

**FEMALE AND MALE NARRATIVES ABOUT FEAR OF VIOLENCE IN  
PUBLIC SPACE IN BISHKEK**

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## **Abstract**

Statistically, men show low level of fear of violence and crime than women, although they are most likely to be victimized, especially in the public spaces. Likewise, women who are least likely to be victimized in the public sphere are more fearful than men. Most of the existing research on geography of fear focused on women's fear of violence and its consequences in the lives of women, but men's fears of violence was mostly neglected. The aim of this paper was to unpack this paradox using hegemonic masculinity as the conceptual framework of analysis. The main purpose was to gather narratives about fear of violence in public space in Bishkek and to do this, qualitative research methods were used in order to investigate the topic more in depth. Through the narratives of female and male college students, it is argued that fearlessness of violence in public space among men is subject to masculinity, whereas fear among women is due to unequal power relations.

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## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	i
Acknowledgements .....	ii
Table of Contents .....	iii
Introduction .....	1
Chapter 1: Theoretical Insights into Gender, Violence, Fear and Space .....	8
1.1 Gender and Fear .....	8
1.2 Gender and Space.....	12
1.3 Violence .....	14
1.4 Normative (Hegemonic) Masculinity .....	15
1.5 Negotiations and strategies .....	18
Chapter 2: Methodology.....	21
2.1 Data Collection.....	21
2.2 Sampling and Methods.....	22
2.3 Ethical consideration .....	24
2.4 The limitations of the research .....	24
Chapter 3: Findings and Discussion.....	26
3.1 Normalization of Violence and Street Harassment .....	27
3.2 Territorialization of safety.....	33
3.3 Fear(lessness) of violence and the use of space .....	39
3.4 Coping strategies and Negotiations.....	44
Conclusion.....	46
Appendix I.....	48
Appendix II .....	49
Bibliography:.....	50

## Introduction

For the past three or four years with the rise of active use of social media among the youth of Bishkek and the spread of criminal news such as rape in public space in Bishkek, kidnapping of young women and children, people start talking and being aware about these issues more than ever before. As an active use of social media, I noticed more and more “shares” of news about women or children being either kidnapped or raped in public spaces or on the streets of Bishkek, however young men who are robbed, if not beaten, every day on the streets of Bishkek have never been mentioned in the news coverage. I got interested how news coverage about crimes and violent situations happening in Bishkek effect on the everyday life of young people in Bishkek and their use of space. The main aim for this thesis was to gain narratives about fear of violence in public space of Bishkek among youth between the ages of 18-23. The results for this research were very interesting and the narratives of young men and women were completely different from each other, which in turn also showed that their experience of public space in Bishkek was different too. Looking at this phenomenon through the gender lenses, I tried to explain why there is such a big difference.

Before going into deep discussion about narratives about fear of violence and the use of space in Bishkek, I find it important to put this research in the context of Kyrgyzstan and tell about Kyrgyzstan in general as well as about Bishkek city. This short background will be helpful in understanding the findings about the use of space in Bishkek and fear(lessness) of violence in Bishkek city.

The issue of crime and violence is important in this thesis, therefore I find it important to cover this topic in the context of Kyrgyzstan. One of the scholars who widely research the topic of “organized crime” in post-Soviet Eurasia was Alexander Kupatadze.<sup>1</sup> In the 1990s,

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<sup>1</sup> See Kupatadze (2012), especially chapter 3 and Kupatadze (2008) for more detailed analysis of organized crimes in Kyrgyzstan.

followed by the split of Soviet Union, the impact of Soviet and post-Soviet “organized crimes” in Kyrgyzstan was tangible: different criminal gangs/groups gained some profit in formal economy of Kyrgyzstan (Kupatadze, 2012). When Soviet Union dispersed the dominant role in establishing and participating in state formation was so called “vory v zakone” (‘thieves-in-law’) and “avtoritety” (‘authorities’): influential people with good criminal networks (Kupatadze, 2012, p. 56). According to the research done by Kupatadze (2008) in Kyrgyzstan, tribalism, family and close friends relationships “survived” the modernization process of Soviet and became one of the powerful connections in the informal areas of the former Soviet state. In sum, following Richard Rose (2009) thought, some post-soviet countries became rather “anti-modern society” which is different to modern state, where there is unreliable state actors, high level of corruption and bribery, obtaining some ‘means’ through informal connections (in Kupatadze, 2012, p. 65). In today Kyrgyzstan, the situation led by informal network connection almost the same and the difference is not profound. Let alone take two previous presidents of Kyrgyzstan: Askar Akaev and Kurmanbek Bakiev, whom both were overthrown, whereas one of the reasons was the active participation of their families in the informal sectors of the state for the individual sake. Blood kinship in Kyrgyzstan based on the tribal loyalty, ethnic origin, and regionalism place an important role in the formation of crime groups (Kupatadze, 2008). Tribes are not only defined in the matter of biological bond, but it can also be related to memories of common ancestors and its history and may comprise villages, towns or regions (Kupatadze, 2012). Similarly, in his important study, Kupatadze (2008) found out that “zemliachestvo: the formation of illegal networks by people from the same village or town” (p.281) was decisive in explaining organized crimes in Kyrgyzstan. Kupatadze cites Roy (2000) who claimed that ‘zemliachestvo’ was powerful element in appointing people to the state position in the government (2012). Moreover, during the transitioning to post-Soviet state, the law enforcement became also mixed with criminals: police also played important role in

organized crimes. In short, it is argued that the failure in successful socio-economic reforms were due to the widespread corruption, which limits the economic growth of the country. Bishkek, being the face of Kyrgyzstan, still have to be developed further.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Kyrgyzstan undergone massive changes in political, economic and social life. Transitioning from central planned system to market system resulted in economic crisis in Kyrgyzstan (Isabaeva, 2011; Kupatadze, 2012; Liebert, 2014; Mikail & Turan, 2013). These radical changes in the economy of Kyrgyzstan led to unemployment, poverty, a decline in industrial and agricultural output, internal and external migration (Isabaeva, 2011). Unemployment, political instability as well as lack of sufficient income from small-scale farming in different rural regions of the country led many families migrate to big cities, such as Bishkek and Osh, seeking jobs in the informal economy of its cities. According to several researches on the issue of inside migration, from different parts of Kyrgyzstan to the city of Bishkek, there is a negative narrative, “anti-migration discourse”, even discrimination against “newcomers” among the long-term urban citizens of Bishkek (Nasritdinov, 2008; Flynn & Kosmarskaya, 2014). This negative attitude is based on “culturally (e.g. not ‘urban’); linguistically (e.g. Kyrgyz speaking having poor Russian); and behaviorally (e.g. uncivilised)” discourse (Flynn & Kosmarskaya, 2014, p.352). Kyrgyzstan is one of the most “russified” countries in Central Asia and almost every citizen understand and speak both Russian and Kyrgyz language, in which the Russian language considers to be a sign of an urban citizen. In Bishkek, people of low class presumably live in the outskirts or so called “novostroikas” of the city as well as in such market places as Osh, Dordoi, and Alamedin bazaars (Nasritdinov, 2008). Nowadays, migration outside the country (usually in Russia and Kazakhstan) considers as a “norm” (Isabaeva, 2011, p.542), through which many families sustain their livelihood. Today, almost every Kyrgyz family has at least one person from the family working abroad and sending remittances back home. With the transition from post-

Soviet state, good medical treatment in hospitals, good quality education and security become very expensive, whereas many people cannot afford it. Comparing the life in Kyrgyzstan before Soviet Union and after, I would like to quote McBrien (2009), who investigated the life and narratives of Mukadas's religious transformation in the face of modernity and who have lived both the life of Soviet time and after:

She was equally disappointed by the hollowness of 'Western' modernity. Actually, lived socialist modernity was characterized by infrastructural improvement, scientific advancement, a certain ethos of community and communal effort to create a new, superior society, and importantly, a set of values – gender equality, mass literacy, economic equality, and meaningful work for all – that were, if only partly, attainable. Post-socialist modernity, by contrast, was not about lived experiences and values – it was almost exclusively about dreams. These were dreams of Western consumption and material standards of living that did not fit the logics of Soviet life and were rather unattainable in the economic realities of post-socialist life (p.133).

There is much unease when talking about modernity and, at the same time, about social norms and traditions in Kyrgyz culture. Despite the fact that Central Asian countries, including Kyrgyzstan, underwent anti-religious and other “modernizing” campaigns during Soviet time, many of these “traditional” norms and practices, which were suppressed under Soviet rule, reappeared in post-Soviet space (Nedoluzhko & Agadjanian, 2015). Although, recent demographic research on nuptiality shows that there is decline of marriage rates and increase in nonmarital cohabitation, cases of arranged marriages, bride kidnapping, polygamy, religious marriage, bride payments are still prevalent and practiced in some parts of Kyrgyzstan, especially in rural areas with high rates of Islamic religiosity (Nedoluzhko & Agadjanian, 2015). There is a debate, on the one hand argued that many pre-Soviet traditions and norms resurged after the collapse of Soviet Union, but on the other hand, other scholars argued that, on the contrary, it opened space for Western cultural and social effects on the society at large (Nedoluzhko & Agadjanian, 2015). While this can be analyzed furthermore, this is not the scope of this research. In sum, Kyrgyzstan can be described as a “hybrid” or mix of modernity and traditionalism. Kyrgyzstan is a Muslim country, where religiosity becomes mixed with certain



traditions, customs and norms. Thus, the struggle for gender equality is opposed by “traditionalist” and patriarchal culture of Kyrgyzstan. Overall, Kyrgyzstan is the developing country, which also heavily relies on international donors too.

