

Title: ROMANTIC PARTNERSHIP:
HOMONORMATIVITY IN UKRAINIAN LGBT CONTEXT

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Abstract

In this thesis, I use a Foucauldian discourse analysis to make a scientific investigation of knowledge production, regarding forms of social arrangements within Ukrainian LGBT community. I aim to find out to what ways and extent LGBT community can be perceived homonormative. Based on discourse analysis, which implies a production of power-knowledge through everyday practices and narratives, I conducted interviews, focusing on a core of LGBT activists. I complemented interviews with a participant observation method, conducted during two major LGBT events. I explored whether discourses and representations of three forms of relationships -- coupledness, multiple partner relationships, and singledom -- are similar or how are they different; what kind of power strategies are used for sustaining homonormativity within the community.

My findings reveal different power strategies dealing with each form of social arrangements, used to fortify normativity. I distinguished most common and frequent associations in responses of my interviewees -- temporality and ethics. Thus, planned character or longevity, as well as the ecology of treatment or self-knowledge enable to explore discursive differences for three examined forms. The most conservative form of partnering coupledness was established as a reference point. Multiple partner relationships are constructed through a comparison to coupledness and have clearly disadvantageous connotations in terms of temporality, ethics, and representation. Singledom appears as the most complicated practice and manifests a unique strategy -- a concealment of itself as a stand-alone practice. A discourse of singledom as a temporary state overshadows its subversive character. Representation of three formats of social arrangements, observed during two Queer Festival events and expressed by my informants, contributes into the discussion about the extent to which the Ukrainian LGBT group appear homonormative to a certain extent.

Thus, my analysis allows concluding that Ukrainian LGBT community shows signs of homonormativity. Considering a context of a current political situation, it is possible to track some interrelations between the homonormative character of the community and a broader political situation in current debates on the association with the EU for Ukraine.

Declaration of original content

I declare that this thesis is my own personal effort. Where any of the content presented is the result of input or data from a related collaborative research programme this is duly acknowledged in the text such that it is possible to ascertain how much of the work is my own. I took reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and, to the best of my knowledge, does not breach copyright law, and has not been taken from other sources except where such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text.

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List of abbreviations

DA – discourse analysis

CEE region – Central and Eastern Europe

FTM – female to male transgender

LGBT – lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender

MPR – multiple partner relationships

MTF – male to female transgender

Chapter I. INTRODUCTION

FORMS OF PARTNERING AND THEIR MEANINGS

*To be “gay,” I think, is not to identify with the
psychological traits and the visible masks of the homosexual,
but to try to define and develop a way of life.
-Michel Foucault, “Friendship as a Way of Life”*

An HIV/AIDS crisis in the USA caused a shift in politics in the US queer¹ community (Takemoto 2003). In face of the disease LGBT group compromised to deradicalize their political agenda in exchange for a guarantee of medical services, provided by the state. The process yielded a gay-assimilation to a body of the nation and an appearance of a phenomenon of a “proper gay subject”. For the US context assimilation was associated with an access to some state institutions, like an army and marriage.

One of the demands, actively lobbied by an LGBT group in a current Ukrainian socio-political situation is a same-sex marriage or a partnership. IN analogy to the US situation, it can be a signifier of a certain compliance with dominant imperatives in exchange for advantages of inclusion into the institution of marriage. This assumption of similarity is particularly relevant as the voluntary inclusion of the community members in a warfare process are communicated quite widely; this is one of the arguments I elaborate on later in my thesis. The dynamics of normativization of a gay subject leads to sanitization of a political agenda for an LGBT group in exchange of certain privileges (like an access to state’s institutions). This phenomenon was later coined as “homonormativity” for an unproblematic compliance with heteronormative imperatives. The US LGBT are considered homonormative by many (Duggan 2002; Duggan 2004; Stryker 2008;). Applying their experience to the Ukrainian situation I find a similarity in a strategy of assimilation through inclusion to state’s institutions.² As marriage is an institutionalization of a form of partnering, I allocate my

¹ I use a term “queer” to define non-normative practices or identities.

² I acknowledge and align myself with a critique of assimilationist politics: its perpetuation and a production of inequalities, sanitizing political agendas, perpetuation of a mutually-reinforcing amalgamation of a state and a heteronormativity.

research focus on social arrangements.³ I examine discourses and representations, concerning social arrangements, as they are indicative of homonormativity, applying them to the Ukrainian LGBT group.⁴

I investigate to what extent Ukrainian LGBT group appear homonormative through discourses, related to forms of social arrangements and their representation. I do not claim a homogeneous or universal character of the phenomenon; however, I claim indicative tendencies. I ground my analysis on one of the signifiers of homonormativity – a compulsory coupledness, which is a form of social arrangements. Through a scrutiny of this component, I expose discourses and representations of normative and non-normative forms of social arrangements within LGBT community in contemporary Ukraine. To do that I establish coupledness as a reference point of normativity. I compare discourses and connotations, together with kinds of representation of three major existing forms of bondings: coupledness, multiple partner relationships (MPR) and singledness. I consider how similarly or differently these three forms of social arrangements are discursively constructed to expose how homonormative the community appears to be. My argument can be briefly summarized as follows: discrepancies in discourses and connotations, together with a representation of three existing forms of relationships allow to understand to what extent Ukrainian LGBT are homonormative. To complement a data of my research I provide some facts, concerning a local political context too. This knowledge of context is mostly experiential and is based on my observations rather than on a scientific scrutiny it would deserve but is beyond the scope of the study.

LGBT approaches a new legal status for the first time in the history of independent Ukraine (since 1991).⁵ Through scrutiny of discourses and representations of partnering forms, I

3 By “social arrangements” I understand a set of practices, experiences or behaviors that are understood as a relatively stable format of a romantic connection between people, namely – forms of partnerships

4 Despite Duggan, who I use as a major reference to homonormativity, defines it as a will of inclusion to heterosexist institutions, rather than problematization of heteronormative privilege, I use it for people with transgender experience/identity too. As was mentioned by Susan Stryker (Stryker 2008) in 1990s the term was used to distinguish “homonormative when discussing the relationship of transgender to queer” (Stryker 2008)

5 This claim is supported by the explicit articulation of LGBT issues throughout a Decree of a Cabinet of ministers of Ukraine (Yatsenyuk 2015), which addresses a legalization of same-sex partnerships and a set of non-discrimination statements that openly name sexual orientation and gender as possible ground for this. Among the named plans is an overcoming of discrimination on a ground of “sexual orientation and gender identity” (Yatsenyuk 2015: 166). Another section suggests providing changes in the existing law to ensure “punishment for crimes committed on grounds of intolerance such as [...] sexual orientation, transsexuality [...]” (Yatsenyuk 2015: 168). Decree prescribes to make changes in regard of legal procedures for transgendered people, and appoints to eliminate limits for transgenders and other categories of people in regard of access to adoption (Yatsenyuk 2015: 171). Homosexuality is addressed as a point to create an institution of civil partnerships for “opposite-sex and same-sex couples” (Yatsenyuk 2015: 170-171). An official permit to conduct LGBT marches at the central streets in two Ukrainian cities is another evidence of a change of a political discourse.

analyze whether or how Ukrainian LGBT people construct themselves as ‘suitable for assimilation’.⁶ As was fairly argued by scholars (Berlant and Warner 1998; Duggan 2004; Puar 2007; Puar 2013), not all but a special (homonormative) kind of the category is assimilative.⁷

In this discussion coupledness act as a signifier of normativity. I support this claim by referring to Rubin, who outlines coupledness as one of the characteristics of a "charmed circle"- a set of normative sexual practices. Other theorists, engaging with her theory, amplify the idea, claiming that current (Western) state policies are centered on “compulsory coupledness” (Wilkinson 2012), rather than “compulsory heterosexuality” (Rich 1980). They support the claim by referring to a statistics of a rapid increase of singledness (Shadrina 2014; Wilkinson, 2012, 2013). Based on this, it is fair to imply that coupledness becomes a keystone of a contemporary social politics and may appear as a foundational category of ‘assimilatedness’ of Ukrainian LGBT. Namely, a manifestation of adherence to the imperative of a compulsory coupledness may increase chances for assimilation for a non-heterosexual community. This idea may be used as a part of an assimilationist strategy, which requires compliance with heteronormative imperatives. Consequently, privileging of coupledness in discourses and representations, together with underrepresentation and a negation of other forms of partnering signifies a homonormative character of the community. The suggestion about an importance of coupledness for marginalized categories is supported by Rubin’s pyramid of sexual hierarchies – “erotic pyramid” (Rubin 1984). The scholar states: “Stable long-term lesbian and gay couples” move closer to a line with respectable heterosexuals, while “bar dykes and promiscuous gay men are hovering just above the groups at the very bottom of the pyramid” (Rubin 1989: 151). Hence, long-term monogamous coupledness elevates homosexuality to a hierarchical level of unmarried heterosexuality: “Unmarried couples living together, or perhaps homosexuality when it is monogamous and married, can move from being highly stigmatized to being considered acceptable” (Spade and Willse 2013: 2). Accordingly, promiscuity lowers a hierarchical position in a pyramid of sexual hierarchies otherwise ‘proper’ heterosexuals (Rubin 1984).

⁶ I singular quotation marks to denote an idea, which I do not support personally, but it can be, implicitly implied or explicitly named in society or a narrow context of Ukrainian LGBT and others. The singular quotation marks are necessary to make the explanation of some phenomena efficient, however, to distance my views from them.

⁷ I use a term “assimilation” here to emphasize an inclusion into a capitalist and a nation-state body of some previously marginalized groups/representatives, inevitably followed by a perpetuation of a structural inequality for other categories.

Thus, positive connotations together with a dominant representation construct coupleddom as a reference point to a “respectable sexuality” (Rubin 1984: 167). Coupledness is narrated as desirable and established as a model: “models for *proper* and *ideal* relationship development and maintenance” (Elia 2003: 67). Being “ultimately perpetuated” (Elia 2003: 75), these characteristics form a certain understanding of the dividing line between normative and queer. I claim that if the researched community produces a hegemony of coupledness through constructing other forms of arrangements as less proper, respectable and by underrepresenting them, the community appears homonormative.

Non-monogamies,⁸ by which I understand relationships built on a ground of romantic bounds, but not fitting to an imaginarium of monogamous coupledness, have more subversive potential in comparison to coupledness. Unlike coupledness, they are variable and fluid, uncategorized for the moment,⁹ which allows them to problematize an existing mononormative imperative. Their probably greatest potential in questioning a division between different formats, revealing how political a very attempt is to categorize sexual and partnering practices. This fluidity challenges an analysis of multiple partner relationships. Thus, a keynote speaker at the NMCI conference stated her data being “not fully factual, not totally fictive” (Zhu 2017).

