uncomfortable for her friends to read about it. Elisabeth, on her side, is afraid that her friends will think badly about her, and find her silly, should she choose to write about her brother's passing. Lily, Aron and Bianca, the older adults in my research, do not worry about these topics, and use Facebook more for their own sake, without worrying about what other people think about them. This could be because older adults in general have better confidence in themselves, and care less about what other people think of them.

Another reason for this may be that there is a significant difference between losing a close friend and losing a child. As I discussed in the previous chapter, I do not want to trivialize the grief the other interviewees' experiences, but like Kreicbergs et al. describe in their research, parental grieving is one of the most painful experiences a human being can live through (2007: 3307). Lily, Aron and Bianca might depend more on the attention and support they are receiving on Facebook than the other interviewees do.

5.3 Expressive writing

In this section, I will answer my second question: *Have the bereaved had positive experiences with writing in their grieving process?* I found that writing about their emotions and feelings helped the interviewees to deal with their grief. Elisabeth explained how writing was therapeutic for her, and led to her not needing Facebook as a place to grieve. Mia and Sophie had the same experience, and explain that they write a lot more for themselves than they post on Facebook. Pennebaker suggested that writing about your emotions could be beneficial, and it is clear that this is true for some of my interviewees as well. When you write on Facebook, you also get instant feedback and attention, which can help the interviewees to deal better with their grief. Pennebaker's research showed that by writing a short text every day, the bereaved would experience a better psychological and physical health. My interviewees found it therapeutic to write, Sophie for example, explained how she would sit down and write when she was sad, but could not cry. When formulating her emotions into words, she felt much lighter and happier afterwards. Even though she did not publish what she wrote on Facebook, she still felt comforted by writing, and told me that she writes almost every day. Mia posted a lot on Facebook, and experienced that both writing down her feelings, and the feedback she received from Facebook friends, was beneficial for her. Mia also told us the story about her sister who wrote letters to their deceased brother that she kept in an angel box. This was more beneficial for her, than writing on Facebook. To conclude, I will state that some of my interviewees found it helpful to write about their feelings and emotions, and that Pennebaker's research concerning expressive writing is relevant in the age of social media as well as it was 20 years ago, when he first published his research.

5.4 Anniversaries

In this section, I will answer the question: *How important is Facebook on anniversaries?* Similar to what Dagny Regine Rosenberg (2012) found in her thesis, my interviewees explained how important Facebook were to them on anniversaries. The interviewees explained that they are more active on Facebook on the deceased's birthday, at Christmas and on the anniversary of their death. These days are extra hard for the bereaved, and because many of the interviewees experience support on Facebook, they naturally turn to Facebook on these special occasions. Aron and Bianca explain that they use Facebook a lot more on the anniversaries than they do the rest of the year. Mia has a similar experience, and explain that she thinks about her brother more often on his birthday and at Christmas. It is therefore natural for her to use his Facebook page more on these days.

Sophie, on the other hand, explains that she finds Facebook extra challenging on these days, because she is noticing that her sister does not get as much attention any more. Sophie's sister died in 2011, which is more than four years ago, and Sophie explained how difficult it was for her to see that only three people congratulated her sister on her latest birthday. Zoey explains that it is difficult for her to see her friends congratulate her deceased friend on Facebook, because when they do, she is notified in her news feed, and she does not feel that grief belongs on Facebook. This is a contrast to what Rosenberg (2012) found. She argues that Facebook is important for the users on different anniversaries, and they post pictures, poems and longer, more emotional comments on these occasions (2012: 80). Sophie and Zoey do not share these experiences, but it is clear that Aron, Bianca and Mia have a similar experience to what Rosenberg found in her research.

5.5 Continuing Bonds

In this section, I will answer the fourth question: *Can Facebook be beneficial for continuing bonds with the deceased?* For Lily, Aron, Bianca, Alice, and to a certain degree Zoey and Mia, it is clear that Facebook provides them with a platform where they can maintain a relationship with the deceased. Klass et al.'s research from 1996 is clearly relevant today, and we can transfer their results to include Facebook. Facebook is a place where the bereaved can share memories, pictures and thoughts about the deceased, and many of the interviewees write directly to the deceased, and use Facebook as a way to communicate with them. By