So far this introduction has focused on the overall situation in Kyrgyzstan. The following section will discuss Bishkek city itself, which is the capital city of Kyrgyzstan. Population of Bishkek is 822,000 which is the largest city in Kyrgyzstan with the population of 5.6 million people.<sup>2</sup> As described previously, the cultural, political and social life applied to Bishkek too. As far as infrastructure of Bishkek is concerned, it is very poor and is only developing. First, most of the streets in Bishkek are not illuminated, except the main ones and it is very dark in many parts of Bishkek. The roads in some areas are not well laid, especially in the outskirts of the city, where there is complete absence of the light. Public transport in Bishkek city start at 6 in the morning and stop working by 11 evening, which heavily influences the overall mobility in the city. Youth culture in Bishkek tends to go to clubs/pubs/movies on weekends, but not every week, due to the lack of money. A lot of students also come to Bishkek from different regions of Bishkek, because the main universities located in the capital city. In addition to that, students who come from working class or coming outside of Bishkek work either part time or full time jobs, to earn money for everyday living expenses. Many universities are corrupted in Bishkek, so students sometimes do not go to classes, but rather earn money, whereas in the end they can bribe teachers. Poor economic status of the country, traditional values and gender inequality can be taken as a basis for criminal acts and violence. In fact it can be suggested that the city of Bishkek is not the safest place to be at night considering the high rate of criminality.

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<sup>2</sup> Atkinson, Aliprandini & Whittaker. (2012). <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?sid=7dccbef0-075f-46a9bf1304811c2cf161%40sessionmgr113&vid=11&hid=121&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWZlLWxpdmU%3d#db=ers&AN=88391112>

Turning now to the research itself, I investigated the fear of violence in public space in Bishkek; particularly I am looking at narratives of college students about violence in their lives, the fear of violence in public space and its effects on the use of space in Bishkek. Specifically, my research question is “What are the narratives about fear of violence in public space among young women and men and what meaning they attribute to it?”

My hypotheses are that men’s behavior and active use in public spaces as well as lack fear of violence is one way of performing masculinity. Alternatively, women’s passive participation in public space in Bishkek as well as having fear of violence is due to the unequal power relations with men and of patriarchal culture of Kyrgyzstan.

This research is significant in several ways. First, it will advance the study of feminist geography; specifically it will cover the concept of masculinity, power relations, patriarchy. Much of the previous research in the field of feminist geography focused primarily on women’s fear of public space, their strategies of coping with fear, and how it affects their lives predominantly in Western Europe. With respect to men, this topic largely has been neglected due to the stereotypical account that men are fearless, and therefore it does not pose any problems to freely use the space. Here I will make an attempt to cover both female and male experiences of public space in the context of Kyrgyzstan. Second, there was no published research done in Kyrgyzstan examining gender relations in public space and how does gender inform the use of space and vice versa. And third, whereas the one specific crime can affect one direct victim in neighborhood, it can also affect indirectly other people through social networks and news, therefore it impacts a large scale of the behavior of women as well as men. The aim of thesis it to understand how young college women and men from age 18-23 speak and reproduce certain gender norms through the use of public space in this particular post-soviet situation. Although I am taking gender as a category of my analysis, I am in no way want to homogenize both groups of men and women as living one experience and representing the

common essence of all women or men. To avoid this, I am aware of “interlocking categories of experience” (Andersen & Collins, 1992, p.12 cited in Valentine, 2007, p.12) such as ethnicity, nationality, religion, class, sexuality which mark out experiences of our everyday life, and similarly the use of space. While, the focus of my research lies on analyzing gender differences in experiencing the space, I also acknowledge other categories that persist in my study such as the regionality of the respondents, able bodiedness, age, ethnicity, though it is not deeply analyzed and beyond the scope of this research. It is important to bear in mind that the fear of violence in public space and the use of space in general are informed not only by gender, but goes hand in hand with other intersections of identity. This issue will be addressed more in the limitations section.

This thesis is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter provides the literature review of the main concepts such as violence and fear, normative masculinity, spatial markings. These concepts will be used to explain and theorized the finding in chapter III. As my theoretical framework, I am heavily relying on the concept of hegemonic masculinity. The second chapter moves on to discuss methodological approach I used in this study, ethical issues, limitations, sampling and methods. The third chapter will present the results of the research and analysis of the main findings. And finally, it will conclude with discussion and overall conclusion of the thesis followed by suggestions from my interviewees how to increase the safety of the city.

## **Chapter 1: Theoretical Insights into Gender, Violence, Fear and Space**

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature on the major concepts and theories about fear of violence/crime and the use of space. This chapter of the thesis will give an overview of what has been done, what is missing in these scholarships and what is relevant to my research. It is divided into five main sections. It begins with discussing how gender influences the level of fear of crime, then it goes to discuss how one way of construction gender identity can be informed by spatiality and vice versa. Thirdly, it addresses the issue of violence regarding the space and gender. In fourth part it disuses the hegemonic masculinity and would be taken as a theoretical framework in my analysis. And lastly, it will talk about possible “coping strategies” with fear of violence and how does fear of violence/crime effects on the behavior of people. In the following research, I am using violence and crime interchangeably due to the fact that some crimes, for example, in my case robbery, followed by physical violence, in case the opponent does not get what he wants. There is a thin line between crime and violence therefore these concepts are used as mutually equivalent throughout this paper.

### **1.1 Gender and Fear**

Fear of crime affects the large number of people than the crime itself due to the high emphasis on media, movies, television programs (Warr, 2000). In fact, many people become “indirect” victims of crime, which influence their feeling of safety (Warr, 2000). According to Warr (2000), fear is an emotion or a reaction to the perceived environment as dangerous. The level of fear is higher when the situation is perceived as both serious and most likely to occur (Warr, 2000). For instance, according to the quantitative research done by Warr (1985), the level of fear of rape is the highest than any other crimes, because women perceive this crime both serious and most likely to happen. In fact, the level of fear of crime is two or three times higher among women than among men (Hilinski et al, 2011; Clemente & Kleiman, 1977; Reid

and Konrad, 2004; Ferraro, 1996). According to Griffin (1971): "... rape and the fear of rape are a daily part of every woman's consciousness" (cited in Warr, 1985, p. 239). In addition, the fear of crime is higher among those who experienced direct violence in their lives in comparison with those who did not (Reid & Konrad, 2004; Hilinski et al., 2011). Proceeding from this statistics and based on this literature, I hypothesize that similar tendency can be found in my research too.

Scholars who study fear of violence come to the conclusion that fear reflects in behavioral patterns, such as avoiding certain places at certain time, employing different strategies, or always carrying protective tools (Warr, 2000; Liska et al., 1988; Brownlow, 2005). Therefore, through the behavior of people we can detect how fearful the person is. Among different groups of people who fear the crime the most are women and elderly (Warr, 1993). Many scholars are perplexed by these finding, because these two groups are the one least likely to be the victims of certain forms of crime, except sexual assault (Warr, 1993). However, even though crime statistics show that women are at low risk being victimized, it cannot get unnoticed that domestic violence and sexual offences largely go underreported, not to mention sexual harassment in different settings (Reid and Konrad, 2004). Nevertheless, women feel fearful of being victimized more in public space and consider home as a "safe" space to be. Men, who are statistically show lower level of fear of violence and who usually spend more time in public space (such as pubs, clubs, streets) where the violence occurs almost on daily basis, it's no surprise that men themselves become either victims or perpetrators of such violence (Stanko, 1994).

The gap in fear of crime reinforces and legitimizes socially constructed ideas about femininity such as weakness, vulnerability and passivity and masculinity such as fearlessness, strength, defender (Reid & Conrad, 2004). One of the explanation for the gender gap in fear of violence is thus of gender socialization, followed by the media and other "ideological" tools

(Reid & Konrad, 2004). It is argued that the internalization of the “woman as victim” privileges men because it serves the purpose of influencing on women’s self-sufficiency and albeit controlling their behavior. Men and women is argued are socialized differently, and being fearful or fearless is not an exception. For men, not being socialized to fear, gave the opportunity for independence, freedom and exploration of public sphere and higher sense of safety, whereas for women it is expected to behave in certain way, so not be labeled and perceived as “reputable” and “disreputable” women (Reid & Konrad, 2004, p. 420). Women are reminded at least once in their lifetime that they can be victims of violence and had been taught to be fearful, while, in contrast, men are socialized to be fearless.

The other explanation of gender gap in fear of violence was explained through “vulnerability hypothesis”, that is of physical strength, body complexion, and inability of women to defend themselves (Fetchenhauer & Buunk, 2005). This argument largely discussed in feminist literature, underlying the patriarchal notion of women as lesser status than men (Hilinski et al., 2011). It is argued, that in patriarchal, gendered society, women are taught to be helpless and unable to defend themselves (Hilinski et al, 2011). In the context of Kyrgyz culture, where there is strong ideology of gender division of space and the perception that woman’s place at home, it can be assumed that women in this research would be more likely to respond on fear of violence as being vulnerable and weak, and presumably to spent their free time at home after dark.

While there were many scholarships to investigate how women learn and construct the fear of violence, little research has been done on construction of men’s fear, perhaps because most empirical data show low level of fear of crime among men. In this research, if there is a tendency of showing low level of fear of violence as in other researches, I will try to explain why this is so using the concept of masculinity, which will be discussed later in this chapter. As far as the construction of women’s fear of violence is concerned, I want to draw the attention

of the reader to one of the prominent figures in the women's geography of fear Valentine (1992), who was able to show the main process that generates spatial fear of male violence among women. In her useful analysis, she found out four main information sources which influence women's feelings of danger and how fear is socially constructed. The first one is the ideology of the family and gender division of space which has an implicit message that public space for women is not safe and she better sit at home to be safe; the second is women's common experiences of public space such as street harassment or parental restrictions; the third is the media showing not only the quantity of criminal news, but also bring the picture of spatial context of the attacks. Not only this, but in many cases media either implicitly or explicitly states that woman was responsible for being in that particular time and space and make a warning to other women. And the last one is social contact where your friends, neighbors or work associates either personally experienced violence or they heard from second-hand sources. What is relevant for my analysis in the context of Kyrgyzstan is the ideology of the family and the stereotypes about the gender division of space into private and public, where women perhaps unconsciously learn that public space is not a safe space and in order safely occupy public space, you need one man from all men (Valentine, 1992). Mass media plays an influential role in generating fear. Most often, mass media portray crimes by the level of seriousness: the more serious the crime, there is high probability that it would be reported in the news (Warr, 2000). Although the more serious the crime, the least often it happens in real life. Nevertheless, many people informed by this news coverage about the crime and violence become fearful of particular situations.