I question the assumption that every person should constitute romantic relationships, disregarding monogamous or multiple partner-kind (Budgeon 2008, 2015; Luna 2017; Rosa 1994; Warner 1993; Wilkinson 2012). Consequently, I include singledness as a form of an organization of a romantic life, which questions a compulsory character of romantic connections. As a feminist researcher,¹⁰ I stay sensitive to heteronormative hegemony and my

8 Talking about coupledness, multiple partner relationships or singledness, I use a term “non-monogamies” to refer to relationships constituted by more than two people; the term “non-coupledness” to define both – MPR and singledness; “non-normative sexualities” I use as a synonym for a broad category of queer sexualities. By doing so, I express my refusal to adhere to any categorization and classification of practices, avoiding a perpetuation of power relations. I purposefully highlight uncertainty and imprecision as a political act.

9 A will to categorize the practices, which exceed the understanding about coupledness was made during the NMCI conference, conducted in Vienna, Freud University, August, 31 – September, 2, 2017. The attempt was not successful, as there options that slip off suggested matrix appeared constantly.

10 Being a feminist researcher means a complex of factors for me. Firstly, I conduct this research, being sensitive to power relations between me and informants, which includes my current status of a person, affiliated with a Western institution, and also an interviewer, who possess a power over a situation of an interview. Secondly, I incline towards Donna Haraway’s idea of a “situated knowledge”. This idea implicates a partial character of knowledge, which enables a “feminist objectivity”, as an acknowledgement of a production of knowledge from a clear standpoint and for a narrow segments makes it particularly relevant for a given obstacles (Haraway 1988). I align myself with this perspective, staying self-reflexive on my standpoint; I also refer to it in my thesis, enabling readers’ understanding from what perspective I speak. Thirdly, feminist approach entail sharing of power with my informants by acknowledging of an importance of their identity, experience, also age and a place of origin, which influence their perspective. This is the reason, why I quote their self-introduction in the list of informants, if they made any clarifications, regarding their experiences, identities or other relevant points.

own beliefs to avoid treating non-normative forms of bondings as an afterthought.¹¹ A heteronormative perspective on the research would mutilate and even reinforce a status quo of heteronormativity through posing a question: “concepts and themes of social theory that might be pressed to this purpose are in fact useless or worse because they embed a heteronormative understanding of society” (Warner 1993: xi). A combination of these three existing forms of social arrangements makes the approach complex and problematizing heteronormative imperatives.

Therefore, throughout my work, I conduct a discourse analysis of three forms of social arrangements: coupledness, multiple partner relationships, and singledom.¹² I aim to find out what meanings are adhered to each of three forms of partnering. I tentatively distinguish some aspects of analysis – temporality, and ethics, together with representations. They were not originally hypothesized, I distinguished them after completing my field research, pursuant to arguments by my informants most commonly used in their narratives.

To analyze meanings and to define their relation to homonormativity I follow next steps. I specify a theoretical framework, review a literature and provide a justification for my methods, including reflections on the process of collecting a data in Chapters I and II. In Chapter III I analyze coupledness, its discourses, and narratives. Based on the discourses and related connotations, obtained from my informants, I state that coupledness appears as the most normative practice for the community, and set it up as a reference point for homonormativity. I establish connections between coupledness and multiple partner relationships in Chapter IV. I examine discourses and narratives around poly-relationships¹³ to find out, whether they should be considered normative¹⁴ or subversive particularly for Ukrainian LGBT context. Thirdly, I engage with singledom, which allows me to avoid a heteronormative perspective in

11 For instance, according to Warner, this happens with some “literature on the so-called new social movements, where theorists might have been expected to take lesbian and gay politics as a model, continues to treat it as an afterthought, and then often with significant homophobia”. (1993, ix)

12 I acknowledge the impossibility to draw a clear-cut line between any of them, as sexuality is fluid, intersecting and sometimes unidentifiable. At the conference Non-Monogamies and Contemporary Intimacies (NMCI), held in Vienna in August-September, 2017, an attempt to give it a classification was made. Non-monogamy was defined through intimate practices, identity, sexual orientation, lifestyle choice, emotional relationships, and economic system (like cohabitation and contribution). For the sake of clarity, I do not restrict my focus with only one of options named above. Therefore, I admit conditionality of my classification for this thesis.

13 Here and after I use terms such as ‘poly-relationships’, ‘polyamory’, ‘multiple partner relationships’ interchangeably, as they all signify partnering with more, than one person, and so, exceed a coupled format

14 In my thesis, ‘normative’ signifies compliance with what Rubin names “blessed sexuality” (1984) . To make analysis sensitive to power relations I use Foucauldian framework of norm in construction of power. More broadly this is discussed in Chapter II

the research.¹⁵ Western feminist critique has been questioning the primacy of sexual/romantic relationships, which becomes a part of power¹⁶ regimes, discussing the significance of alternatives for decades (Warner 1993, Rosa 1994, (Foucault 1997; Jackson и Scott 2004a), Duggan 2003, Luna 2017). Thus, Singledom is a specific category of partnering; its analysis is provided in Chapter V, where I examine relevant narratives of my informants. In sum, the structure develops the idea of an analysis of three existing forms of partnering, starting from the most normative one – coupledness – proceeding to a least normative – multiple partner relationships – and completing with the most subversive form of partnering – singledom.

To make the analysis coherent, I test each of the named above forms of social arrangements according to three aspects: discourses of temporality and ethics; and their representation. Each of them may be further divided, according to the acquired data. These aspects allow seeing the differences and similarities in construction and representation for three forms of social arrangements. I presume that a conditionally equal visibility of normative and non-normative practices with similarly positively connoted discourses refute homonormativity, while other options require a thorough analysis.

Representation is very tentatively divided to an internal and external, where applicable. I consider a representation internal when it is focused and communicated within the LGBT community in Ukraine. Most commonly it includes lectures, workshops, audio-visual exhibitions, and demonstrations and other formal or semi-formal occasions. I also consider informal discussions. Under the external representation, I understand the communication for a broader Ukrainian society. Usually, it is embodied in a political agenda. I separate external vector of a discussion even if absent because I consider silences and their reasons indicative of the research question.

15 In my paper I apply the description of heteronormativity as “[C]ommunity is imagined through scenes of intimacy, coupling, and kinship; a historical relation to futurity is restricted to generational narrative and reproduction [...] this privatized sexual culture bestows on its sexual practices a tacit sense of rightness and normalcy. This sense of rightness – embedded in things and not just in sex – is what we call heteronormativity (Berlant и Warner 1998: 554) and also, more simply expressed by Jackson “Heteronormativity [...] as shorthand for the numerous ways in which heterosexual privilege is woven into the fabric of social life, pervasively and insidiously ordering everyday existence. It is, however, often used as if it were synonymous with institutionalized heterosexuality” (Jackson 2006). Therefore, sexual relationships appear as a basis for heteronormativity. Singledom allows to avoid a reproduction of a compulsory sexuality, which I touch upon later in this thesis

16 I use the term ‘power’ in Foucauldian interpretation as a social and political power over life, which constructs a socio-political usage of sexuality. While Foucault made a great impact on how we consider the political usage of sexuality for disciplinization of bodies and so application of regulations over life, I would investigate how sexuality is used in a political debate, concerning the geopolitical belonging of Ukraine by virtue of sexuality, which I will discuss more closely in my second chapter Michel Foucault: Security, Territory, Population, (2007)

SEXUALITY AND A POLITICAL PROMISE

Regarding the significance of the political atmosphere in Ukraine in relation to the research question, I should address a process of geopolitical transition Ukraine currently undergoes. For more than a decade, Ukraine gradually approached a goal to become a part of the EU. The promise was strong until the former President and a current escapee Viktor Yanukovich¹⁷ made a sudden change of his decision and refused to sign the accurately prepared and thoroughly discussed agreement about a Euro association of Ukraine.¹⁸ The about-face evoked an immense societal resonance, which resulted in a rapid start of the Revolution of Dignity, later called a “Maidan” or a “Euromaidan” as the revolution started from the main state’s square, which is “maidan” in Ukrainian, and “Euro” signifies its major goal – to resist the pretence of the ex-leader, and to get back to negotiations about Euro association for Ukraine. The revolution yielded a change of an official state’s power, and a newly elected President has promised to renew the interrupted dialog and to achieve a goal of Euro association for Ukraine.

The revolution gave a new breath not only to societal moods – a new hope to have benefits of European association – but also a new level of freedom of expression for the LGBT. The promise of a union with the ‘advanced West’ conducted an appearance of new discussions in the community. The change promised an arousal of a public discussion about LGBT, human rights, and equality.¹⁹ However, the discussion was not exclusively initiated by LGBT. It caused a backlash from opponents of Euro association. The manipulative opposition’s narrative instrumentalized a promise of liberalization to attach a negative significance to the discussion. They purported to problematize benefits of the Euro association by utilizing the “gay issue”. A narrative of ‘gay’ as a major threat to the state and the nation was offered and nurtured.²⁰ Its obvious strength was in the exploitation of an existent homophobia. Euro

17 Throughout the thesis, I have adhered to the Library of Congress transliteration system.

18 The landmark gesture was made on November 28 in Vilnius, during the Eastern Partnership Summit. The event was conducted in a framework of an EU integrational project, which aims to make connections between the EU and six former Soviet countries: Ukraine, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia and Belarus («Lutsenko: Yanukovych refused to sign an agreement with the EU» 2013; *Fakty* 2013; «Yanukovych did not sign the Association Agreement at a Vilnius summit» 2013; «Yanukovych ultimately refused to sign an association with the EU in Vilnius» 2013)

19 This expectation had their grounds. Thus, Katja Kahlina (Kahlina 2014), studying an influence of Eurointegration for Croatia and Serbia refers to a “leveraged pedagogy”, which implies an imposition of certain social requirements to a new country within the EU. I elaborate on this in Chapter II. These demands were would expectedly advance discursive and legal positions of LGBT members in Ukraine.

20 A format and a focus of this thesis prevent me from a scrutiny of an origin and a source of these narratives. It can be assumed that a major beneficiary of the split was Russia with its counter-European pressure on Ukraine. ‘Gay issue’ was co-opted for the sake of anti-European panics. “Gayromaidan” – a neologism, which appears at these times, was analyzed by Russian scholars (Riabova & Riabov 2015). The term utilizes gay panics simultaneously diminishes the political significance of the Revolution, manifests mockery, ascribes negative connotation and connects change of official political power to a threat of moral corruption, associated with the West.

association, according to gossips, requires a mandatory legalization of gay-marriage that means an annihilating of Ukrainian nation in a long-run.²¹ This discussion was boosted by the inclusion of same-sex partnership status into a Decree of a Cabinet of Ministers, signed by a Prime Minister in 2015 (Yatsenyuk 2015).