maintaining the relationship with the deceased, the bereaved are more likely to cope and live with their grief, rather than trying to forget about him or her and let go. Facebook provides them with an opportunity not only to remember the deceased, but also to communicate directly to them, and at the same time receiving massive support from friends and acquaintances, and sometimes also strangers. Lily explained how it was essential for her to be open on social media after her daughter passed away, and that she was relying on the support there to be able to live a "normal" life again. Aron and Bianca expressed gratitude that someone created a memorial page for their child, and explained that they visit the page every day and write posts about - and directly to - their child there. Klass et al. suggest that to be able to live with the grief, one must change the relationship with the deceased, and it is important that the deceased is "present" through all the steps of the way. Facebook is part of making this possible for the interviewees in my research. They explain how important the memorial page, or the Facebook page, has become to them. Zoey and Mia even suggest that losing the profile would be like losing their loved ones all over again. The profile page becomes the last piece of the deceased they have left. This, on the other hand, might be dangerous as well. I recommend researchers in psychology to do further research concerning the danger of a prolonged grieving process due to the contact the bereaved experience with the deceased on Facebook. I am concerned that the Facebook profile page belonging to the deceased can become too important for the bereaved. The contact they are maintaining with the deceased on Facebook might have unhealthy consequences that i.e. psychologists should be aware of and be able to help them with.

5.6 Offline vs online support

In this section, I will answer my final research question: *Does using Facebook replace the important face-to-face conversation?* This is difficult to answer. Some of the interviewees – namely Talia, Elisabeth, Sophie, Katie and Zoey - experienced that the offline communication became important to them. They chose to talk to a couple of close friends outside of Facebook, instead of talking to a big audience on Facebook. This was beneficial for them, and they all experienced Facebook being a strange, unnatural place to grieve. For Alice, Aron, Bianca, Lily and Mia, on the other hand, the online support was important. They found the comments from people helpful and supportive. Facebook is a place where they are more comfortable expressing their feelings, which again leads to them being more comfortable

talking about their emotions and feelings. However, they experience Facebook as an additional source of support, not necessarily the main source, which is important to notice. This means that Facebook is not replacing face-to-face conversation, it rather becomes an additional source of support.

In the next section, I will look more closely at Sherry Turkle's findings concerning how active Facebook users end up feeling more lonely, despite their big online network.

5.6.1 Alone Together

Similar to what Sherry Turkle found in her research, Sophie experienced that increased Facebook use after her sister passed away, made her feel more lonely than she was before. Sophie realised that people who wrote comments on her sister's memorial page, and wrote condolences, did not say hello when they passed her in the streets the next day. She then realised that Facebook was becoming a fake place to her, and she experienced loneliness in her grief. She decided to reach out to a couple of good friends in the offline world, and even though she found it harder to talk to them in real life, she experienced that this was more beneficial for her than the support she received on Facebook.

Zoey was living in Norway when her friend passed away, and she was not feeling comfortable with using Facebook for a place to grief. She experienced that her friends were active on Facebook, but she felt as if she could not participate in this. The more they posted about him, the more lonely she felt. She felt left out on the outside, unable to participate with her friends, and share her grief with them.

Turkle argues that Facebook provides a platform where we can talk to each other without meeting, but without meeting and talking face-to-face we isolate ourselves, and we become more lonely (2011: 11). This is what Sophie and Zoey experienced, and Turkle's theory about being alone on social media can also be transferred to bereaved using Facebook for a place to grieve. The danger with Facebook is that it is too available, it is too easy to use and it is perhaps too easy to find short-term support there. When people write on Facebook that they are there for you, but then they pass you on the street without saying hello, that support might feel shallow, fake and meaningless. You realise that even though you have hundreds of supportive Facebook friends, you are still home alone, with no one to actually talk to. This is

what Sophie and Zoey experienced, and I find this interesting. Despite all the comments and hearts on Facebook, they felt lonely.

5.7 Unexpected findings

In the following sections, I will discuss my unexpected findings, and discuss some ethical concerns that occurred during the interviews.

5.7.1 New acquaintances

Some of the interviewees expressed that people in similar situations reached out to them after they had posted on Facebook. Even though the same interviewees expressed annoyance that strangers commented on their loved one's memorial page, they appreciated that strangers in similar situations contacted them directly via Facebook mail. This was an unexpected finding, which I did not foresee. Facebook can be a good place to make friends after you have lost someone close to you. Sophie for example, stated that most of her closest friends today, are people she met on Facebook after her sister passed away. Many people who lose someone close to them, experience that their friends do not understand their situation, and even if they want to help them, they are not able to. They cannot say reassuring things, because they do not know anything about the process the bereaved is going through. Aron, Bianca and Lily had similar experiences, and they still keep in touch with people who have reached out to them via Facebook. Sophie commented that this was the best thing about Facebook.