When trying to unpack the high level of fear among women, it is important to understand that fear is not an inborn quality and not of genetic code, rather it is socially constructed. Gender socialization cannot be ignored here, because one of the important parts of this socialization is spatiality: where to go, when and with whom (Koskela, 2005). For example, when children are

at age of 10 or 11, they have the similar experience of not going out by themselves alone, but after the age of 11-13; the gender division of space is vivid: parents let boys go out alone, whereas girls are more limited. Most of 'traditional' families, boys socialized as to be fearless, risk-taking, confident, whereas girls, by contrast, learn to avoid risky situations, be fearful and submissive (Fetchenhauer & Buunk, 2005). Because of the intense warnings from parents' side about vulnerability, it may influence on behavior of girls, on the level of fear and on the use of space (Valentine, 1989). What is also interesting in the socialization process, children is mostly influenced not by their parents, but rather by their peers. Fetchenhauer & Buunk (2005) suggested that young men are less fearful than young women because their male peers encourage each other to perform proper masculinity, i.e. taking risks or be fearless. While in contrast, young women encourage each other to be aware of different dangerous situations, crimes and be careful.

While this section discussed how gender influences the level of fear of violence, there are also been done quantitative researches incorporating other categories such as age, class, race (Reid & Conrad, 2004), however qualitative investigation covering all this categories are rare and needs more attention to understand how they influence the level of fear. The next section describes how gender also affects the use of space. Similarly, the same logic of taking into consideration other categories together with gender has to be investigated more qualitatively.

## **1.2 Gender and Space**

What is space? It is not merely a surface, but rather a space where social and spatial domains are closely interconnected and where gender identities are formed by space, and vice versa (Koskela, 1999; 2005). According to Koskela (1999), urban space is formed by gender relations and reproduced in everyday practices. Violence whether attempted or direct, street harassment, and other types of violence which generate women's feeling of danger, reinforces masculine domination of space (Koskela, 1999). During the daytime, the space does not



considered as frightening or unpleasant as it is during the night. By the time, when it is dark outside, women perceive streets as highly sexualized, where they are objects, in contrast to men as subjects (Koskela, 2005).

One of the scholars to whom I am referring in my analysis section is Koskela (1999), who argues that the fear that women exposed to manifested in their exclusion of public spaces. This is happening because of women's unequal status and gender inequality. She argues that fear among women leads them to avoid certain areas in the city or either staying home after dark. Thus, spatial constraints are the result of gender power relations: women who restrict their lives because of fear constantly reminded about their powerless position. Women's decision to stay at home because of fear of victimization also influence on the type of urban space created: their "oppressors" dominate public space and therefore reproduce "masculine domination over space" (Koskela, 1999, p.113). Moreover, violence against women or a threat of violence in public space kept mostly male dominated and heterosexual (Koskela, 1999). Thus women are afraid to go out because if something happens to them, usually it is she who is blamed, because she was not in the right place or was wearing inappropriate dress. Policing women the way they dress reproduces power relations. If they dress "openly" and get harassed, they are told that it is their fault (Koskela, 2005). They are constantly told to wear certain clothes in order to prevent certain crimes, which does not apply to men's audience, although they are most likely to be victims or perpetrator of violence. Most often, women are perceived and taken as commodities in highly heterosexual space. As some criminologist found out, women who went out after a certain hour, continuously perceive themselves in danger and more likely to be attacked by offender (Condon et al, 2007). Women are expected to be fearful when they are outside at night and showing their "boldness" is becoming a taboo (Koskela, 2005, p. 6). If women will overcome their fear and get more confident and courageous, they could "routinize" the space and confidently use the space at anytime and anywhere (Koskela, 2005), and everybody could

equally participate in everyday social activities. According to Valentine (1989), the unequal use of space is “spatial expression of patriarchy” (cited in Pain, 1997, p. 231). Likewise, if the space would be occupied by both female and male it maybe suggested that it is one way for gender equality.

### **1.3 Violence**

Geography of violence against women proposes that women have to be more fearful of violence happening at home and from people they know (Valentine, 1992). Nonetheless, women feel being in danger from strange men and in public space. Similarly, due to the social constructed ideas around masculinity, women perceive strange men as potentially aggressive and powerful, and at the same time, perceive known men as potential defenders. Violence, attempted violence or street harassment on a woman from one man generates the fear of violence from any man (Koskela, 1999). Sexual harassment most often does not take as a crime, but rather as form of “non-criminal street violence” (Koskela, 2005, p. 258). Besides, it also reminds them about their vulnerability and unequal status relatively to men. Such situations construct different perception of the space in comparison to men.

The most important fact about the crime and the use of physical violence is done by men in most of the cases (Newburn & Stanko, 1994). What is also interesting, criminologists define violence only in the confines of criminal statutes, such as force with element of physical or sexual harm, or that there should be a victim or witness who can report on this person, so the case would be considered criminal (Stanko, 1994). What is more disturbing is that the police don’t take every violent case as criminal or as a “real violence” (Stanko, 1994, p.33). Evidence from crime surveys show that men are most likely to be victims of interpersonal violence (masculinity is not considered here) and at the same time least likely to report (even talk) about fear of crime (Stanko, 1994).

Women organize their lives in such a way as to minimize the risk of being victimized by dangerous men. In turn, to explain why and how men engage themselves in violent situations requires investigation of men's structural power and how they negotiate this power with others (men and women) (Stanko, 1994). While many can say that men's violence against women were characterized as "losing control", much of the empirical data state that men's violence against woman was used as a mean of control (Stanko, 1994, p.42). Men's experience of violence in their life is often relegated to their experiences of "normal masculinity". When the violence is used by one man, it is usually to assert his control over other woman. Whereas violence directed to other men, it is to assert his own status in the hierarchies of power (Stanko, 1994, p.43). In the next section, I will talk more deeply how does masculinity can be taken to explain violence and the active use of space among young men and can generate the exclusion of women from public space.

#### **1.4 Normative (Hegemonic) Masculinity**

As I touched slightly about masculinity in previous section, I want to talk more deeply about the concept of masculinity According to Connel and Messerschmidt (2005), hegemonic masculinity is not a role or an identity; it is rather a set of practices/ set of behaviours through which you subordinate and exercise the power over women and other men or other "subordinated" masculinities. Hegemony is understood through looking how particular groups of men locate themselves in the structure of power and how they reproduce certain social (gender) relations that bring about their dominance (Whitehead, 2002). According to Millet, a radical feminist, there are implicit "sexual politics" that men inhabit for keeping already existing power structures and maintaining hegemony over women (In Whitehead, 2002, p.86). Hegemony implies the hierarchy of masculinities as well as control in relation to women, which is considered as an integral part of masculinity (Tosh, 2004). Masculinity is socially constructed through "culture, institutions, and persuasion" (p.832), which means that dominance over other

categories is acquired not only through force, aggression and violence, but also through consent and cultural means such as family, education, state, popular media and so forth. This is evident in the case of women who are afraid of being victimized, and thus restrict their mobility do it on ‘voluntarily’ basis; which can be argued is the outcome of the processes of the masculinity using cultural or ideological means. In different studies hegemonic masculinity is taken as framework through which scholars try to understand the means of men’s dominance over women and how it is achieved. Similarly, I am using this concept as my theoretical tool to explain men’s dominance in the public space in the evening/night time, which largely been overlooked. In sum, in the analysis part, I will also uncover what kind of hegemonic masculinity is most honoured and desired in the context of Bishkek.

The hegemonic masculinity embodies such characteristics as aggression, fearlessness, physical and emotional strength, control, and risk-taking. Prominent authors investigating the concept of masculinity claim that there are multiple and different types of masculinities, however there is one hegemonic masculinity, to which other masculinities strive/struggle for. It means that there are social and cultural hierarchies of masculinities, but hegemonic masculinity dominates. Usually the hegemonic masculinity is the one which is heterosexual. It sustained by institutions and interactions, which means it is beyond individual level. Masculinities has not to be universalized or essentialized, we have to take into account the diversity of masculinities which also include race, class, regions, generation, sexual orientation. Masculinities are not static; they are dynamic and can be changed. To analyze masculinities, we have to learn it through relation to gender. Hegemonic Masculinity is not a self-reproducing pattern, but rather it is a process in which you have to maintain it through the “policing” of men and subordination of women.

In contrast to ‘hegemonic’ masculinity, Bob Connel also introduced the concept ‘subordinated’ masculinities, which are usually oppressed and not welcomed in the society,

depending on different factors, such as sexual orientation, class, race/ethnicity and so forth. The conceptual framework of masculinities can help to unpack male active participation in violent situations and active use of public spaces. In addition it will uncover hidden dimensions of power relations. Considering masculinities will broaden our understanding of violence men commit, and/or understand why men are the first one who initiates violence. Masculinity requires a man to bear in mind that he is protector, the one who is in control (Reid & Konrad, 2004).

Introduced by Brittan (1989), the concept of masculinism is highly connected to ideological dynamics where dominant models of masculinity and heterosexuality become legitimized and unquestioned narratives about gender differences and social reality. Sometimes masculinity and masculinism get confused, whereas the former is regarded very often as an essence of a gender identity, an inborn characteristic (Whitehead, 2002). Brittan (1989) writes:

Masculinism is the ideology that justifies and naturalizes male domination, as such it is the ideology of patriarchy. Masculinism takes it for granted that there is a fundamental difference between men and women, it assumes that heterosexuality is normal, it accepts without question the sexual division of labour, and it sanctions the political and dominant role of men in the public and private spheres (p.4, cited in Whitehead, 2002, p.97).