To give a cursory introduction to a geopolitical split articulated through non-normative sexuality, I distinguish three major vectors.²² “Ukraine belongs to the West” is supported by a liberal part of the country; they advocate for LGBT rights or tolerate them as a condition of ‘becoming a part of the West’. “Post-Soviet nostalgists” in line with Russian propaganda claim that West brings sexual excess, and its decayed morality facilitates Ukraine’s moral corruption and losing connections with ‘its blood brother’ – Russia and Slavic peoplehood. A third ideological group is nationalist; however, sometimes uses sentiments, similar to Russian rhetorics, according to which West is a threat. It underlines the exclusivity of Ukraine’s culture, history, and morality, for which non-heterosexuality is an alien influence, superimposed by other, supposedly less moral cultures. Pro-national supporters emphasize a uniqueness of Ukrainian population and demand independence from any geopolitical influences, whether Western or Eastern. Therefore, formal tolerance and inclusion of LGBT to a broad state’s agenda are interpreted by all three geopolitical supporters named above, becomes a signal of alignment between Ukraine and the West. In this way, homosexuality becomes an argument in rearticulation or definition of Ukraine’s geopolitical belonging. This thesis has an explorative character and serves the purpose of opening a scientific discussion of non-normative forms of boundings in Ukrainian LGBT scene that is mostly unknown. I consider important to address homonormative tendencies of the community so that in the future, a further, more substantial and much-needed analysis in the field of political science can be developed, regarding mutual instrumentalization of sexualities and politics in Ukraine.

21 This argument utilized social panics. Among them are a decrease of the population of Ukraine, influence on children and propaganda of a perversion: “During the quarter-long “independence” the population of Ukraine has already decreased from 52 million to 39. The increase of “homies” [an offensive term for gays] and lesbians in number will further aggravate the demographic situation. Do all “European values” need to be imposed on us? Aren’t some of them for us like a saddle for a cow?” (Ivanovslyi 2016) It also included messages of a “Western sponsorship” of the “gay revelry”. This conspiracy theory discusses a global plan to occupy Ukrainian black-soil lands.

22 I ground the analysis of the split on my personal observation and experience, together with a research paper “Geopolitical belonging and temporality of Ukraine through homosexuality. “Maya and her moms” book presentation, case study”, prepared by me for a course “Geopolitics of the Internet” (Central European University, autumn, 2017)

Chapter II. THEORETICAL, CONTEXTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

In this chapter, I examine three concepts that are central to this thesis: sexual normativity and homonormativity, and forms of social arrangements. I also give an overview of the local contexts, which include Ukraine and Central and Eastern European regions. I address ideas, related to homonationalism in order to establish a connection between my research question and a broader political context. Thus, I set up my theoretical framework to answer the question in what way homonormativity is expressed in discourses and represented within LGBT community in a current political situation in relation to forms of social arrangements. Approaching homonormativity through social arrangements is one of the most accurate ways to explore a situation in the community. A recent discussion, regarding the legalization of same-sex partnerships, allows making a quite accurate research. The topic is enthusiastically discussed within the community as well, as communicated to a broader society, being implemented in the political agenda. To do so, I conduct interviews with a group of Ukrainian LGBT activists and participant observation of two major LGBT events to provide insights that both challenge and confirm different aspects of the theories I draw on in my research. By applying these theoretical frameworks and methodology I expect to find out what kind of meanings the community ascribes to forms of partnering and how does that impact homonormativization of the group. An examination of these strategies allows to understand the work of a discursive power in the application for a certain context; however, also provides a possibility to test them in different situations.

Firstly, I reflect on the origin of the term ‘homonormativity’ and one of its constituents – coupledness – as they are important concepts for this thesis. I follow the historical line of its development to show its interconnectedness with forerunning relevant theories for justification of its usage. I also introduce some following concepts, which were built on top of “homonormativity” and introduce interconnectedness between sexuality and states’ politics.

Secondly, I analyze literature which questions a prioritization of romantic relationships over other forms of relationships. Regarding this topic, scholars criticize a discourse, which prioritizes romantic/sexual relationships over other forms of bondings. I refer to a critique of institutionalization of same-sex partnerships within the LGBT community, as it perpetuates

heteronormative hierarchization of romantic or sexuality-based relationships over other forms of connections. I am going to illustrate that the major political demand is an ambiguous achievement for same-sex partners, because it causes a split within the community to those, who fit the marriage canon and those, who do not, simultaneously perpetuating other inequalities, being camouflaged by the rhetoric of equality. In addition, I will refer to literature which gives a feminist perspective on how coupledness reinforces heteronormative dominance. I will consider coupledness and its alternatives, discussed from the critical feminist perspective. This analysis finds that LGBT is exposed to the heteronormative trap, which enables a surveillance of people through their sexuality. Therefore, not only coupledness, as the most conservative form of social arrangements, but also non-monogamies is a way to discipline population. (Foucault 1995)

Finally, I will explore the local Ukrainian context concerning the applicability of the terminology regarding homonormativity produced in West. I will stay sensitive to the critique of the Western scientific hegemony from non-Western feminists. In this discussion, I assess previous attempts to apply Western theory frames to the broader Central and Eastern European (CEE) region, so to see their relevance and to localize the focus. The above mentioned theoretical debates will help to make a proper analysis of relevant contemporary practices within Ukrainian LGBT and to open up a discussion of some aspects, indicative for non-normative sexualities in a country with a rich political context.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SEXUAL NORMATIVITY

My work is grounded in three theories, which construct the framework of this thesis. Three concepts can be understood through scholarly works where they were developed. These are “History of sexuality” (Foucault 1988, vol 1), “Thinking Sex” (Rubin 1984) and “The Twilight of equality” (Duggan 2004). The latter serves as a source from which I extract the definition of the term “homonormativity”, which I consider as a core concept for this paper. The entwinement I use is a development of the idea of sexuality as an instrument of inclusion or belonging. My starting point is the Foucauldian idea of normativity, the elaboration and clarification are Rubin’s defining what kinds of practices are normative and later on Duggan’s discussion about the ways initially non-normative practices can change their position and on what terms.

The first scholar who emphasized the strategic deployment of sexuality as an instrument of

disciplinization was Michele Foucault, who argued that: “sexuality represents the precise point where the disciplinary and the regulatory, the body and the population, are articulated” (Foucault и Ewald 2003): 252). He problematized the hypothesis that sexuality was repressed in the middle ages. Instead, he claims, it was codified and proliferated in discourses and silences²³, rather than being repressed (Foucault 1988, v. 1). It was constructed through new ideas of “norm” and “not norm”, becoming a ground for a process of normativization – that is, the disposition of practices in a matrix of “normality”. For Foucault sexuality provides a way to discipline of both an individual and multiple bodies (a nation): “Sex was a means of access both to the life of the body and the life of the species” (Foucault 1978:146). Thus, sexuality becomes one of the instruments, which enables a political management of a biological life not only an “individual-as-a-body” but also a “multiple body” (Foucault 2003: 245) – an uncounted number of individuals, a population. According to this, sexuality with the applied matrix of normativity serves to govern populations through discourses, practices and other power techniques, which Foucault coins as “governmentality”(Foucault & Ewald 2003). “Sexuality is not in relation to power, an exterior domain to which power is applied, that on the contrary is a result and an instrument of power’s designs”, acquiring a meaning of a “political issue” and becoming an instrument of power (Foucault 1978: 152). A normative subject is constructed within a disciplinary power.

A scholar who followed the idea and gave a clearer definition of normative and respectable sexual practices was Gayle Rubin. She allocated sexual practices in a circle-shaped matrix, what she labeled a “charmed circle” (Rubin 1984). The idea of a circle is a contrast between respectable (“blessed”) and improper (“cursed”) sexual practices and how they compose of what is normative²⁴. The scholar presents a pyramid of sexual hierarchy. The pyramid allocates those, who practice heterosexual, reproductive non-porn, non-commercial or monogamously coupled sex on the very top, emphasizing the propriety and respectability of these practices. Gradually from top to down are located those who diverge from one or some of the ‘proper’ practices (singles, masturbators or coupled homosexuals). The bottom is

23 For Foucault discourses are meanings, attached to practices, what is not said, but understood “By ‘discursive’ I do not mean that which refers to ‘text’ narrowly defined, but to the ensemble of the phenomena in and through which social production of meaning” (Jäger & Maier 2014)

24 “[C]harmed circle represents the “. . . Good, Normal, Natural, Blessed Sexuality,” which is limited to: heterosexuality, marriage, monogamy, procreative, non-commercial sex, dyadic sexual relationships, individual being from the same generation, sexual activity being restricted to the private sphere, no pornography, bodies only, and vanilla sexual expression (i.e., no kinky activity). The flip side constitutes what she refers to as the outer limits, which is considered “...Bad, Abnormal, Unnatural, and Damned Sexuality.” The forms of sexual expression that fall in this category are: homosexuality, sexual activity outside of marriage, promiscuity, non-procreative sex, commercial sex, being sexual alone or in groups, casual sexual interactions, cross-generational sex, sex in public, use of pornography, sex with manufactured objects, and sadomasochism” (Elia 2003: 66-67)

constituted by transgenders, promiscuous gays, drags: “Modern Western societies appraise sex acts according to a hierarchical system of sexual value. Marital, reproductive heterosexuals are alone at the top erotic pyramid. [...]. Stable, long-term lesbian and gay male couples are verging on respectability, but bar dykes and promiscuous gay men are hovering just above the groups at the very bottom of the pyramid. The most despised sexual castes currently include transsexuals, transvestites...”. (Rubin 1984: 51).

The theory shows symbolic respectfulness of some (normative) practices through production and exclusion of ‘others’, their marginalization. Stigmatization of “inferior” sexual parameters originated from religious taboos and condemnations, transformed into medicalizing, moralizing and pathologizing in Modern Western societies: “This discourse on sexuality is less a sexology than a demonology” (Rubin 1984:166), but reinforces the same set of desirable behaviors, forming and maintaining the idea of their normative character through the system of discursive benefits and punishments²⁵. The consolidation of this hierarchization also manifests in “compulsory heterosexuality”, a term suggested for the phenomenon, which ascribes heterosexuality by default, until proven otherwise (Rich 1980).²⁶ This compulsory character of heterosexuality entails the construction of the whole social system with its institutions²⁷, including institutions of care, based on implied heterosexuality (and reproductivity) of each member (Warner 1993)

For Jackson “Heteronormativity defines not only a normative sexual practice but also a normal way of life” (Jackson 2006). This idea reflects the Foucauldian “way of life”²⁸ (Foucault 1981). Thus, I consider inseparable these two forms of creating social arrangements and sexual practices: where heteronormative sexuality becomes a reference point of a ‘normal life’.

25 Individuals whose behaviour stands high in this hierarchy are rewarded with certified mental health, respectability, legality, social and physical mobility, institutional support, and material benefits. As sexual behaviours or occupations fall lower on the scale, the individuals who practice them are subjected to a presumption of mental illness, disreputability, criminality, restricted social and physical mobility, loss of institutional support, and economic sanctions. Extreme and punitive stigma maintains some sexual behaviours as low status and is an effective sanction against those who engage in them

26 As an implication of this process, claims Rich, all the social institutions reproduce heterosexuality, women become disempowered, their experiences are erased.