5.7.2 Ethical concerns and observations

When researching this topic I became aware of different ethical questions, and I have therefore decided to write a section with my own ethical concerns and observations.

First, I would like to address an issue that two of my interviewees experienced. Even though this was not the case for more than two of them, I still find it important to raise awareness about it. Mia experienced that the news about her brother's passing travelled so fast on Facebook that several of her family members, and close friends of his, found out about his passing there. Elisabeth also experienced that her family had to call her to let her know about her brother's death, instead of telling her in person when she came home, because just hours after his passing, it was already on Facebook. Both Mia and Elisabeth found this hard and

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painful to experience, and they explain how this feeling has shaped them, and still affects them today. They both became very angry with everyone who posted to them, and they closed their profile page, or deleted all the comments. This was most likely not how the people who commented it wanted them to feel, they wanted to show support and offer their condolences. However, Mia and Elisabeth felt as if the situation was out of control, which led to more anger and perhaps also a prolonged grieving process. The news about a family member's death should never be conveyed on Facebook, and it is clear that the two interviewees have been affected by this. I would suggest that people wishing to offer condolences wait a couple of days before posting on Facebook so the bereaved have time to tell family and friends beforehand. Because the bereaved may not be able to access the deceased's profile page, there is nothing they can do to stop the condolences, which leads to a feeling of not being in control, which again leads to much pain and sadness amongst the bereaved. This is a problem not easily solved, unless the deceased has given his or her password information to anyone. As a bereaved, you cannot contact Facebook and immediately get the profile closed, or block the wall, this only happens after Facebook receives the death certificate. I would not recommend to offer condolences on Facebook directly after the news of someone's passing, as this can be very difficult for the closest family. This was an unexpected finding that I did not foresee, but I find it a very important issue to address.

Second, I would like to highlight how Mia, Aron and Bianca had written and shared things on social media without thinking critically about what they had written. When interviewing Mia and Lily, we talked about what they wrote, and what they chose not to share with their Facebook friends. Mia started to scroll on her phone to read status updates she had posted right after her brother had passed away, and was surprised to see what she had written, as she did not remember writing it. She explained that she never felt she had been in shock after he passed away, but looking back at her posts, she realised she had been. She said that she did not regret what she had written, but she was surprised to see how personal she had been on Facebook, and how much she had posted about her feelings. Sophie explained that she had gone back and hidden some of her posts, because when she looked back, she was not comfortable with how open and personal she had been. Facebook can be harmful this way, because there is no censorship. No one tells you when you are being too personal, when you post things that could potentially be harmful to you, or when you are posting too much, and you may look back and regret it.

Aron and Bianca simply replied *I don't know* on several of my questions and showed that they had not thought about it before either.

I was surprised to find this, as I expected people who write very personal statuses on Facebook to have set limitations for what they write. The examples above, however, show that this is not the case. Whilst in shock, Mia and Sophie wrote things they were surprised to see after some time, which could mean that when a person is in shock after someone close to them has passed away, they write on Facebook without thinking about consequences. This is logical when we look at Kübler-Ross' grief model. As the first three steps in the model; denial, anger and bargaining, are more explosive emotions, it is natural that you would be in a situation where you want to express your feelings to the world and show everyone how much pain you are in (Rosenberg 2012: 9). In the last two steps; depression and acceptance, you experience grief at a deeper level, it becomes more real, and the bereaved might feel lonely. When someone feel lonely, it is natural to think that Facebook is a place where you can find love and support, and that is what some of my interviewees did. Others are not comfortable with grieving on Facebook, and have a negative experience with the social networking site.

Third, I would like to highlight the importance of "likes" for the bereaved. I believe the importance of the number of likes is a significant finding. When one gets many likes on a post or a picture it feels like support for the Facebook users. This is not only true for the interviewees; I believe likes are important for many people, but it seems to be especially important for the bereaved, because they experience the likes as support. When the interviewees talk about likes, they talk about it as if it is a way for them to be visible to their friends. It is a way for them to get the attention, support and care they need to be able to cope with their grief. The likes get even more important as time passes, and it is an easy, effort free way for their friends to show them support. The importance of likes can, on the other side, be addictive and harmful for the bereaved. Sophie for example described how she gradually became dependent on the likes she got on her posts and pictures, which scared her. She started to depend on the attention Facebook was giving her, and realised that it was not healthy for her to continue grieving there. She also explained how painful it was for her to realise that the number of likes were decreasing. She experienced that directly after her sister's passing, she would get hundreds of likes, and after some years, she would only get a few. Elisabeth talks about likes too, and how she would depend on them, should she choose to write about her grief on Facebook, which she has not done.