While masculinity problematizes the “masculine ideology” and argues that the construction of masculinity is the product of historical processes, structures and certain practices, masculinism by contrast, opens the door to think about ideological possibilities within the dominant framework of hegemonic masculinity (Whitehead, 2002). In other words, masculinism can be also taken as a theoretical tool to observe ideological discourses in a particular setting.

Together with masculinity, there are certain “manly virtues” lived by men which varies by time and place. In other words, it can be referred as “normative masculinity” (described by Mosse, 1996) which embodies certain “male codes of honor” (Nagel, 1998, p.245). These virtues include honor, strength, courage, bravery, stoicism, dignity, competitiveness, adventurousness, but not limited to them (Nagel, 1998). In anthropological accounts, the concept of honor often was interrelated with masculinity, as well as authority and status (Peteet, 1994). Such definition of normative masculinity is usually associated with sex role stereotypes and of dominant discourses of what it means to be a man in particular culture. Of course, these views should not be essentialized in any way and we have to remember that there are always multiple masculinities bound up with other categories of identity, who do not follow these codes of honor, however they may be suppressed or “subordinated” in a culture where such ideas are strongly prevalent and reproduced.

### **1.5 Negotiations and strategies**

Liska et al (1982; Liska et al, 1988) stated that the fear of crime greatly affects our quality of life and it has the negative impact on our social life as well as on our health. Starting from psychological effects such as feelings of anxiety and mistrust, avoiding certain places and not participating in social activities, protecting yourself and loved ones through different devices and watch dogs are just only few that come with fear of crime. Fear of crime became a social problem affecting the psychological as well as the social behavior of people. In this thesis I would like to also observe what kind of methods are used among young men and women to negotiate their fear of violence in the public space.

Liska et al (1988) proposed that the fear of crime effect on the two types of constrained behavior: avoidance and defensive behavior. Avoidance behavior is used due to the fear of violence and that is trying to avoid certain places, people try to find safer routes to get home, avoid unsafe areas. Some people even become prisoners of their home. In the same way,

“preventing” strategies include to dress and behave in certain way in order to cope with harassment on the streets (Koskela, 2005). Defensive or protective behavior are those that buy different devices to protect themselves, people who do sports such as wrestling or boxing and go to self-defensive trainings, not walking alone, but with somebody, or using taxis. Liska et al (1988) also found out that actually constrained behavior make people fear more than if they did not protect themselves. Likewise, Brownlow (2005) discussed protective and avoidance strategies, but, in relation to men. He says that for men protective behavior means “control” over situation, which allows them to participate in public space. According to Peteet (1994), control is the absence of “fear of anyone or anything” which is significant in emphasizing “real men” (p.34). And an avoidance strategy is not welcomed among hegemonic masculinity discourse. In his analysis, avoidance strategy is not taken as an option, and in the case of dangerous situation, fear is suppressed and the fearlessness adopted as a more acceptable behavior. However, the most valuable finding was that in comparison with Valentine (1992) where women’s fear of violence was constructed through second-hand resources, which I discussed above, Brownlow (2005) found out that young men spoke from their personal experiences who actually faced violence in their lives.

Day, Stump, & Carreon’s article (2003) “Confrontation and loss of control: Masculinity and men’s fear in public space” is a very interesting research, which found out that public spaces and situations that challenge masculinist identity may actually generate fear. Likewise, the safe places will retain masculine identity. Similarly to Brownlow (2005), the fear of unfamiliar places was due to the need to maintain the control that characterizes masculinism.

The authors argue that achieve control in unfamiliar places is highly difficult where one can get easily lost or where one’s actions can provoke unexpected backlash. Therefore, those men who try to maintain their masculinist identity avoid such unfamiliar places where it is hardly possible to achieve control. Being aware and always keep an eye helps them to maintain

control as it is characterized by masculinism, and in effect, it will preclude from unexpected situations which could challenge their masculine identity. In addition to that, some men said that those who engage in confrontation in public space, they consider them as “lacking emotional maturity” (Day et al., 2003, p. 318). In what follows is that a “mature” masculine man does not involve himself in conflict situation in public space given every opportunity. Such conclusion would be taken into account while analyzing my own findings, whether it supports or on contrary, refuse their findings.

In the case of women, as it was discussed above, the fear of violence constrains women’s behavior more than men’s. Women employ more of an avoidance strategy. It also worth noting, that crime prevention strategies are mostly directed to women: how and when walk in the streets, lock their doors, use only public transport and other, while for young men, there are less such crime prevention strategies, although they are direct victims of interpersonal violence (Stanko, 1994). The issue of clothing is also very important: women are constantly reminded about their clothes as to avoid any crime, and in this way they reproduce gendered power relations by messages of wearing “appropriate” clothing (Koskela, 2005). Women who are afraid to go out because of fear being victimized take blame on themselves, because she was not in the “right” place or was wearing inappropriate dress, which is the result of unequal power relations.

In this chapter, the main theoretical insights of the relationship between gender, crime/violence and space have been reviewed. In the analysis part, I will be using the concepts that were mentioned here, especially the concept of normative masculinity will be considered largely in my analysis. The chapter that follows moves on to consider the methodological part that has been used to gather empirical data.



## **Chapter 2: Methodology**

In the following chapter, I will describe what I did during my field work in Bishkek, how I collected the data, what methods I use, what were the limitations of the research as well as ethical issues.

### **2.1 Data Collection**

Prior to the research investigation and going for the field research to Bishkek, I created guiding questionnaire which was based on certain readings and theories about the fear of crime, violence, and the use of space (the sample of questionnaire is attached in Appendix I). Based on the relevant literature review, I came up with certain questions which would help me to answer my main research question: “What are the narratives about fear of violence in public space among young women and men and what meaning they attribute to it?” The interview tests had also been done among representatives of the study to ensure that prepared questions were clear and unambiguous to respondents and whether I had somewhat a similar response. After the preliminary interview questionnaire had been checked, I clarified my hypotheses which are: men’s behavior and active use in public spaces as well as lack fear of violence is one way of doing masculinity. Alternatively, women’s passive participation in public space in Bishkek as well as having fear of violence is due to the unequal power relations with men and of patriarchal culture of Kyrgyzstan.

The next step was sampling procedures, which I will talk more deeply below. All interviews were done on face to face basis on the campus of their universities. Interviews were conducted between April 13 and May 2 in the capital city of Bishkek. After gathering all the

data, interviews had been transcribed and analyzed, and will be discussed more deeply in the rest of this paper. All the interviews, except the one, have been done in Russian language.<sup>3</sup>

During the data collection, there were more responses from women's side rather than men's. Moreover, during the interviews itself, young men were reluctant or hesitant to talk about fear of violence, however all of them feel confident to tell about violent situations in their lives. Whereas young women tend to give easily information about their life-stories, young men, on contrary were more passive, therefore I would constantly repeat the same question to young men to get more information or elaborate on the same topic more. In contrast with male respondents, young women were willing to give me any information and even were telling me that they are "boring" respondents, because nothing "violent" have never happened in their lives. In addition to the responses, women were also hesitant to talk about sexual violence: they either were whispering the word "sexual/sex" or made it seem obvious that the only crime/violence that can happen to them is sexual assault.

In addition to that, the way of talking among young men were slightly different from young women. They were more likely to talk with slangs and different "jail" concepts. One of my respondents called it as a "thieves' language".<sup>4</sup>

## 2.2 Sampling and Methods

The goal of the current research was to collect narratives about fear of violence in public space. To do this, I used qualitative research method in understanding fear-related production of space. There has been a lot of quantitative research done in investigating the level of fear of violence among different groups, yet "mental and social processes" behind fear was not fully uncovered (Koskela, 1999, p.111). I used Convenient Random Sampling. The sampling was

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<sup>3</sup> One interview has been done in English language, because respondent was confident in speaking either English or Kyrgyz. Because I have bad speaking skills in Kyrgyz language, I preferred take an interview in English language

<sup>4</sup> "yazyk blata"

done in urban setting, which means that findings not necessarily can be applicable in non-urban settings. Second characteristic of the sample is quite similar to all Bishkek college students, coming from different regions, renting the flats in Bishkek, attending similar universities, having the common cultural background etc. I chose in-depth interviews, because I think interviews were appropriate method in my research study, because it would help me to understand the perceptions, narratives and opinions of participants on particular phenomena, plus eye contact was a good method to see their reactions. It is also a good opportunity to provide complete and accurate data to my research and it gives much of details. I think interviewing is the best way to know what is in the mind of people and understand as well as to explain fear-related issues. I chose the semistandardized interview, because it is convenient way to know what you will ask and it gives the opportunity to probe more deeply. Therefore, the interviews were not strictly structured to encourage respondents to cover the possible themes in this research. This study is based on in depth interviews (from 30 to 1.5 hours) among college students ranging from the age of 18 – 23. The population from which I draw my sample were college students from different universities. A total of 26 interviews were gathered: 12 males and 14 females. As far as ethnicity is concerned, one male respondent was Uighur, the other was Korean, but both lived their whole life in Kyrgyzstan. One female respondent was mestizo of Uzbek/Russian/Tatar and the other female respondent was Kazakh from Kazakhstan, other female respondents were ethnically Kyrgyz. Other variables such as age, economic situation, race, nationality or ethnicity was not deeply investigated, because the main focus was the general experiences of public space in Bishkek and gender differences in experience of space. However, it might be included in the further researches for more comprehensive analysis. The main themes of my research were: fear, violence, public space, crime.