27 In this regard, the role of marriage in sustaining of the normative hegemony through production of hierarchical system is difficult to overestimate. “Marriage is the most fundamental means through which the relationship between citizenship and intimacy is crystallized” (Raj 2011)

28 The very point of his idea “way of life” is described in a quotation at the beginning of the Introduction. For Foucault ‘being gay’ is less sexual practices or identity, but rather a certain way of life, which is constructed as a proper for these group of people. This opens up a discussion around friendship as an alternative to romantic relationships. To advantages of friendship, it is not restrained with the rituals, prescriptions, expectations and allows a free flow of relationships, not defining every part of them. Therefore, for Foucault, friendship is a strong subversive force for power of normativization.

Institutions and normativity shape each other. One of the examples I ground my research on is a term “homonormativity”, introduced by Lisa Duggan (2003). Both scholars, Rubin, mentioned above, and Duggan, claim that normativity is a flexible construction. Rubin highlights a constant negotiation of the borderline between respectable and “unfit forms of desires”. Rubin claims that long-term, monogamous coupledness becomes an instrument of a symbolic elevation of a position for homosexuals, while, for instance, cross-generational bonds decrease heterosexuals’ rank²⁹. The Rubin’s observation was attested by Elia. Both state that sexual hierarchy privileges coupled arrangements to non-coupled (Elia 2003: 74). Duggan (2003) further develops the idea of ‘elevation’ to the realm of respectability, showing benefits, acquired through compliance with other constituents of Rubin’s respectable sexuality, such as marriage.³⁰ She describes the phenomenon of inclusion of some (normative) homosexuals to the socio-political and cultural realm through the split within the group to those who fit and those who do not. This phenomenon of exclusive inclusion proves flexibility of ‘norms’.

While Rubin concretizes Foucauldian normative sexuality, Adrienn Rich (1980) introduces an idea of “compulsory heterosexuality”, under which she understands the obligatory character of heterosexuality. For this work, the concept of ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ is important as it establishes a reference point, in relation to which other forms of sexual expressions are constructed as alternatives³¹, and therefore, inferior to heterosexuality; and indeed are made invisible (Rich 1980). Another definition of “compulsory” character was suggested by McRuer, who defines it as an illusion of choice with no choice.³² In this thesis compulsion and normativity are tightly interwoven: normativity prescribes a compulsory character of a practice.

29 “Unmarried couples living together, masturbation, and some forms of homosexuality are moving in the direction of respectability [...] Most homosexuality is still on the bad side of the line. But if it is coupled and monogamous, the society is beginning to recognize that it includes the full range of human interaction. Promiscuous homosexuality, sadomasochism, fetishism, transsexuality, and cross-generational encounters are still viewed as unmodulated horrors incapable of involving affection, love, free choice, kindness, or transcendence.” (Rubin, 1984: 152-153)

30 In my discussion I refer to both marriage and partnership because in Ukrainian legal field partnerships is a form that is discussed for same-sex unions. Partnership limits an access to the set of rights marriage grants. However, in scholarly works, marriage is addressed as an all-encompassing term; thus, I consider it relevant to my discussion.

31 Which, in fact, produces their (alternatives) negative connotations. For Rich lesbianism “is perceived on a scale ranging from deviant to abhorrent, or simply rendered invisible” (Rich, 1980: 632)

32 McRuer does not elaborate much on what the compulsion is: “Compulsion is here produced and covered over, with the appearance of choice (sexual preference) mystifying a system in which there actually is no choice” I find a meaning of a compulsory character in his “mystification of the system”. In my interpretation the system is built on rewards for a suitable behavior and vanishing of other choices. This leads to taking for granted, rather than questioning of a prescription of normative imperatives. Other choices are made invisible or marginalized, condemned, ostracized in this way. This is what I call an “illusion of choice” in my text

It is challenging to separate social arrangements and sexuality due to a co-constitutive character of three imperatives: coupledness, monogamy, and compulsory sexuality³³.

Therefore, I use terms “couplehood” and “monogamy” (or non-couplehood, “It is non-monogamy”) interchangeably throughout the text; sometimes “couplehood” and “monogamy” are joined in the phrase “coupled monogamy”. Three concepts – compulsory sexuality, compulsory couplehood and mononormativity – can be defined separately, but they are interwoven to the extent they “feed on each other” (Belen Amil 2017: 5).³⁴ Based on this, couplehood (together with monogamy and compulsory sexuality) appears as core constituents of sexual normativity and acquire a compulsory character. As a result, other forms of sexualities and social arrangements are vanished or marginalized.

Another relevant term, which I use in the text is “mononormativity, which is the “taken for granted allegation that monogamy and couple-shaped arranged relationships are the principle of social relations per se, an essential foundation of human existence and the elementary, almost natural pattern of living together” (Bauer 2010: 145). Bauer associates ‘mononormativity’ with an existing normative sexual regime: “Mono-normativity is historically linked with heteronormativity in complex ways” (Bauer 2010: 145) and sees the connection between the idea and processes of exclusion and ostracization for those, who do not fit.³⁵ This is another argument, which contributes to a tight interrelation between sexuality and social arrangements, called a “way of life” by Foucault in the introduction to this thesis. In other words, sexuality itself is not enough for a complex engagement into power relations and management of individual and “multiple body”, as was already stated. Sexuality serves as a basis for a set of rituals, which define positions in sexual hierarchies. Therefore,

33 Compulsory sexuality was explored and discussed even more explicitly as having a role of sustaining and ensuring heteronormative regime. Many institutions, together with expectations and discourses, constitute and reinforce it “Romantic love given a precedence over platonic love. We are asked if we have a partner, but information about our friends [...] is not commonly solicited with such a vigor” (Rosa 1994: 109).

34 This thought was also implicitly and explicitly supported by other scholars too. Some see couplehood as an all-encompassing term, which includes monogamy or as a dimension of social arrangements, rather, than sexuality: “Thus in the 1970s resistance to monogamy was not just about sex, but about couplehood more generally” (Jackson и Scott 2004b). I see couplehood as a social arrangement that reflects on monogamy and use two terms interchangeably or together. Another author emphasized that couplehood is inevitably overlaps with monogamy is Robin Bauer. She claims that society is uncritical to the “taken for granted allegation that monogamy and couple-shared arranged relationships are the principle of social relations per se” (Bauer 2010: 145)

35 Elaborating on the consequences of non-mononormativity Bauer states: “From this perspective, every relationship which does not represent this pattern [mono-normativity], is being ascribed the status of the other, of deviation, of pathology, in need of explanation or is being ignored, hidden, avoided and marginalized.” (Bauer 2010: 145)

social arrangements are inseparable from sexualities, each can be defined through the other, both can act as determinative for normativity.

These points raise the issue of sexuality as a basis of social connections, which is not unproblematic. Becky Rosa questions a borderline between sexual and nonsexual relationships on the example of friendship and romantic relationships: “Sex is seen as an intrinsic part of romantic love, and it is made inevitable that we will be in, or want to be in, sexual relationship” (Rosa 1994: 109). Another evidence of a very sexual character of the existing regime was addressed by Jackson: “Heteronormativity defines not only a normative sexual practice but also a normal way of life” (Jackson 2006). Here both ideas – normativity and the interconnectedness between the sexual and the social are risen. This work employs this idea of inseparability between the sexual and the social.

The necessity of a romantic and sexual connection as a ground for relationships of care has been questioned, too. This perspective allows problematizing the division between sexual and non-sexual as a tool for maintaining heterosexual regime for Rosa (Rosa 1994b) and surveillance and discipline for Foucault (1995). Rosa’s focus on lesbians enabled to address a gendered difference of this order, namely a substitution of women to male’s hegemony. The scholar suggests non-sexual relations as a form of disruption, the inclusion of a friendship and non-sexual connections, which in her essay, is peculiar for lesbians³⁶. Regarding alternatives to coupledness, Becky Rosa (1994) shares some thoughts about the permeant borderline between friendship and romantic bonding which is practiced by lesbians. Most recently, the same suggestion to critically engage with the hierarchical division of forms of kinship and to question the privilege, given to romantic partnerships, is in Caleb Luna’s work (Luna 2017, n.p.). The author comments on the constitution of some relationships as intimate, nurturing and satisfactory, calling herself “being *singled*” (Luna’s accentuation). The author describes the consequences of this hierarchy she experiences and offers a suggestion. Luna calls for a system, where connections would not obey the hierarchy, based on whether or not they are sexual, non-sexual or fall under any other kind. The author calls to subvert monogamy, while expressing an aspiration not to be secondary for her friends, who have romantic partners “I do

36 For the author, monogamy is an instrument of sustaining compulsory heteronormativity. The work shows segregation and reinforcement of gendered inequality through hierarchization of types of relationships, maintaining their heteronormative character even for lesbians (Rosa 1994b). “Men have almost constant access to women through various mechanisms, marriage, harassment, violence, the organization of work and so on, which women do not necessarily have to each other” (ibid: 108). The author finds moments of disruptions and makes a great work, revealing failures of the heteronormative, however, not engaging with details like a same-sex marriage.

not want to feel obligated to reserve the love and care I have for a single person, because this not just loving and caring for one person but doing so at the expense of loving and caring for everyone else.[...] I want to build a world where romantic love is not a prerequisite for these investments” (Luna 2017). A similar point, regarding the capitalist individualization of romantic love, is provided in a scrutiny of the role of monogamy in a current feminist struggle against heteronormativity: “Monogamous love entailed individualistic expectations: to be placed at the centre of another’s universe, while building one’s own world around them” (Jackson и Scott 2004b). A critique of a romantic imaginary, aligning with this point was a focus for two other feminist theorists Illouz (Illouz 1997) and Povinelli (E. A. Povinelli 2006). Both claim an uncritical consumption of romantic imaginary that has already transformed into a part of a capitalist system, despite being a classed production.

Earlier a similar point was risen by Andrew Sullivan, who sees the domestic partnership as a disruption of normativity. Speculating on “who qualifies”, he lists “an elderly woman and her live-in nurse [...] [a] couple of uneuphemistically confirmed bachelors [...] two close college students, a pair of seminarians, or a couple of frat buddies” (Sullivan 1989), which questions a necessarily sexual character of partnering. I refer to this point in the discussion of same-sex partnerships in Chapter III. Here, though, it is important to note that Sullivan outlines that ‘alternative’, ‘emancipatory’ politics do not question coupledness. Jackson openly admits that “The current hegemonic form no longer necessarily requires marriage, but nonetheless privileges monogamous coupledness as the ideal” (1999: 110). Therefore, non-romantic/non-sexual partnering is another argument, which problematizes homonormativity. It is especially relevant for the discussion about the institutionalization of same-sex partnerships, as it allows to see another power instrument of perpetuating normativity.