Fourth, I would like to address what Katie experienced, that she felt forced to be brave online. After her aunt, and a close friend, passed away, her friends were all active on Facebook, posting pictures, messages and statuses about the deceased. Katie did not want to do this, and felt forced. She experienced that writing on Facebook became the norm, and if you did not want to do this, people around you suspected that you were not sad enough or not dealing properly with your grief. I find this interesting and important, it has become so common to write about your feelings in public, that Katie experienced it as abnormal not to. It could potentially be harmful for the bereaved if he or she does not want to use Facebook, but feels as if it is compulsory to do so. Katie ended up feeling weaker than her friends, and emphasizes that this was not the case, she was simply more private about her feelings than her friends were. She chose instead to deal with her grief by having conversations with her closest friends and family, rather than participate on Facebook.

5.8 Limitations and future research

In this section, I will discuss the limitations in the thesis, and suggest future research.

First, it is difficult to generalize any results from my research; I have not interviewed enough people to be able to say anything about people in similar situations. That, however, was not the intention of the research. I wish to contribute to the research field by researching a phenomenon on a personal level, rather than generalize the result to other groups.

The interviewees were difficult to find, and I ended up with interviewing nine women and only one man, which is perhaps what weakens the thesis the most. For future research, I will recommend interviewing more men about the topic. According to Klastrup (2011), more women than men use Facebook as a place to grieve. However, that does not mean that men do not use Facebook for that purpose. I will recommend doing research concerning their experiences with Facebook, as I believe it can give a different understanding of the phenomenon.

I chose to write about a time consuming topic; the interviewees were difficult to find, the interviews were long, and it was, at times, challenging for me to write about. I would have liked to interview more people, and perhaps it would have been beneficial to be in a research team when researching this topic. I am not a professional researcher, the only experience I have is my job as a journalist, and the research I did for my bachelor thesis. It would have

been more efficient and supportive to have other researchers to collaborate with, and for future research in the field, I would recommend being in a research team, instead of working alone.

I chose to only use one method, qualitative interviews. It would have been beneficial to have used more methods to get a better understanding of this phenomenon. I did not have the time, nor the resources to use more than one method. I do, however, believe that I have investigated an important area of the field using qualitative interviews. I connected well with the interviewees and I believe I was able to present an honest result, with in-depth information concerning how the interviewees experienced Facebook after the death of someone close to them.

I will recommend investigating how Facebook might be addictive to bereaved people. Sophie explained that she purposely stopped using Facebook for a place to grieve, because it was about to be addictive for her. Elisabeth chose not to use Facebook in the first place, because she was afraid of the same, while Zoey stated that when her friend's Facebook page was deleted, it was like losing her friend all over again. Facebook is addictive for most people. All of my friends, including myself, check Facebook several times a day, but for people who are grieving, it seems to be more intense, and they rely heavier on the support they receive there. I would recommend doing more research on this field, to see if Facebook potentially can harm the bereaved, rather than support them.

Another interesting topic that came up in my research was how friends of the bereaved experienced the bereaved's Facebook use and how they have to take part in a grief that is not theirs. Katie mentioned that she feels she has to read the posts about grief that pops up in her news feed, and that she is forced to participate in a grief that she is not directly affected by. Mia mentioned that she is careful with writing too much about her deceased brother, because the people around her might get uncomfortable when she writes about it. It would be interesting to research friends of the bereaved, to see how they are affected by what the bereaved writes.

There are many possibilities when it comes to researching grief and social media. It is a field in constant change, which is interesting and exciting. Despite all the limitations mentioned above, I believe my thesis contributes to the research field. I have presented a unique angle,

where long, truthful conversations with the interviewees provided me with new, interesting and insightful information.