All students were enrolled in college, almost all of them did not work and one of female respondents was married and was expecting a child. Almost half of the respondents were from

different regions of Kyrgyzstan and either live with their relatives or rent the apartments/live in the dormitory in Bishkek. In addition, they live in different districts in Bishkek. Young men in my research were more likely to go out often than female. During the interviews, male respondents talked about violence in public spaces and about “philosophy” of street culture, whereas women tended to talk more about the fear of violence, what kind of situations were particularly frightening, coping strategies, and other details. In general, participants reflected on memories of violent experience in public space.

### **2.3 Ethical consideration**

People in my research were all well informed about my study, followed by informed consent forms, which is attached in the Appendix II. Here were some steps that I used in order to avoid unethical issues: first step in my in-depth interview I represented myself as a student of CEU (no misrepresentation) and informing them about my research. I asked them to give me an interview and they agreed, everything was on voluntarily basis. I asked them if they (subjects in the research) want their names to be anonymous or by first name. I promised them confidentiality and whether I can quote them, on which I got permission. The interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the participants, and later transcribed.

### **2.4 The limitations of the research**

There are several limitations for the present research. One of the limitations of the research was the passive participation and responses from male students in the research. As it was originally planned, I wanted to focus on one university, to make the research more solid, however the response rate was not very active. Consequently, due to time limits, I start to interview students from other universities, which did not affect the research as a whole. Moreover, it allowed the heterogeneity of people coming from different regions and different backgrounds.

The other limitation was that of my gender. As Day et al (2003) noticed, the gender and identity of the interviewer shaped the information men provided during the interviews as well as how respondents presented themselves as men. Because one of the themes (sensitivity of the topic) of my research was about fear of violence, none of the male respondents claimed to be fearful of violence in public space, although I tried not to ask them directly.

The lack of generalizability and representability is the other limitation for this research. The sample size is small and it was taken from a particular geographic area, i.e. Bishkek. Future research involving a national sample would be a more representative. In addition to that, I had only 26 in depth interviews, it is still not enough to generalize for the whole population in Bishkek, taking into account other dimensions such as class, ethnicity, nationality, etc., however due to the qualitative analytical techniques, it is less problematic than if quantitative analysis have been used. The study would have been more interesting and convincing if it had included all other categories to fully explain and understand the fear of violence among particular group of people and how does it affect the use of space in Bishkek. The complexity of intersectionality incorporated in this paper would be hardly attainable in the single paper and due to the time limits. Future research including other categories of analysis such as age, ethnicity/nationality, sexual orientation, class, marriage status, disability, linguistic identity, and so on would benefit from such data.

Despite these limitations, the research question has been answered. In the next chapter, I will present findings of my empirical research and the analysis of main findings using the concept of hegemonic masculinity.

### Chapter 3: Findings and Discussion

*“If you would listen to me, seems like my whole life is violence”*

(Islam, 21, in interview)

Above quotation was narrated by a male college student (raised in the family of criminals), whose life is rotated around violence. Not only him, but each other male respondent dealt with violent situations as well as different types of crime such as robbery, murder, beating. What is most interesting, men still do not seem to be afraid going out or they do, but they do not show it, whereas women, who told me that there was no direct physical violence in their lives, seem to show more anxiety being outside after certain time. In this chapter, I will discuss how this violence and crimes dealt in everyday life among female and male youth. I will proceed to the analysis of interviews and narratives regarding the use of space, fear and violence through the gender lenses. Particularly I will refer to the concepts of masculinity or masculinism, gender socialization, unequal power relations as my framework to explain how particular groups of people behave in certain situations.

Before proceeding to the analysis, the hypotheses stated for this research are that men's behavior and active use in public spaces as well as lack fear of violence is one way of performing masculinity. Alternatively, women's passive participation in public space in Bishkek as well as having fear of violence narrated as the unequal gender relations with men and of patriarchal culture of Kyrgyzstan. I am particularly looking at violence, fear, and use of space, however during my investigation of this concepts there were many other interesting findings too, which I will touch very briefly.

### 3.1 Normalization of Violence and Street Harassment

In this section of the chapter, I will analyze how violence among men and street harassment among women are narrated. Furthermore, I will explain such normalization through the concept of masculinity and unequal status of women in the society. Among all twelve male respondents, each of them experienced physical violence in their life, beginning from the school years, for some even earlier. As it was narrated by respondents: racketeering, “dedovshchina” (hazing), bullying, beating, fighting and taking away of cellphones were common practice during schools years. Male respondents in this study considered this type of violence as rites of passages to manhood which is central in the construction of masculine identity. Looking back when the violence was on the peak of their lives, and even today, male respondents reflect on physical violence as a “norm” in their lives or as a “ritual” that each boy have to go through. Consider for example Maksat’s narrative about the violence:

*I think every boy who respects himself goes through some kind of baptism. Let’s say somebody wants to humiliate you or you got in some kind of skirmish, the safest way would be to defend your honor, even if you’ll lose, but in no way run away from there as a coward. Of course you can ran away, but skirmish will always be there unless you’ll be able to defend yourself, unless you won’t show your strength (Maksat, 21, in interview).*

The key words here are honor and strength which are considered as “manly virtues”, where cowardness is not acceptable behavior and not a masculine trait. Thus, violence and manliness is almost go hand in hand. Being exposed to violence is a part of “normal masculinity” (Stanko, 1994). Not only, young men think so, but also, female respondents consider it to be a normal part of men’s lives. It is not a surprise that violence and men are closely interconnected, whereas the violence becomes part of the construction of masculinity. Such concepts as honor and reputation were often used during interviews with male respondents. Male honor is different from female honor, whereas male honor in this context depends on bravery and forceful response to insults (Nagel, 1998; Spierenburg, 1998). Passivity is not acceptable in the case of violent confrontations and is taken as a feminine trait. In this case, masculinity is highly

connected to physical bravado (Spierenburg, 1998). This also shows the struggle for the status and respect among other men and asserting one's power in the hierarchy of power (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Day et al., 2003; Stanko, 1994).

Overall, these cases narrated in a way that for young men, violence became so naturalized that even during interviews they were not able to recall the stories about violence or they could, but it was more like "everyday" story which would not be interesting to tell. Public spaces provide opportunities for young men to display fearlessness, competition, and physical strength through confrontations with others. Male respondents would tell the stories of violence only the one which were the most memorable and "unusual" for them (whether they were beaten or they beat somebody, or somebody got serious injury). Men also tend not to talk about it with anybody except their male friends, where they tend to discuss how they get into fight, where they get injured, showing marks on the body and so forth. This usually expressed not in the form of complaint, but rather to reassert their masculine identity: "empower the self and inform an agency of resistance" (Peteet, 1994, p.40). Not complaining about being a victim of physical violence is still prevalent and attached to the common understanding of manliness that "boys don't cry" (Goodey, 1997). Consider this example:

*I never told my family that I have been beaten. If I did come home beaten, I would always say that we were riding something or playing with my friends. For me it is a shame to say that I was beaten, because as a future head of the family, breadwinner, and so on, it is not proper to say that I lost somewhere (Leonid, 21, in interview).*

Leonid inexpressiveness of fear is an essential to the male power and it stands against other subordinated masculinities, girls and women in the hierarchy of power relations (Goodey, 1997). Showing your fearlessness is part and parcel of hegemonic masculinity. In order to maintain control and power, they tend not to talk about their feelings of vulnerability and fear. Thus, displaying fearlessness is a tool to avoid being labeled as weak or "sissy" (Goodey, 1997). To be in "control" of emotions and perform fearlessness is one of the characteristics of



hegemonic masculinity. Neither would they go to the law enforcement nor in any other state institutions in case of fighting or being beaten by a one or a group of people. Such situations were usually resolved between these two men and in no way involving police, so to say in a “manly way”. Only in severe cases, when there are serious wounds or serious robbery. But in the situation where there is a fight between the two groups and one was beaten, calling police is not compatible with the “codes of honor”. There are different reasons for that, for instance, the police do not do their jobs properly or you would not be able to revenge as you wished. But the dominant discourse among young men was of “real men” don’t do that, therefore it is considered as not a “manly act”. The narrative by Azim also tightly connects to the idea of authority and respect:

*In such instances, we usually don’t go to police, because let’s say if our side went to police, then we would be called snitches among our circle of friends, among other districts and of course our authority would be damaged. And in addition we would get in trouble from our ‘seniors’<sup>5</sup> because it is not acceptable (Azim, 23, in interview).*

Rather than going to police, young men tend to “solve” such problems themselves and “set a meeting”<sup>6</sup>. Even when they lose, they tend to keep it to themselves and acknowledge that their opponent is stronger than you. Thus also going to police will emphasize your powerlessness and would be considered as a failure “taking up the challenge” (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 11 cited in Peteet, 1994, p.41). This challenge (in this case confrontation) opens up an opportunity for male youth to prove and assert their belonging to the world of men (Peteet, 1994). Stoicism which is an important attribute of “normative masculinity” performed as most acceptable behavior. According to narratives by Maksat and Azim, they position themselves in the hierarchy of masculinities. For example Maksat, embodies a hegemonic masculinity as being strong, fearless

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<sup>5</sup> “starshak”

<sup>6</sup> “zabit strely”

and in control. In case of Azim, he embodies complicit masculinity in relation to men who are older than him and more respectful.

It is a thin line between violence and crime: if you don't give what the other boy is asking for, you will get punched. Now, being as college students and living in the capital city of Bishkek, the quantity of fighting (and violence) decreased moderately due to the fact that many of them consider themselves mature for such confrontations, however violence still persist in their lives. In addition, many young men told the violence that was happening in their lives were mostly "childish" and now they do not go to fight on every opportunity, thus constructing "mature masculinity" (Day et al., 2003).