Regarding institutionalization of beneficial for the regime practices, Michael Warner in his “Fear of a queer planet” critiques some scholars, who explore “new social movements” for reinforcement of existing regime rather, than subverting it. For him, the way a question is put matters as much as the changes craved. He denounces some positions, seemingly written from a queer perspective, which, nonetheless, treat non-coupledness as an “afterthought”³⁷

37 Here he refers to Alberto Melucci, citing his piece from “Reproduction as a Choice.” In addition to the model of the heterosexual and monogamous couple, who are the foundation of the family institution and guarantee of the continuity of the reproductive process, new choices become possible. These parallel models, which are capable of coexisting with the heterosexual model and even of becoming institutionalized, include homosexuality, singles, and a range of mobile and temporary couples living outside a stable matrimonial friendship. (in Warner 1993: ix-x)

(Warner 1993: ix), which for the author testifies “significant homophobia” (ibid). Eleanor Wilkinson not only agrees but emphasizes implications of the (institutionalized) coupledness for everyday life. She and others point out to the deep embeddedness of coupledness into state’s politics.

For Wilkinson, coupledness is a state’s interest for contemporary (British) society, which witnesses “not compulsory heterosexuality, but compulsory coupledness.” (Wilkinson 2013: 207). Other authors agree with the point, claiming that “monogamous coupledness” is inscribed “in much state policy and institutional practices defining which social relationships are socially validated” (Richardson cited in Jackson 1999: 110). This idea is extended to the term “couple citizenship” (Raj 2011). Unpacking the idea of the state’s appropriation of coupledness, Wilkinson makes explicit that “sexual citizenship continues to exclude those who might be single, asexual or those who see friendship, or other forms of kinship as their most important intimate connections” (Wilkinson 2013). It seems like due to homonormativization when homosexuals do not entail a threat to the heteronormative patriarchal system but perpetuate the same norms themselves; they acquire beneficial for the power system position in contrast to singledom. The latter by its very existence undermines heteronormative imperatives, among which compulsory coupledness has a central role. Firstly, this means that coupledness not only acts as a constituent of normativity but becomes a leading focus of states’ power in a contemporary world. Secondly, for the Western world, it is coupledness, not only heterosexuality, becomes privileged.

A similar idea was theorized in a “Couple Culture and the Production of Singleness” (Budgeon 2008). The author outlines the problem of marginalization of a singledom for many centuries and its participation in a construction of a privileged position of coupledness at its expense. She reinterprets the idea of singledom, implicitly showing its subversive potential. Budgeon explores narratives about singledom among people with different sexualities, finding out possible positive discourses, in which she sees places of disruption for “heteronormative regulation”.

Marriage, as a significant perpetuation of coupledness, evokes wide debates among feminist scholars. Besides many scholars claim that marriage, same-sex or heterosexual, is no more than a reinforcement of a sexual status quo (Butler 2004; Spade and Willse 2015; Warner 1999, 2000), some authors emphasize its disruptive character, too. For instance, same-sex

marriage, despite accepting monogamy, not necessarily leads to reproduction, which undermines heteronormative sequence of events “by transforming the association between marriage and biological reproduction”³⁸ (Raj 2011)

CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK: UKRAINE AND CEE REGION

This thesis must also be positioned in the geographic CEE context, as I also demonstrate intersections between the normative/non-normative construction of sexuality and the broader political context. More specifically, I examine how LGBT identities are politicized and/or instrumentalized in political discourses, based on examples from the region. In doing so, one of the theories I draw on demonstrates the appropriation of sexual subjects by the state, that is “homonationalism”, coined by Puar (J. K. Puar 2007). In a broad understanding, homonationalism addresses the moments of intersections and divergences between national sentiments and LGBT discourses. It results in granting or reserving some privileges to homonormative subjects in exchange for a support of a national(ist) politics. This process yields their separation from other (improper) non-homonormative fellows and the process sustains the states’ interests.³⁹ Kevin Moss introduces the theory in this way:

“[Homonationalism is] the idea that nationalism is no longer exclusively heteronormative or heterosexist, but that instead of gay citizens and gay rights can be instrumentalized or co-opted to exclude others—immigrants and Muslims— from the benefits of citizenship” (Moss 2016: 56). Homonationalism is also used as a part of an image-making activity. Its aim is to separate “secular Western” and “Muslim” states too. Thus, some states build their image on a speculation of formal and partial integration of “gay and lesbian subjects” (J. K. Puar 2007) into state’s oppressive politics, while framing the process as providing equal rights, yielding “benefits of citizenship” (Moss 2016: 56). The result appears to be not only a creation of an idea of “normative gayness” through its separation from an improper/other gayness, but a further cooptation of “gay-ness” by national(ist) politics. Thus, homosexuality is only considered in a national politics if it complies with a “middle-class cultural competence and lifestyle” (Illouz 1997: 285) of a romantic imaginary (Povinelli 2006; Illouz 1997).

³⁸ “Marriage no longer simply confers recognition for heterosexual couples to engage in reproduction. Whilst queer couples may conform to a monogamous family structure, they trouble conservative politics, as suggested by the Australian Christian Lobby, of ‘fundamental (anatomical) gender complementarity’ by transforming the association between marriage and biological reproduction (ACL 2009: 5).” (Raj 2011)

³⁹ More implications of this assimilation of a “queer body” is the estimation to what extent a state has “the right to and capacity for national sovereignty” (J. Puar 2013 :336).

The concept of homonationalism also discusses an extent of a citizenry. The idea of sexual citizenship allows encompassing the discussion about homonormativity the fullest as it directly addresses ways to include non-normative subjects in a state's politics. I do not include sexual citizenship into the theoretical framework of the thesis, as an analysis of rights or an extent to which they are granted (or promised) to LGBT members is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it is worth making reference to it, as sexual citizenship allows to address an extent to which people with certain sexualities are included or excluded from an access to political, civil and social rights,⁴⁰ in other words, to what extent they are included into a nation-state. Rather than framing my analysis through the notion of 'sexual citizenship', in this thesis I am more attentive to the intersections and co-constitutions between discourses and representation of social arrangements and the broader political situation. Thus, I am not looking at a distribution of rights *per se*, but the discursive production of different types of partnerships and their particular character in the Ukrainian LGBT context.

The idea of sexual citizenship was scrutinized by many scholars (Duggan 2003, Graf 2010, Isin 2012, Kulpa and Mizielinska 2011, Bell, & Binnie, 2006; Richardson, 1998, 2000 Rofel 1999, Kahlina 2015). For example, for Richardson "sexual citizenship" also entails inclusion into a market economy through consumerism, "nationalism and boarder making" and "tolerance" (Richardson 1998). Giving a complex observation of relevant ideas, Richardson implies that citizenship as a national identity is "a set of practices which define social membership in a particular society or nation-state" (1998: 85), and Bell and Binnie emphasize its "heavy heteronormativity" (2006: 870). For this work, I adhere to the term in Richardson's further explanation as a level of "not belonging to the city-state or the nation-state" (Richardson 2000: 72) as a refusal for full citizenship. Based on this, an eloquent example is people with non-normative sexualities, as they are mostly excluded from social institutions, which forms their non-belonging.

In regard to localization of my research, it is important to acknowledge that Ukraine is a Post-Soviet country, on a territory on which a war currently takes place. The country's integrity was recently undermined by the annexation of the Crimean peninsula. There are three major geopolitical narratives related to sexuality that are indicative of Ukrainian context. The first is

40 The classification was introduced by Marshall in 1950 and since then is undergoing changes (Duggan 2004)

related to the influence of Post-Soviet sexual contexts. It is characterized with criminal persecution for homosexuality (up to the incarceration) and a compulsory treatment in a mental hospital for other ‘sexual deviations’. For Ukrainian discourse these are less strict, however, the homophobic approach is peculiar for modern Russia. The second is a Western-liberal homophilic discourse. In Ukraine’s LGBT discourses, the political desire for EU-association is interpreted as a promise for assimilation for LGBT. The third discourse is an influence of national(ist) sentiments, claiming Ukrainian historically indivisible morality and sexual modesty. For this discourse, homosexuality can be tolerated (as Ukrainians are ‘historically’ tolerant) but should not be public, because this causes a threat of corruption for children⁴¹.

Talking about a non-Western context, I am mindful of limitations of the application of Western terminology. The insensitive employment of Western thoughts to non-Western contexts was problematized by many scholars. For instance, Spivak shapes her theory in relation to muted “subaltern” – a product of colonization (Spivak 2003), and Said defines the phenomenon as a process of “otherness” (Said 1978). Chandra Talpade Mohanty problematizes a homogenous character of Western ontological thought, as well as Western scientific hegemony (Mohanty 1984). Mohanty introduced the term “Western gaze”, narrating the idea of knowledge colonization in Western feminist texts. For the scholar, the ‘West’ imposes its perspective and context to another world, which yields universalization of non-Western experiences and inferiority of non-Western analytical model⁴². This issue was cursorily mentioned by Moss when critiquing epistemological Western-centrism in his analysis of *Split Pride* (Moss 2016). Also, the issue was acknowledged by Ukrainian scholars, who are anguish about the hegemony of Western optics for Ukrainian discourse of temporality⁴³ (Mayerchik & Plakhotnik 2017).⁴⁴

The current LGBT struggle in Ukraine manifests an explicit will to assimilate, expressed among other things in the demand of the legalization of same-sex partnerships. Among

41 For further information see: "For the protection of children of Ukraine": offensive on sexual rights in the discourse of religious rights and legislative initiatives (Pagulich, 2012)

42 Elizabeth Povinesli (Povinelli 2002) raised the same issue with the focus on an epistemological gap between area and queer studies, calling to be critical to ethnographic studies of non-Western territories and contexts. Also here “Through her work on aboriginal communities in Australia, Povinelli pushes at the question of what is at stake in recuperating ethnographic details and what is entailed in how those details are collected and communicated.” (Arondekar & Patel, 2016)

43 “It seems to us that by imposing such [West-developed] classifications on post-Soviet space and time, we, of course, sometimes find interesting similarities, sometimes the elements of the puzzles coincide successfully. But many other fragments of the wider picture remain unnoticed or unexplained” Excerpts of the speech, delivered at a presentation of the Magazine “Feminist Critique”, April, 2017, Kyiv, Ukraine

44 Throughout the thesis, I have adhered to the Library of Congress transliteration system.

similarities for both contexts, there is a will to be decent citizens expressed through readiness to fight with an ‘enemy’, which is different for both contexts. The US sexual exceptionalism is based on a contrast between “proper gays” and an image of a “dangerous bodies” of Muslims, who are constructed as terrorists (Puar 2007). At the same time, Ukrainian homonationalism is embodied in a willingness to support and protect the country, as of a war with Russia or a Revolution of dignity. Being decent taxpayers and committed to the state’s values citizens is another argument for Ukrainian LGBT to prove their ‘propriety’. Therefore, the US produces sexual exceptionalism as an instrument of othering raced Muslims: “during this historical juncture, there is a very specific production of terrorist bodies against properly queer subjects.” (J. K. Puar 2007). The process begets Islamophobia. Ukrainian polity instrumentalizes “gayness” to make a geopolitical switch. Tolerance to LGBT allows to estrange Ukraine from homophobic Russia and draw closer to the West. For the local Ukrainian context, dangerous bodies are those who jeopardize national sovereignty and its move towards the West. Among them are Russia’s supporters. A complication here is that LGBT is also seen as a threat to state’s interests. In wide social discourses, non-heterosexuality and non-cisgenderism are constituted as a jeopardy to a national moral and a reproduction. Connotations, regarding sexual ‘perversion’ are currently quite intensive. According to this belief, homosexuality and transgenderism lead to an extinction of the Ukrainian nation.