6. Literature

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7. Appendix

Appendix A: Interview guide:

Bruk av Facebook

- Brukte du Facebook og/eller blogg fra før?
    - o Hvordan brukte du sosiale medier? Til hva?
- Hva tenkte du da du bestemte deg for å skrive om sorgen?
    - o Var det en spesifikk, gjennomtenkt handling eller i affekt?
- Ble du enig med andre familiemedlemmer/venner at du/dere skulle bruke sosiale medier i etterkant?
- Hva slags tanker er det du skriver om, og hva skriver du ikke om på sosiale medier?
    - o Har du satt grenser for hva du er komfortabel med å skrive om?
- Føler du at sosiale medier har hjulpet deg i sorgen?

Tilbakemeldinger

- Hvordan har du opplevd tilbakemeldinger du har fått?
    - o Har de vært positive/negative?
- Hva har det betydd for deg?
- Får du mest tilbakemelding på internett, eller i det «virkelige» liv?
- Hva er det som gjør at Facebook/Blogg er en fin arena for å uttrykke slike tanker vs «real life»?
- Hva slags forskjeller er det på tilbakemeldingene du får via sosiale medier vs «real life»?
- Har du opplevd at antall tilbakemeldinger synker etter hvert som tiden går?
    - o Hvordan føles det?

Åpenhet

- Hvorfor er det viktig for deg å være åpen?
- Følte du at du måtte være åpen? (Nesten tabu å ikke være det?)
- Hvorfor Facebook og ikke en dagbok?

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- Hvor går grensen for hva du deler på sosiale medier?
- Hva er forskjellen på å være åpen på Facebook vs real life?
- Hvorfor tror du noen velger å ikke være åpne?
- Var det en prosess hvor du bestemte deg for å være åpne eller falt det dere helt naturlig?

Anger

- Har du angret på noe du har lagt ut?
- Hva var det?
- Hvorfor angret du?
- Tok du det vekk?
- Fikk du tilbakemeldinger på det?
- Om man har blogget/Facebooket på forhånd av et dødsfall: Følte du at du *måtte* fortsette med det?

Refleksjon

- Hvordan synes du det har vært å bruke Facebook/blogg til å uttrykke sorg?
- Vil du anbefale det til andre?
- Er det noe du vil advare andre mot?
- Hvordan ser du for deg fremtiden? Vil du fortsette å bruke Facebook/blogg aktivt?

Appendix B: Approval form NSD:

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES

Harald Hårfagres gate 29
N-5007 Bergen
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Postboks 1093 Blindern
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| Vår dato: 24.02.2015 | Vår ref: 41991 / 3 / AGL | Deres dato: | Deres ref: |

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 02.02.2015. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

41991	Sorg og sosiale medier
Behandlingsansvarlig	Universitetet i Oslo, ved institusjonens øverste leder
Daglig ansvarlig	Anders Olof Larsson
Student	Astrid Linnea Løland Hovde

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet, og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger vil være regulert av § 7-27 i personopplysningsforskriften. Personvernombudet tilrår at prosjektet gjennomføres.

Personvernombudets tilråding forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 10.05.2015, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Katrine Utaaker Segadal

Audun Løvlie

Kontaktperson: Audun Løvlie tlf: 55 58 23 07
Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.

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Kopi: Astrid Linnea Løland Hovde astridlinnea@gmail.com

Personpvernombudet for forskning

Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

Formålet er å finne ut hvilken rolle sosiale medier etterhvert har fått i en sorgprosess.

Utvalget informeres skriftlig om prosjektet og samtykker til deltakelse. Informasjonsskrivet er godt utformet, men "Du vil være helt anonym, ditt navn og andre personopplysninger vil ikke bli oppbevart sammen med svarene dine." må endres til "Ditt navn og andre personopplysninger vil ikke bli oppbevart sammen med svarene dine." Dette fordi dataene ikke regnes som anonyme når det benyttes koblingsnøkkel.

Det behandles sensitive personopplysninger om helseforhold.

Personvernombudet legger til grunn at forsker etterfølger Universitetet i Oslo sine interne rutiner for datasikkerhet. Dersom personopplysninger skal lagres på privat pc/mobile enheter, bør opplysningene krypteres tilstrekkelig.

Forventet prosjektslutt er 10.05.2015. Ifølge prosjektmeldingen skal innsamlede opplysninger da anonymiseres. Anonymisering innebærer å bearbeide datamaterialet slik at ingen enkeltpersoner kan gjenkjennes. Det gjøres ved å:
- slette direkte personopplysninger (som navn/koblingsnøkkel)
- slette/omskrive indirekte personopplysninger (identifiserende sammenstilling av bakgrunnsopplysninger som f.eks. bosted/arbeidssted, alder og kjønn)
- slette lyd- og videoopptak