Whereas, each of male respondents in my research experienced direct physical violence, other fourteen female respondents never had or either did not tell me about it. Female respondents would often repeat "I heard" and for the question "From whom/where?" they would tell me either from parents, friends, news or social media. Female respondents seem to talk and think more about violence in their everyday life and about different precautions. The data reported here appear to support Valentine's (1992) argument that women's perceptions of danger based on stereotypes about the gender division of space, the media, and social contacts. Such information sources have a great impact on the feeling of safety and overall fear of public space. On the other hand, sexual harassment on the streets, similarly to men's violence, also became normalized, that female respondents hardly could recall one detailed case, although they said it happens all the time. In addition to it, most of these women ignore those men, explaining that it would be worse if they will say something back to them. This in turn, brings back about the "lower" status women occupy in patriarchal society of Kyrgyzstan. Their responses to harassment in public spaces did not vary much and was faced with ignorance, which could possibly be one of the ways of resistance. Consider example of street harassment of Chynygul:

*It happens to most of the girls, and not necessarily happening at night, it happens during the day. And to my surprise, recently I was walking with my female friend, they saw that I was pregnant, but nevertheless they bothered us. I think this is something that goes beyond upbringing. Another thing if we were wearing heels or would have been wearing short skirts and somehow attract their attention, but NO, we were dressed very modest, and yet they still yelled at us, whistled and frightened us. In such cases, I never guided by my emotions, of course we became very sad, angry, could say something back, but assessing the situation at that time, we just needed to calm down, because firstly, they were more than two us, and second, we would still not be able to talk back against bunch of people there (Chynygyul, 21, in interview).*

All of the girls agree that sexual harassment is not necessarily happens during the night, but happens during the day as well. The case reported here illustrates the unequal gender relations. Such cases of sexual harassment in public spaces remind women of sexual danger, and consequently affecting their fear of violence in public space and not being able freely move around the city. Even experiencing such kind of harmless violence increases the feeling of vulnerability and does affect overall women's mobility. Chynygyul reflected on the way she and her female friends were "appropriately" dressed, which in her narrative, should not have been caused unnecessary attention and above all she was pregnant. This evidence suggests that women does not necessarily depend on women's outfits and can be harassed no matter how they dressed. Indeed, female respondents tend to pay a great deal on the way they dress, the way they behave and how people think of them, so to say, not to earn the reputation of a "bad girl". In that way, many young women reproduce oppressive gendered power relations policing their clothing and behavior (Koskela, 2005). All of my respondents told that women who were dressed "provocatively" is responsible for attracting man's attention or being sexually harassed by men. Thus, there is a high emphasis on policing women in order to prevent certain crimes, and at the same time creating the space solely in heterosexual terms. Similarly, men make responsible women or blame them themselves for being sexually or verbally abused because they dressed "too sexy". Young men, in turn commodify, objectify and perceive women as the "Other", who is not supposed to be in the public space, especially during the night. This is done

through the verbal and visual harassment to “remind” women of their “lower” status in patriarchal society (Hilinski, 2011). Consider for instance two examples from young men:

*We can say that women are objects (oops sorry), a person, on whom different sort of freaks make a hunt. She is the object of sexual fantasies. Anything can happen (Jekshen, 22).*

*There was no fight, because usually, it is not acceptable to fight over the girl. We talked for some time, shook our hands and dispersed (Azim, 23).*

Women are represented as an image of sexuality and commodity. By the time, when it is dark outside, women perceive streets as highly sexualized spaces, where they are objects of male gaze (Koskela, 2005). In general, many young women generate the idea of victim-blaming, that they would take a responsibility for being in the wrong place, in the wrong time, in the wrong clothes, and so on. Many of them recall Kyrgyz society as conservative and traditional, therefore young women, under the pressure of society, reinforce and comply with the idea of a “woman’s place at home” and most of female respondents do not resist to this social structure. Men, also support this “women -private” and “men-public” dichotomy. Most of the respondents regard the reason for violence or sexual harassment toward women explained through the “wrong” behavior, including clothes, lifestyle, bad habits such as drinking or smoking, etc. All these restrictions on women display unequal status of women in comparison to men and due to the relatively “lower” status in the society.

Regarding the reasons for violence among boys is completely random and various, such as accidentally touching with shoulders with the other man or just being not from the same region/village/district as the offender and so on. Due to the hostility between the north and the south in Kyrgyzstan and the high emphasis on regionality of people, it serves as a reason for the violent acts and at the same time can be resolved immediately for the same reason. In either way, the problem is solved in a “manly” way. If a young man understood his mistake, they will talk and disperse. However if not, they will fight. If one group/person would be beaten up and want a revenge, they arrange a meeting in quiet place, where they gather as many people as

they can and do the same: they talk, if the person acknowledges his mistake, the group disperse or the other option, “one on one”<sup>7</sup> fight, when two people from the different groups decide to fight and whoever wins, the authority of that person and his position in the hierarchy of power increases and respected among other men. The evidence based on these interviews suggests that men stress more on “how rather than on what men do” (Peteet, 1994, p.34). In sum, violence in the lives of men narrated as “justified” and affirmed in the world of men and performed as a “normative masculinity” (Nagel, 1998). In case of young women, the violence is not significant in the construction of femininity: “It does not reproduce or affirm aspects of female identity, not does it constitute a rite of passage into adult female status” (Peteet, 1994, p. 44).

### 3.2 Territorialization of safety

In this section of the thesis, I would like to talk about districts<sup>8</sup> in Bishkek, the use of space and the feeling of safety. For women, there is a big difference between day and night: during the day they are active users of public spaces, whereas at night it comes to minimum. Nighttime and darkness is what makes many women in my research feel uncomfortable to going out. It is argued however that not the lack of light makes women anxious, but the social dimension of it, what is happening there and how people behave (Koskela, 1999). Men “flaneur” relatively more in comparison with women, but not alone and mainly they do it in their own districts. Each time, when I was taking interviews from young men and women, I was fascinated (and enlightened) by the fact that not only the experience of space in Bishkek among women is different from men (although I do not want to essentialize the gender difference and there are many other intersections of identity that could influence the overall experience of space), but also, by the fact, that young men have a whole set of “unwritten rules” or “ethics of the street” on how to behave in public spaces. In other words, it could also be called the

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<sup>7</sup> “odin na odin”

<sup>8</sup> “raiony”

“microculture of masculinity” where men affirm their respect, authority and honor. Some of this “district rules” that I was told are:

- if a boy walks with a girl, you do not touch him
- you do not go to the militia in case of fighting with other boys
- it is not acceptable to fight over a girl
- you do not leave your friends in trouble
- you do not steal from your own people
- always tell the truth

Such discourse was persistent among all male respondents and all were aware of these rules. These are the means by which young men mark their identities. If you do not comply with these rules or resist this system, it becomes a matter of losing your status, respect and authority among other boys and among your own circle of friends and acquaintances, which in turn affects your status in the hierarchy of power and questions your belonging to the community. According to Whitehead (2002), in this case, the discourse that is prevalent among male youth is much stronger and more powerful than the physical oppression (p.108). I think it would be safe to say that through these practices and certain forms of behavior, Kyrgyz hegemonic masculinity is constructed. All male interviewees tend to comply with this “codes of conduct”, which are qualified as a manly.

In the section that follows, it will be discussed how spaces are constructed as safe. Territorialization of safety for men depends highly on their familiarity of the district, the quantity of friends or acquaintances there and the region they came from, whereas for women it is just home which they consider the safest. In comparison with men, women in general were afraid to go out after certain time, and they rarely mentioned that they were afraid of being lost or being fearful of unfamiliar places as it was often mentioned in the narrations of young men. Consider Azim’s response on the feeling of safety:

*I feel comfortable in my district (Vostok 5), because mainly Uighurs lives there. Vostok 5 is Uighur district, everywhere my people. I can easily go out at 2 or 4 at night. I am not even thinking that somebody can touch me, because I have friends there. In between there is such district “Karpinka”, which was famous for its criminality in 70s. It used to dominate other districts in Bishkek. Fortunately, I have many friends from there and I have never had any misunderstandings (Azim, 23, in interview).*

In the case of Azim, who is ethnically Uighur, he feels safe in the district where not only his friends live, but also occupied by other Uighurs too. As he also said, after the 2010 revolution and the ethnic conflict in the south of Kyrgyzstan, he felt more unsafe being in the public space due to the high rate of violence directed toward people of other ethnicities. Likewise, Nafisa, who is ethnically mixed of Uzbek/Russian/Tatar, was also afraid to go out after this ethnic conflict. It is almost certain that such factors as age, ethnicity and gender influence on the perceived risk which in turn affects our perception of safety. In case of Azim, he feels more safe being on his district where there is more Uighurs. This narrative contrast to Nafisa:

*First of all, I am afraid that I will be raped, let them steal, but not rape. That’s why I try to stay away from trouble and come home before 10 maximum (Nafisa, 19, in interview).*

In the case of Nafisa, she felt safer at home. Almost for each young woman, irrespective of ethnic background and most of whom live with their parents, responded that they feel safe at home. In both cases, gender along with ethnicity may influence to the feeling of safety and if looking deeper on the intersection of gender and ethnicity, we can see analyze the relationship between the production of space and production of power. During the interview, Azim narrated that he looks more Kyrgyz and physically capable to defend himself, acknowledging that this gives him more confidence (privilege) to be in the public spaces. This is worth to point out that in most of the cases we do not acknowledge our privileges of being of certain gender or class or ethnicity or simply being of certain body complexion and take all these categories for granted. In fact, among all male respondents, only one reflected on his social position in the society. In fact, many male respondents are unconscious of their gendered status and how does it shape their experience of space.

The other issue that was constantly narrated among male respondents was the quantity of friends which not only help to decrease one's vulnerability to danger, but was empowering as well. Consider this narrative by Beksultan:

*There was a big company of friends; we were celebrating Birthday in the night club. When I have many friends with me, you feel so confident in yourself and some even provoke the fight themselves, and this was our case (Beksultan, 21, in interview).*

Beksultan's case demonstrates how group of young men in public space may bolster one's masculine identity. While for women, male friends/family member, taken as a protection or an "escort", in the case of young men, being in the groups of friends was more of a being part of a "gang" (Day et al., 2003). The feeling of confidence was due to "tough" presence of other members of the group with similar characteristics such as physical strength, bolstering one's masculinity. Thus, it can be argued that the quantity of male friends not only gives the confidence of protection from danger, but also provides an image of powerful and invincible man (Day et al., 2003).