Concerning studies of sexualities in a local context, Ukraine, as well as other Eastern European countries (later also – CEE region), is epistemologically underdeveloped. Kulpa and Mizielinska discussing a CEE region, defined its epistemological stage as “infancy” (D. R. Kulpa and Mizielinska 2012), despite that the relevant body of literature on the West is ample. They see the reason in power interrelations between West and CEE not only in structural inequalities but also in power dynamics in queer/sexuality studies, which yields a certain (Western-centric) “epistemological focus” (D. R. Kulpa и Mizielinska 2012). The authors, discussing mostly Polish context, call Central and Eastern European region a “contemporary periphery”, assuring that its spatiality is Western enough, despite its temporality is “yet not enough advanced” (2012:18). Applying a postcolonial perspective, they raise the issue of centrality/provinciality in a geopolitical power division.

One of the illustrations for the inapplicability of Western knowledge to CEE context, I find in Moss’s analysis of a Croatian Pride (Moss 2016). Problematizing a universal character of

Western knowledge, he aims to “explore the failure of recent queer theory to account for queer lives in Eastern and Central Europe” (Moss 2016: 60). Moss concludes that the very basis of the term is irrelevant for the local Croatian context. The existing regime does not recognize homosexuals as “productive subjects” (in reference to Puar 2007: xii). The result is a mismatch with one of the major conditions for homonationalism. The same idea is communicated through Graf’s analysis of the homophobia in Poland. Interrogating the situation in times of transition (2005-2007) Graf reveals that homophobia becomes a signifier of national belonging. Thus, the division us/others is based on a homophobia, which consequently acts as a marker of “cultural identity and national pride” (Graf 2010: 584)⁴⁵. These works challenge some aspects of homonationalism and allow to evidence a conditionality of application of western theories to a CEE context. Thus throughout this thesis, I remain attentive to the particularities of the Ukrainian context when applying theoretical frameworks that have predominantly been developed in, and with reference to, the ‘west’.

There are not many works, which study sexualities in a contemporary Ukraine. However, there are some relevant sources, which discuss the intersection between political situation and sexualities. I would distinguish two young Ukrainian scholars Tamara Martsenyuk and Lesia Pagulich. Both claim that Ukrainian LGBT group is homonational: “Homonationalism, through appellation to patriotism and vindication of “correct” citizenship, contributes to the formation of a “correct” LGBT identity, which itself can be used to normalize “other”, non-normative queer people later.” (Lesia Pagulich 2016 n.p.) Martsenyuk, in her discussion, sees a geopolitical narrative of “[there are] ‘us’ who are for the Eurointegration, and ‘them’ who are against it” (Martsenyuk 2016). She concludes that the production of a “correct gay” identity is a result of geopolitical struggle, which is rooted in a current political fluctuation between European belonging and remaining under Russian’s influence: “The concept of homonationalism can be usefully applied and adapted to the case of contemporary Ukraine, where the juxtaposition of two potential political vectors—pro-European and pro-Russian—encourages attempts to create a “correct” gay identity.” (Martsenyuk, 2016: 66). Pagulich builds her argument, regarding a production of a “proper gay” identity, on an analysis on an

⁴⁵ Graf emphasizes that sexuality becomes a “boundary marker” between ‘proper’ and ‘improper’ citizenry for Polish context (Graff 2010): 584). Her focus on the transitional period allows to see the dynamics of reinterpretation of markers of national identities through the medium of attitudes towards LGBT. Graf concludes that homophobia became an indicator for national belonging, extending the tolerance, culture or identity. Despite this work explores broad Polish population’s moods, rather than attitudes within the marginalized community, it allows to see the interrelations between national identities and sexualities, which is significant for my focus, too. For Graf decency of national belonging in times of confusion, is related to the geopolitical (and cultural) transformations, which resulted in rejection of members with non-normative sexualities

agenda of two “Kyiv Pride” (2015 and 2016) events. For her, the creation of a Ukrainian “proper gay” is made through the process of exclusion of other ‘others’, like Roma people, for example (Pagulich 2016). Homonormativity through the adoption of capitalist consumerism, based on an analysis of recent Ukrainian Prides agenda, was presented by Nadiia Chushak at a public talk titled “Pink capitalism”. Chushak defines normativization of gay subjects through inclusion to a capitalist consumerism (Chushak, 2017).⁴⁶

This section is mostly concentrated on Ukrainian works, however, I also refer to a broader discussion of the issue, where the most relevant to the context I see studies which focus on countries in a transitional period. I acknowledge a comparatively broad discussion of relevant topics, among which homonormativization, assimilationist politics and instrumentalization of sexualities by scholars from countries like Poland, Hungary, Croatia or Serbia (Graff 2010; Kahlina 2011, 2014; Kulpa 2013; Kulpa и Mizielińska 2016; Renkin 2009; Takacs и Szalma 2011). The major difference between Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian situations is that of the post-Yugoslav region, Poland and Hungary are concerned with the inter-influence between politics and sexualities in a mostly transitional or post-transitional period. After joining the EU, Western homonormative hegemony made a significant impact, reshaping discourses in these countries. (Kahlina 2014; Graff 2010) For example, Kahlina refers to Kulpa’s term “leveraging pedagogy” to explain how the EU imposes a certain set of demands, where LGBT is one of them (Kahlina 2014: 74). According to this, a tolerance to sexual non-normative people acquires a meaning of a “European liberal democratic value[s]” and serves to evidence the “Europeanness” (Kahlina 2014: 76) Ukraine’s uniqueness in this discussion is in its separate standing, which results in absence of a similar top-down influence. At the same time, in Ukraine’s ambiguous political situation LGBT still acquire innovative meanings, becoming agents of political changes.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK AND A REFLECTION ON A FIELD RESEARCH PROCESS

In my work, I use discourse analysis because its application allows exploring meanings, together with an analysis of power distribution, which creates meanings. To know an extent to what Ukrainian LGBT appear homonormative, I explore the discursive narration of different forms of social arrangements. Discourse analysis gives me an opportunity to analyze what is

⁴⁶ A lecture-discussion “Pink capitalism”, a lecturer – Nadiia Chushak,. The event was organized by Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, Kyiv, Ukraine December, 21, 2017

said, forms it is expressed and what is silenced, as well as the cultural/political hierarchization of social arrangements. I deal with a very sensitive topic – a marginal practice within the already marginalized community. Therefore, I assume that the discourses they produce and reproduce are influenced by normative power. The role of power in the production or subjugation of knowledge was emphasized by Foucault. For the scholar, discourse can be produced by power and act as the result of power, it can be contingent or purposeful: “Discourse transmits and produces power, it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it” (Foucault 1988: 100).

Discourse analysis (DA), which was used mostly in linguistics and related fields, is no more an exclusive philological method. Thus, Foucault reclaims DA as an instrument of analysis, which enables him to see an amalgamation of power and knowledge, where exactly interrelations between senses make them expressive: “These relations characterise not the language (*langue*) used by discourse, nor the circumstances in which it is deployed, but discourse itself as a practice.” (Foucault 1972). For Foucault, discourses do not name, but create the reality: “no longer treating discourses as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak.” (Foucault 1972). Hence, I use discourse analysis as a primary method of my research, which investigates a meaning formation and is sensitive to relationships between power and knowledge. “[T]hrough the discursive practice” equivocations, tensivity, and fluidity of meanings are created (Shepherd 2017: 28).

To stay sensitive not only to connotations but also to the contexts they are produced in, I refer to Laura J. Shepherd, who emphasized “the constitutive effects of discourse”. In her analysis of policies, she focuses not on “what” they impact, but “how” they do (Shepherd 2017: 5). Discourse analysis has a competency to reveal a strategy of “production and reproduction of knowledge” (Shepherd 2017: 26), which executes through repetitions of manifestations, becoming substantial. A critical captious unpacking of these produced, reproduced and repeated ideas enables to track how a narrative becomes “meaningful” (Shepherd 2017: 26). In other words, I aim to find out what power strategies are used for a perpetuation of sexual normativity, a ways power-knowledge is constituted and ways it is manifested in discourses and connotations, regarding forms of partnering for the studied selection.

Following up the already stated interrelation between power and discourses, Critical Discourse Analysis allows exploring how the process of production of knowledge depends on power relations, by which I rely on Jäger and Maier's understanding of knowledge which is contained in discourses. According to the authors, there are no restrictions to what exactly we consider as knowledge, legible for DA: "All sorts of knowledge can be analysed, for example, common knowledge transmitted through everyday communication, scientific knowledge, knowledge transmitted by the media, by schools, etc." (Jäger & Maier 2014).

The purpose of this research is to explore meanings and representations of three forms of social arrangements: what kind of discourses are re-produced by my informants, regarding coupledness, multiple partner relationships and singledom and what is a relative quantity (ration) of their representation internally – for the community, and externally – for the broad audience, a Ukrainian society in a given context. I examine what kind of connotations are inscribed to these three forms of relationships and how does that contribute to a suggested homonormativity of LGBT in Ukraine. Thus, applying the method of discourse analysis I analyze narratives of my informants together with my observation of visual and verbal communication that were communicated in public spaces during two queer festivals KyivPride2017 and OdesaPride2017 that took place in Ukraine in summer 2017.

Aiming to reveal meanings, inscribed in different practices of social arrangements, I analyze a content of textual and visual products during Pride events. I focus on investigating how discourses of coupledness, multiple partner relationships, and singledom are narrated, and in turn how they reflect and produce homonormativity of Ukrainian LGBT. More precisely, I consider interviews as my major source of knowledge and complement them with print and visual materials, speeches, communicated during two events. Leaflets, slogans, printed materials, speeches at roundtables, workshops, presentations, exhibitions, movie screenings are additional sources of the data for my analysis.

To answer my research question, I conducted 20 interviews with participants and organizers of festivals' and events to ask about what kinds of social arrangements they practice and their reflections on these and other forms of social/sexual arrangements. With participants, I discussed as well other related topics such as same-sex marriage/partnership, the Ukrainian political situation and its influence on the LGBT agenda, patriotism, and national belonging. I

have endeavored to provide space to these responses where necessary and provide quotes that are emblematic of my findings.

The interviewed sample includes at least three representatives of each category of sexual orientation: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender to make the selection valid for the named community – LGBT. Two out of 20 informants are people with disabilities. The age group includes informants between 15 and 39 years old. They are residents of cities and villages from all geographical parts of Ukraine, including people, who recently moved from Crimea and Luhansk (temporarily occupied territories). To the best of my knowledge, all my informants are citizens of Ukraine.