Another question that arises, how are these borders constructed in a way that people identify it as their district? And what makes them feel safe there? First of all, this is a district where they live. Second, the quantity of male friends who knows you and you equally know them. What is interesting here also, the fact that both men and women stress on the "contingent"<sup>9</sup> of certain people or in other words, a social group who embody certain characteristics which perceived negatively. These characteristics narrated as coming from other (rural) region without proper manners, lacking good Russian language skills, and behaving not in "civil" (narrated in interviews) or urban manners. The later was emphasized very often during the interviews and was constructed as "rural other" (Flynn & Kosmarskaya, 2014), followed by expressing feeling of "discomfort" in certain districts in Bishkek which supposedly occupied

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<sup>9</sup> "kontingent"



by these groups. As one of my respondents said, they are not “urbanized” yet. Often, male respondents would say that they would avoid going there.

*I think such districts as Ak Orgo, Pishpek are criminal districts. My friends always got in trouble there. How it usually happens among rurals in Ak Orgo: people walk in the streets, this and that, where are you from, do you have this, if not they punch you into the eye. This is how it happens usually. (Akim, 20, in interview)*

*I wish I can run on ‘Moloday Gvardiya’, but I know for sure, that there is a dense concentration of people from different regions, and there are many crimes happening there (Aigul, 20, in interview)*

This is evident in case of young man Akim and young woman Aigul, who both emphasized that districts inhabited by “rural others”, defined in terms of their region, class, appearance, are deemed criminal. Interestingly enough, some of my respondents, originally, are not from the city, they were too newcomers some time ago, however they uphold this discourse of “rural other”. According to my respondents, those people who came from different regions and villages are different from them in a way they speak, dress, and behave are narrated as “uncivil”. Young men recall several districts which are far from the center or outskirts of the city as the most criminal, because “these” people live there. People coming from villages to the city are mostly working or lower class people. Young men don’t feel safe there due to the fact that they can be robbed, however they did not say that they were afraid of them. For women, the fear lies on either be robbed and/or fear of being sexually abused. In this case, as I was mentioned above, for men their own district feels safer than any other, and for women the home considered as a safe space to be. Although young men in this study, did not directly recall being afraid to be in that places or saying the word “I am afraid”, instead words such as “unfamiliar” or “unknown” were used to specify fearful places and most often they would say that they just don’t like being there. The fact that men feel safe in their own district and not in any other (unfamiliar) place is due to the one of the qualities of masculinism – to be in control of the situation and to be aware of the situation (Brownlow, 2005). In places which are unfamiliar to them or where there are “rural others”, from whom you can expect anything, to be “in control” is hard to achieve.

Therefore, young men who want to maintain their masculine identity will avoid such places where it would be difficult to be in control (Brownlow, 2005). Similarly important is the region of the country where the young man came from as well as the district of the city where he lives.

Consider this example:

*It is very important from which district you are from, because let's say I have friends from 'Karpinka'. If somebody would want to take something from me, he would already feel afraid because 'Karpinka' has a very influential criminal status from the past. And that is very very important. Or you let's say "I am from 'Derjinka', my 'bro'<sup>10</sup> this and this". He can ask you to call him and you do and give the phone to this guy. My bro says, yes this is my man from my district and that's it, the conflict is settled (Azim, 23, in interview).*

In this case, "bros" play an important role; people or authorities of a you district, that in case of offense can stand up for you. That is why some young men ask "do you know this and this person", because nobody wants to deal with an authority or a person who has a valuable social status. In this narrative we can trace the hierarchy of masculinities, which in this case, the position of the "bro" in the hierarchy of power depends on age factor and physical strength (this needs more investigation on how one's authority is legitimized in the hierarchy of power in the context of Bishkek). Through the narratives, it was found that the elder the man the more respected he is. Physical strength is also a strong marker in the hierarchy of masculinities. Borders of the district are supported by the certain number of people who have high status among other, which was earned through the violence. The violence becomes the language of communication and hierarchy.

In sum, interviewees did name some of the districts that they think are criminal, which were mostly outskirts of the city. However, male respondents would say that if they had to go there they would, but if they do not need to go there, they would not. The question that can be raised here, whether they go there not because they are not afraid, but whether "microculture of masculinity" pressures them to go, otherwise they would be called "cowards", which are not

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<sup>10</sup> "bratan"

compatible with being a “real man” (Nagel, 1998). Fear of being accused of cowardice what pulls young men to go and fight for their friends. In this case, discourses which are surrounded around the codes of manhood are very powerful than the direct coercion. According to Whitehead (2002) “the masculine subject is not a ‘free subject’ in any pure, humanistic or spiritual sense, but is subjected to the disciplinary conditions elementary to discourse” (p.110), which means that young men in this study uphold “masculine ideology” and engage themselves in the masculine discourses in order to validate their identity. For women, the quantity of (female) people outside is a major denominator of the safety in the public space, following the lighting and the time of the day. It seems that the fear of violence among women is equated to the fear of men.

### **3.3 Fear(lessness) of violence and the use of space**

In this section I will analyze fear or fearlessness of violence in public space and how does it affect overall participation in public space. There are distinct differences in fear of violence between women and men in public spaces. I argue that this difference could be explained in the framework of hegemonic masculinity and gender socialization. For the question ‘Is fear for safety in public space a big problem for you?’, all twelve interviewees answered No, although each of them have experienced violence in their life, beginning from school till now in public spaces. In addition to that, they admit that Bishkek is not safe. By contrast, women openly discussed their fears being in public space, especially during evening and night time.

The lack of fear among men was narrated as being physically strong and tough. Almost each of them was confident in their abilities to protect themselves and capable enough to fight back. Some of them particularly did such defensive sports as boxing and sambo<sup>11</sup>, and some do

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<sup>11</sup> Act of fight involving special techniques

workouts to “build muscles”. For those young men, sports were narrated not as a recreational activity, but rather as a way to protect and be able to stand for themselves. Likewise, many male respondents recall being vulnerable and fearful when they were either young and was not “strongly enough” to stand for themselves.

*In the childhood I was afraid, now I am not. As a kid, my cellphone was taken away sometimes. Now, I am confident and do sports, I can give a guarantee that I can stand either for myself or for someone (Ruslan, 19, in interview).*

Indeed, male narratives about fear of violence most often were relegated to the age factor as a signifier of fear. Having been exposed to violence as a teenager, male respondents describe this as a process of becoming a man, transitioning from non-childlike to the male adulthood (Goodey, 1997). As it was discussed above, this process also can be viewed as a right to passage to the world of manhood – being physically stronger and showing less fear. Thus, showing fearlessness is a reflection of their gender and age (along with other factors such as ethnicity, class, able-bodiedness). And for example, in case of Azim and Nafisa described above and who belongs to ethnic minority, ethnicity plays an important factor in the perception of fear. What follows that those young men being aware that they might encounter and be victims of “crime in the street” prove one’s fearlessness as men. It can be added that fearlessness and being able to face violence without fear was also inscribed by their elders and was taken as a ritual which every boy have to undertake. Compare for example two narratives, one by young man Islam and one by young woman Aigul, whose narratives about fear of violence are different

*They would made us fight, it was fun for them, for us boys, it was needed (Islam, 21, in interview).*

*I feel like our society knows that it is dangerous here, because from our early ages we were told that not to go outside at night, do not do certain things, do not talk with certain people. I don’t think it is everywhere like this (Aigul, 20, in interview).*

In case of Aigul, she was socialized always to be aware of her vulnerable position and being fearful, whereas Islam was taught from early ages about violence, to be ready to cope with

situations that involved violence and express fearlessness. It can be seen from these two narratives, that vulnerability is deeply connected with gender (Sandberg & Tollefsen, 2010). Violence is taken as a male action only and part of normative masculinity, which shape men's experiences and perception of fear in public space (Sandberg & Tollefsen, 2010). Consequently, fear and vulnerability is not compatible with the dominant discourses of masculinity.

Similarly, young men would also say that for women it is not safe at all to walk alone, but it also depends on time, the way she dresses, the way she behaves and her lack of physical strength. All male respondents agree that for women night Bishkek is not safe and it is better for her either to sit at home after certain time or be accompanied by the man.

*It is better to stay at home after 12, because there are so many alcoholics out there. There are also many drunk drivers who have a big desire to pick up a girl. They can easily use physical violence, put her into the car and take her somewhere. But what should men be afraid of? That some girls will catch us and take away somewhere? In general, boys are stronger than girls, and besides many do sports. (Leonid, 21, in interview)*

Through such narratives, young men constructed their masculinity in opposition to feminine traits such as lack of physical strength and fearfulness. In doing so, male respondents reinforce their masculine identities build on the perception of women as being weak and having high risk to be victimized by “other” men in the public space. In this study, young men presented “chivalrous masculinity” in contrast to “badass masculinity”, where the latter usually performed in the presentation of other men and the former performed usually to the audience of women (Day, 2001). It can be argued that due to my gender as female and by constantly repeating about woman's vulnerability in the public space, male respondents presented the picture of fearless man. Thus, emphasizing that some places can be dangerous only for women, inhabited by drunk men or drunk drivers, and not for men, enables young men to perform “chivalrous masculinity” (Day, 2001).