The participants are strategically selected to represent the most active part of LGBT community. The extent of their involvement varies, and some represent what I consider ‘formal’ power. They are mostly workers of human rights and LGBT NGOs. Others have an ‘informal’ status, regarding power, in that they are mostly activists now or in the recent past, a volunteer with relevant organizations, or are involved in more grassroots initiatives. The majority of my informants took part in Pride events as an organizer, volunteer or a participant. Limiting the sample to activists allows me to better focus on attitudes of the most influential part of the community. I imply that their views shape an official political agenda of the community.

Looking ahead to what will be discussed later, fourteen of my informants were people who practice coupledness. They were either in relationships or single at the moment of an interview but defined coupledness as the best or the only possible practice for them up to this moment or for the lifetime. Four out of 20 informants have or had non-monogamous (multiple partner relations) experience. In addition, one person declared his variable experience in terms of forms of partnerships, he also indirectly pointed out to his consideration of the current single status as a format of social arrangement, rather than a temporary state.

Seventeen out of 20 interviews were conducted in Ukrainian or Russian languages. During the transcribing, they were simultaneously translated into English. I acknowledge limitations and confusions this fact causes to the delivery of meanings. At the same time, being a feminist researcher, I understand an advantage of me being associated with the community for a long-

term, therefore, be trusted to provide uneasy insights to and sensitive to meanings and discourses in narratives shared.

I obtained explicit consent at the very beginning of each interview. As a matter of security, I offered to each informant a possibility to name themselves with their real name, nick-name or to leave them anonymous. Around a half of the pool named themselves in a real or chosen names, while another half asked to be anonymous⁴⁷.

To reflect on the process of the interviewing, I should mention I was acquainted with 14 out of 20 participants. I had familiar relations with 8 of 14 previously known informants. All interviews were initiated by me, except two of the informants (15 and 16 years old) proposed to talk with them by insisting that they were “experienced enough, despite being very young” (informants #12 and #13). As the situation of the interviews was formalized, tape-recorded and started with my explanation of the purpose and getting a consent for using a data, there was no need to employ any practices to mitigate an influence of our previous friendship status for those, to whom this applies. Moreover, for this particular research previously informal friendly relationships with my informants were beneficial as they allowed to achieve more relaxed and open discussion of sensitive topics such as practices of partnering and decision-making processes for those, who possess a formal power in a community.

Despite the topic is personal and for some of my informants could be uncomfortable, I did not encounter difficulties in recruiting my informants. I experienced one refusal to talk to an intersexual transgendered person, whom I didn’t know personally, however, knowing about his participation in human rights activities. He is associated with one of the international human rights organizations. People with different gender and sexual identity were talking with me, I would say, openly and enthusiastically. I see two most possible reasons. Firstly, I remain a part of the community. The majority of my informants knew me before the research to a greater or smaller extent. Secondly, it seems like people in a community, based on a sexuality and gender, are used to talk about their sexuality and practices, they are self-reflexive about sexualities, identities, and practices. This fact contributed to deep and interesting conversations. Thirdly, as was mentioned, the interviews were conducted with mostly previously known people. People, who didn’t know me personally, saw me during

⁴⁷ I ensured every informant that the data would be used for an MA thesis, which I write being affiliated with a Central European University. I confirmed that the data will appear only in an academic field and might also appear in English-speaking magazines, besides the thesis itself.

Pride events being in a close touch with many participants and organizers. I consider this indirect evidence of my trustworthy an important factor for those, who saw me for the first time.

The process of a typical interview was as follows. As a warming up, I asked questions whether my informant was in romantic relationships at the moment of an interview, if this is important for them and why. After a rapport was established I was asking about whether they practice coupledness or another format. I was always following my informants, not forcing us to stick to my questionnaire, however, my interview consisted of four major blocks. The first part consisted of a warm-up session. Second – the discussion about different formats of relationships. Third – hierarchies and positions, “more queer/less queer”, how to position non-monogamous people. At the third part, the questions mostly reflected on the institutionalization of same-sex relationships, whether the idea of marriage has flaws and how to neutralize them. The fourth section was related to national belonging. A tentative list of questions is cited in Appendix 1.

An exhaustive list of my informants is introduced in Appendix 2. I define gender, sexual identity, age, place and time of the interview. I also identify their role in the Ukrainian LGBT community that is mostly based on my knowledge of the context, as this factor was not an interview question.

I conduct a discourse analysis of my interviews, together with data obtained from other sources. I treat equally information obtained in a form of my informants’ narratives, artifacts, taken from texts, visuals, slogan pronounced during Pride Marches in 2017 and the results of my own perceptions, based on my participation in community’s life during two decades and results of my participant observation, conducted during two major events in LGBT life in Ukraine – Festivals of queer culture Kyivpride2017 and OdesaPride2017, which took place in June and August accordingly. KyivPride events were taking place from June 9 to June 18 (10 days). OdesaPride lasted from August 9 to August 13 (5 days). Both festivals resumed with a Pride march, held at central streets of both cities.

I evidence a quite intensive dynamics of changes in discourses, perceptions, narratives in Ukrainian LGBT community lately; still, I avoid universalizations in my discussion. The community is influenced by different and active political and social processes from the

outside. Moreover, an ample amount of non-profit organizations, ruled by different policies, make an impact on the community from the inside too. I do not claim a universal character of my findings, but rather denote significant tendencies, inherent for the place and time, relevant for the research. Their tendencies are ambiguous, still, as I argue, their cumulative manifestation is indicative of homonormativity of the LGBT community in Ukraine in a given time period.

Chapter III. COUPLEDOM

“A modern concept of romantic love is an exclusive monogamy”, – claims Anna Shadrina, who studied Russian and Belarusian discourses, concerning single women (2013: 117). In her work, she points out that the growing number of single people are noticed in the West, but the issue is not addressed or unexplored in Post-Soviet space. According to her, the dynamic she observes encourages changes in states’ politics in the West. Hence, as was mentioned in Chapter II, compulsory coupledness, rather than compulsory heterosexuality, become the recent focus of states’ regulations (Wilkinson 2013). As was already stated in Chapter II, singledom appears as more subversive practice, than normative homosexuality. Therefore, in a process of liberalization of sexual regimes, concerning homosexuality, coupledness takes over and becomes a keystone of normativity, which appears to: “redefine the boundaries of the normative, between those who live in couples and those – gay or straight – who choose not to” (Jackson & Scott 2004).

In this chapter, I aim to detect the interconnectedness between coupledness and homonormativity in the Ukrainian LGBT context. I argue that coupledness signifies normativity and acts as a reference for it. I apply this suggestion to practices of Ukrainian LGBT and establish coupledness as a reference point for an analysis of partnering practices. To do so, I scrutinize three major aspects: temporality, ethics in my informants’ narrative and a representation. Temporality allows me to compare stable, long-term and linear (planned) character in comparison to temporal/ short-term and contingent character. I use the term ‘ethics’ as an all-encompassing notion for an ecology of treatment of oneself and partner(s); maturity and efficiency are among its constituents. Representation is needed to show the extent to which coupledness is communicated, whether information about it is visible and accessible.

I assume that on the level of narratives coupledness should be reflected in the most respected form of partnering. It is long-lasting, planned, and emotionally comfortable for partners; coupledness does not challenge a capitalist assumption of belonging, situating partners on top of each other's personal interests. This form of relationships is supported by institutions and discourses (Elia 2003; Rubin 1984; Jackson и Scott 2004b). I consider these aspects indicative for establishing a normative character of a practice.

The effect of improving a hierarchical position for long-lasting couples (Rubin 1984) is a starting point in my argumentation, concerning coupledness as a normative practice. Based on this theory, I presume that if within LGBT society long-lasting stable monogamous romantic relationships are narrated as more respectable/ethical, they comply with heterosexual values of stability and decency, thus, a community expresses homonormative views.

Another example is a quite comprehensive observation made by a “Sex and relationships” former teacher to his unpurposefully reproduced heteronormative imperatives: “My lectures and assigned readings, although including various sexual perspectives, were imbued with assumptions and ultimately perpetuated such notions as (1) a sexual relationship should constitute just two people, a couple; (2) long-term relationships were better than short-term ones; (3) nearly everyone was interested in sexual relationship that involves love and commitment; [...] (9) stable heterosexual relationships were exemplars to be used as models for *proper* and *ideal* relationship development and maintenance of sexuality [author’s italic]”⁴⁸ (Elia 2003: 75) He refers to many aspects, including a prioritization of long-lasting relationships over short-termed. In my next section, I examine discourses, regarding temporality.

TEMPORALITY

The planned character is one of the particularities of coupledness’s temporality, which becomes one of the significant differences between this partnership form and others. This planned character establishes a connection between coupledness and heteronormative linear understanding of time, which precludes that every person experiences a certain sequence of events in their life. This “current oppressive heterosexual model” (Rosa 1994) implies mating with a life partner and creating a (heterosexual) family at a certain time of life, usually associated with after-school life period. There are no evidence of a planned character, probably, because it appears as a self-evident aspect. Neither planned character, nor contingency was ever addressed in regard of coupledness, despite being implicitly or explicitly discussed in relation to a non-monogamies. One of my informants (#5) expressed a suggestion that this is caused by an “inertia of a patriarchal society”, which makes it obvious that every person should “create a family, plant a tree”.⁴⁹ This ironic response from a non-normative

⁴⁸ This is a quotation from an Elia’s (2003) work, which cites a self-reflection of a high-school teacher. He was teaching “Sex and Relationships” for more than 10 years, when made an analysis of discourses he reproduced in his classes about sexuality, namely how heteronormative they were.

⁴⁹ Here he refers to a Russian proverb, which says that “A real man in his life should build a house, plant a tree and raise a son”. This set of events is seen as a ‘natural order’ for Post-Soviet culture, which Ukraine belongs to.

trans informant exemplified the conclusion - coupledness is a part of a 'life-code', which does not require a reconsideration.

Longevity is another significant indicator that separates coupledness from its alternatives. Length of relationships is one of the heteronormative markers that is illustrated in the imaginary of one forever-lasting partner from children fairy-tale. Longevity, therefore, constitutes another preferred aspect. Longevity was usually associated with a stable character of coupled relations. For this point I quote one of the answers, which allows seeing a clear sentiment related to an emotional investment and longevity:

I dedicate my life to a person. I share my life, my time with them [...] relationships for me are a really deep thing. It means I live my whole life with my partner (#11)

The discourse about dedication and eternity, intertwined with a value of the whole life, sacrificed, granted or dedicated to only one person, creates a certain cult: a desirable but rarely achieved ideal. "Whole life" here is narrated not as a sacrifice, but a bliss. A 'right person' appears to be a luck to meet when a 'rightness' is defined by the longevity of a mutually pleasurable partnering. This ideal resonated with the idea of a supermonogamy. It is sold and consumed through media and public discourses. My informants-lesbian women expressed a similar to the next quotation desire:

I am dating my girlfriend for almost four years [...] I want to build my life with her, to live with her [...] And I want something I can call a family with her. (#8)

The aspiration for a longevity constitutes one of the arguments to lobby same-sex partnerships. They are seen as an instrument of sustaining relationships among homosexuals; legal partnerships are narrated as granting new more advantageous connotation for same-sex couples for themselves and a broader audience; legal security and social adaptation contribute to longevity too. In short, the imaginary of supermonogamy is implicitly present when legalization of partnerships is discussed. It becomes an idealized schema for sustaining homosexual relationships. As was already addressed in chapter II, this aspiration for inclusion into a strictly limiting heteronormative institution allows revising a threat from homosexuality for an existing convention.