As for female respondents themselves, they were more open about their fear in public spaces and without any hesitation talked about situation when they felt most vulnerable. Across all responses from women's side, there were common themes about fear in public space. Furthermore, there was considerable difference between female and male "talking" about fear, as if they already talked about it many times. Indeed, young women told that they constantly hear and talk about their safety with their friends and family irrespective of ethnic or age factors, alongside with experiencing street harassment. In that manner, respondents reproduce certain gender ideas about femininity and masculinity through their narratives. As I mentioned above, women never talked about being physically victimized in their lives, thus, their fear of violence was constructed through parental and friends' warnings as well as media, which in turn, have a strong impact on the perception of danger. Female respondents, who live with their parents, displayed more fear than those who live with their friends. However, those female students who are not living with their parents, recalled situations when they just arrived to the city, they were constantly called by their parents, asking where they are, what they are doing and asking call them back when they will arrive home. Consider for example narrative by Aigul:

*I feel like we talk about safety all the time, especially with my family. It is everlasting problem. My parents always worry, they think Bishkek is like Boston or Brooklyn, where firefights happening. We also talk with my girlfriends all the time. For example, we say to each other not to stay too late, if you will, warn somebody about it or tell me and we will go together. If there is some kind of an event, we always think how we will get home or make sure we will finish by certain time (Aigul, 20, in interview).*

Just like in Aigul case, parents engender the feeling of being fearful and vulnerable in public space into their daughters. As a result it greatly affects their behavior and use of space (Valentine, 1992). Not only this, Aigul is also constantly talks and warned by her friends about violence in public space, automatically making her feel more conscious of possibility of being victimized when being alone in public space. Consequently, they are encouraged to perceive home as a "haven of safety" (Valentine, 1992, p. 24). The social production of fear from the

parents instructions and daily warnings from friends and other people's side assume that women will have to blame themselves if something happens, that they were not in the right place or places "not suitable for women" (Koskela, 2005, p.262). Consider Altynai's example:

*I try not to go out by myself. If I decide to go, then it will depend on me. Where and with whom I will be. So, it would be my fault if something will happen to me at 11 in the night. Where did you go in such late night, one, and all by yourself?* (Altynai, 19, in interview).

Thus, women's fear and consequently their use of space constrained and controlled by the discourse of "victim blaming". Most young women reproduce the notion that "good girls" do not go out after certain time. Likewise to the codes of conduct among men, there are different codes for women, which legitimize gender differences in behavior. Thus, women's narratives were discussed in the framework of the gender division of space and constant reminder that public space is certainly not the place to be for women, at least not without the men's protection (Wesely & Gaarder, 2004). According to Koskela (1999), fear of violence is not only due to the "implicit sexual politics" (Whitehead, 2002, p.86) of men who tries to control and dominate women, but rather the result of the "complex processes of power and gender relations" (p. 121), which is produced and sustained by other institutions such as family, media, school.

The other issue that constantly came up across interviews was fear of unknown men in the public space, thus constructing "dangerous other" (Sandberg & Tollefsen, 2010, p.10). Many of young women felt fearful in the situation when they were alone in the public space and followed by other men.

*When men walk behind me, my brain automatically says that something is wrong, that there are people behind you and have to do something. There are always such thoughts, but at the same time, I try to say to myself, maybe it is normal guys and they just walking. But I stop anyway and wait until they pass me* (Nazira, 23, in interview)

It can be suggested that the social construction of masculinity influence on the perception of men as potentially aggressive and powerful, and at the same time as defenders. The fear of being stalked exclusively by men lies on the fear of sexual assault – uniquely done by men. In

the next section, I will discuss how young women negotiate such situations and what strategies they use to cope with their fears. Similarly, I will cover men's negotiations of fear of violence.

### 3.4 Coping strategies and Negotiations

Important part of this research was also to find out what strategies respondents use to feel confident and suppress the fear of being victimized. The fear of violence is the behavioral problem and greatly affects the mobility and use of public spaces. Indeed, several researches show that women use various strategies to negotiate their fears of vulnerability in public space. As it was discussed in this study, men show being fearless, however there are few of the strategies that young men adopt which do not challenge or question their masculine identity. Here are some of the strategies that female and males respondents use to cope with fear of violence when being in public space.

#### Male

- Be adequate, calm and confident
- Self-defense weapons
- Sports/workouts
- friends

#### Female

- Don't take expensive stuff
- Don't go to clubs
- Do not look into the eyes
- Do not dress provocatively
- Do not take "informal" taxi
- Be confident
- Walk very fast
- Take the same route
- Keep cell phone close to you or either imitate the call
- Always let my family/friends to know where I am and what time I will be back
- Listen to music
- Keep Keys as a defensive tool

The strategies employed by young men and women are not only quantitatively different, but qualitatively as well. Young women in this study show greater fear of being raped than any other violence or crime. Thus, women scrutinize environment around them with the risk of sexual assault in mind. Women tend to constantly assess the environment and observe any signs of danger, self-policing their clothes, and restrict their mobility. According to Wesely &



Gaarder (2004), the strategies women use can be regarded as “social control that keeps women quite literally, in place” (p. 649). Even though, young women in this study employ all these strategies, this does not mean that they can remove the possibility of potential victimization. Fear of crime among women pushes women to follow “gendered rules of behavior” (Wesely & Gaarder, 2004, p.657), and if they would not follow them, they may be blamed for their own fate. In comparison to women, who are most likely to engage in avoidance behavior, young men, whose strategies are more abstract than women’s; do not consider avoidance behavior as an option – it is not compatible with hegemonic masculinity. In the case of young men, fear becomes suppressed and instead fearlessness adopted as a more acceptable behavior. Although the fear can be suppressed among young men, it does not mean that it does terminate fear at all (Brownlow, 2005).

## Conclusion

Through the narratives of college students about fear of violence in Bishkek city, this thesis showed how young people position themselves in power relations. Bishkek where the poverty rate is high, economic and political situation is weak, and where traditional gender norms sustained and reinforced by different institutions and by the society as a whole, it is not a surprise the crime rates are high and fear of violence among young men are low, whereas among women, fear of violence and negotiation of it become part of their everyday lives. This phenomenon was explained through the gender lenses, particularly through the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Although the main variable of this research was gender, it also tried to take an intersectional approach, taking into account other categories of identity such as region of the respondents, ethnicity, able-bodiedness, age and how does these categories inform spatial and social in/exclusion in public space in Bishkek. Further research on fear of violence and the use of public space will benefit from the analysis of other categories in broader sense.

What can be done next is the discussion of urban policies that would increase the safety of its citizens. Suggestions on safety measures or preventive strategies should not address only women, as it's usually done, but to include men too. Indeed respondents of this study listed some suggestions that would increase the safety around the city. One of the prominent issues that came across all the interviews was lightening of the city. Although Bishkek is the capital of the country, you can easily recount the main streets which have the light and the streets that do not. The lack of good illumination of the streets, considering that the actual streets and alleys are in bad conditions, that you can easily fall into the hole, highly needed. The other issue was to increase patrolling of the city and put "well-disciplined" policemen. Many young women had situations in which they were intimidated by the "gaze" of policemen. Similarly, young men told that they can be hostile, especially to foreign people. In addition to that, because transport works only until 11 in Bishkek, many proposed night buses for those who cannot

afford taxi. And the last, but not least, young women emphasize greatly, to change the “ideology” of people. Specifically, what they mean is that they all aware of traditional gender norms that pressures them to comply with them, which as a result, influences on their use of space in Bishkek and being afraid to be blamed if something happens to them. Thus, we need change not only urban policies, but go deeper into theoretical insights on the “social and spatial structure of fear, gender, and urban space” (Koskela, 1999, p. 121). For more comprehensive analysis, other social categories need to be incorporated into the analysis of fear of crime and the use of space.

## Appendix I

### Interview Questions:

- **Opening Questions:**

1. Tell me little about yourself?
2. Tell me about your lifestyle? What are your day to day activities?
3. How often and how long you spend your time outdoors?
4. Do you often go out after dark? For what purposes?

- **Questions about violence:**

1. Tell me about your life and whether you have ever encounter/experience violence?
2. What about neighborhood violence?
3. How did institutions react?
4. Do you have friends who experienced violence? Is there story....
5. What are your favorite parts in the city to walk and feel safe and what parts you hate?
6. Did you travel outside city?
7. Whom they talk if they experience violence?

- **Questions about fear of violence in public space:**

1. What time of the day do you consider the most frightening and dangerous?
2. What places in Bishkek do you usually try to avoid in the evening?
3. Why do you try to avoid such places?
4. Is fear for safety in public space a big problem for you?
5. Are you afraid of walking alone after dark? (Why yes/why no?)
6. Are there certain parts in the city that you think are less safe than other parts?
7. How do you know that particular place is not a safe space to be?
8. Among different types of crime, what are you afraid of most?
9. How do you think, is it safe for women to walk alone after dark?
10. Do you think it is safe to walk for men alone after dark?
11. What strategies do you use to cope with fear and vulnerability (i.e. taxi, going out with somebody, calling somebody, etc)?

- **Finishing Interview:**

1. Do you feel I missed something?
2. Is there anything you would like to add?

## Appendix II

### Informed Consent Form

Female and Male Narratives about Fear of Violence in Public Space in Bishkek

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

**The aim of the research:** The following research is interested in female and male narratives about the use of space in Bishkek, fear of violence and the safety issues among city residents of Bishkek.

**Interview Procedures:** The interview will be audio taped, transcribed, and used for scholarly use by Begaiym Turdalieva. The interview will take half an hour to an hour and you can withdraw at any moment. During the interview you may request to stop the recording at any time to discuss or clarify how you wish to respond to a question or topic before proceeding.

**Interviewee:**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (full name) consent to be interviewed by Begaiym Turdalieva (name of interviewer) in the context of this research project. My participation is voluntarily and it is understood that I am free to withdraw from the interview at any moment or to not respond to certain questions.

- Everything what I will say, I want to be:
  - Under my first name \_\_\_\_\_
  - Or
  - Under pseudonym \_\_\_\_\_

I grant permission to use all or part of this interview in the form of a transcript or in digital form for the master thesis or in its publications or to authorize such publication without seeking further consent.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**INTERVIEWER:**

If you accept to be interviewed, I, Begaiym Turdalieva, promise to respect the sensitivity of your experience and the terms of this consent form.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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