Coupled monogamy grants more respectability, and provides certain (albeit, not insufficient) level of security, which otherwise lesbian can not have, due to misogyny and homophobia

(Elia 2003). This point allows to proceed to an analysis of ethics of coupledness, how mature, rewarding and ‘natural’ is to be a part of a coupled relationships.

ETHICS

In this section, I analyze whether coupledness goes along with ideas of healthy, fulfilling, rewarding relationships. It includes a voluntary character, a fair resource expenditure, or a limited amount of conditionally negative emotions. In media, coupledness appears as a marker of personal emotional maturity, which is characterized by skillfulness and a will to restrain desires. These characteristics are explicitly communicated, for instance, in psychological literature, including self-help manuals (Amil 2017, Barker & Langdrige 2010). Psychology, among other institutions like religion, science, medicine, school, sustain hegemony of normative sexual regimes and serve as a ground for perpetuating the architecture of surveillance (Foucault 1995).⁵⁰ Conducting the analysis, I focus on these markers in my respondents’ narratives, and on places of disruptions between avowed narrative and its discourses. I consider an important observation that in the responses discourses, regarding coupledness were constructed through comparison to multiple partner relationships, where MPR appeared as a secondary and subordinate practice. This is an evidence of heteronormativity in the strategy of setting up coupledness as a reference point, which I already discussed in this thesis. Thus, I mention both forms of social arrangements in this section, providing analysis of coupledness.

One of the interviews was made with an FTM transgendered person, who is 20 years old, residing in a distinct place – a mostly rural area of Zakarpatska Oblast (Transcarpatia), which is about 750 km West from Kyiv. This part of Ukraine is least integrated with the core of LGBT community in Ukraine, due to my observation and some facts. Only around one year before the research was conducted one of the national LGBT NGO opened a community center – a regional office of the organization – in the biggest town in the region. After opening the center my informant became one of the regional representatives of the organization. His narrative is particularly interesting because he is a comparatively ‘freshman’ in the community’s life and discusses both experiences – coupled and non-monogamous:

⁵⁰ Despite Foucault argues that disciplinization is not necessarily associated with an institution, but rather with a “set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets” (Foucault, 1977: 215), they may embody in prescriptions/discourses, which are supervised and corrected by “specialized” (ibid) institutions too, including the list, named in the chapter. In addition to social institutions, Foucault emphasizes a role of an family, which becomes “the privileged locus” of discipline (Foucault, 1977: 216)

I thought, why not? In our family, which was four people... it was very cool: all were creative, very interesting. It was all good not only in terms of sex but also in terms of communication, in terms of aesthetics. And more freedom, let's say so because no one is obliged to anyone. We all loved each other and understood each other. But then I've got just tired, tired of the fact that I need to be attentive to someone, that someone wants something from me all the time. And I decided to leave ... to have some rest. They know [what are my relationships now].

I would not even compare ... In poly-amorous relations, yes, it's free, nobody obliges you in any way, let's say it directly. But I want to be the only person I can come to. Yes, I'm an extrovert, I love communication, but not to that extent. Now, when I'm dating a girl, this is different. I pay more attention to her. We understand each other, respect each other, learn to feel each other's boundaries, we work on our relations and we think. That is, "I want to quit my job". – "Why?" – "I'm tired". – "Why tired?" – We talk, understand each other, look for solutions, support each other. In polyamorous relations, this too is, but it is important for some reason now that it is the only person, one person. Perhaps I'm tired of the life situation and I want to give someone something to myself (#14)

The way his narrative constructs a discursive difference between multiple partner relationships and coupledness is analyzable and tangible. He provides ideas for both aspects: temporal and ethical. The geographical distance between him and a mainstream discussion supports the suggestion that he was not influenced by mainstream ideas until recently. Still, he expresses many matching ideas. Despite a diverse experience, his narrative allows delineating at least three significant discrepancies in discourse between coupledness and MPR.

Firstly, he affirms the assumptions that coupledness signifies maturity and produces it. Given the maturity of partners makes relationships successful (compromising, acceptance, support and care with a reward for energy expenditure⁵¹). Also, coupledness (unlike MPR in this answer), provides maturation, through loving, accepting partner, who helps to build self-knowledge, reflects on behavior. Concerning this and other responses, it is fair to imply that

⁵¹ I am talking about a reward too, because it acts as an additional expected benefit in coupled relationships. Variable messages, promising a reward are widely communicated through psychological literature. In this case, it would be safe to imply that informant may be aware about them. I take into account his confident handling of terms like 'personal borders' and 'work on relationships' that evidences his acknowledgment of psychological messages. Therefore, a reward, as well as inevitable difficulties, yielding maturation, are probably familiar for the informant. Under the 'reward' I understand a promise for respectability (for being capable to maintain coupled relationships), self-knowledge and a deeply intimate, long-lasting pleasure from having a partner.

coupledom provides a specific emotional depth of relationships and is supposedly unique for this form of partnering. I would not insist on the universal character of this implication, however, it worth to admit that the tendency to the same connotation of coupled relationships exists and was expressed by other informants too (#1, 3, 8,10, 11, 12, 13, 17).

Secondly, monogamous coupledom is a ‘hard work’. This idea appeared in my interviews many times in different contexts. Many other informants, talking about their coupled experiences, stated that (romantic) relationships are difficult to maintain even with one person (informants #1, 3, 4, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17, 20). Some of them added that it is unthinkable to have more people involved as it would be exhaustive (#10, 11). As was pointed out by Finn (2012), monogamy is needed to avoid an imagined chaos, which is inevitable in case of sexual excess: “Monogamy, as participants construct it, is critiqued as an action and policy that produces an exclusive and contained essence of relationships and that guard against a perceived chaotic excess that is set up in opposition to it.”(Finn 2012). Probably, this chaos is one of the tacit reasons of an exhaustion that my informants address.

Thirdly, the difference in a given example is focused on the dichotomy obligation/freedom. Poly-relationships are narrated as a site of freedom, aesthetics, and easiness, while coupledom requires responsible attitude, emotional investment, and commitment. While monogamy is implicitly constructed as captivity, a deep, hard work and long-time effort, multiple partner relationships are easy, creative, multifarious sex.

One of the ethical points in this thesis is a substitution of a romantic love to a capitalist canon of ownership and possessing. So-called ‘reservation’ of a romantic love for a single ‘user’ invokes a discussion about a collapse of capitalist ideas and an understanding of ideas of romantic love, which becomes constituted by a mass market (Illouz 1997).

It is like... if people are in relationships they take care of each other [...] a romantic like that. In case you have a beloved person, everything impossible becomes possible (#13)

‘Love’ becomes a commodity with capitalist elements of possessing, investment and economy of romantic relationships, where a couple is a most efficient form. There were many similar ideas about “everything impossible becomes possible” when you have a partner. Thus, coupledom transforms into a tool, which enables to achieve “unachievable”.

Ethics of treatment implies different emotional states. My informants referred to coupledness as to an environment not compromised with jealousy, because in a canon of mutual belonging there is no reason for a jealousy:

Because this is jealousy, for example, when you partner... well... when the sexual act, intercourse happens between your partner and someone else this is jealousy. (gay 15)

This is true inasmuch, as a reverse effect is true too:

[I practice] only monogamy because I am very jealous. (gay, 16)

The discourse about coupledness and jealousy-free environment aligns with heteronormative imaginarius of healthiness or ecology of treatment of a partner. As becomes clear from this section, the influence of discourses, produced by media and science are relevant not only for heterosexual consumers of the meanings but also for LGBT respondents, who took part in this research.

REPRESENTATION

My aim here is to analyze how coupledness is represented within the community (internally) and how is it communicated to the external audience, which is a broad Ukrainian society. By doing this, I aim to uncover “coded messages that [are] embedded in popular culture”⁵² (Halberstam 2013: 1). An engagement with ideas of coupledness for the community itself during two queer festivals (KyivPride2017 and OdesaPride2017) is tentatively classified as internal representation. The perspective, which is located between two dimensions – internal and external – is expressed in a discussion about the legalization of a same-sex partnership. This topic influences discourses within the community, as well, as communicates a community’s issue to a broader Ukrainian society.

LGBT TALKS: AN INTERNAL VECTOR OF DISCUSSIONS

The festival KyivPride2017 opened with a movie screening, preceded by a talk about queerness in a global cinematography.⁵³ During the lecture, a brief introduction to Queer theory was given, together with the following analysis of major queer films, shot in 20th and 21st century. Despite the promising start, a set of movies consisted of six pieces. All of them

⁵² In my context “popular culture” means that ideas are communicated during two most mainstream national LGBT events

⁵³ The talk was given by Ukrainian feminist Nadiia Parfan in Kyiv, SkyCafe, Basseina str.,1 on June 9, 2017

presented either happy or tragic but exclusively coupled relationships. One exception was a story, which did not reveal partnership status of a hero. Consequently, gender identity, heterosexuality, sometimes race and class were questioned at this session, but coupledness remained self-evident.

OdesaPride2017 was rich on workshops. Instructions given to participants is another significant source of my analysis. How coupledness is presented, communicated and understood by an audience contributes to the analysis. An instruction, given during one of the most crowded workshops at the OdesaPride2017 event was next:

Choose one picture to color for yourself. You can take one more to color and present to your partner or a future partner if u don't have any now (instructor, cis-woman, bisexual, Dnipro, 38 yo)

Moreover, coupledness was explicitly promoted through plots, proposed for coloring. Some of them are presented here.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Plots are produced by a FlameHead design™ and are used with the explicit consent of an author.



The plots depicted either couples or singles. The workshop was complemented with a sort of an art-therapeutical session. While discussing with participants their feelings, stories, associated with the pictures, singledom occurred in discussions as a temporary state. Besides these clear evidence of normativity, all pictures represent quite a stereotypical gender embodiment: feminine women and masculine men, all are able-bodied, slim, young, white race. During the workshop, an openly polyamorous participant complained about a neglect of representation of multiple partner relationships, disability, or racial diversity. A depiction

of pets in these plots is another evidence of a homonormative cannon, for which pets substitute an image of children.⁵⁵

During another workshop participants were asked to present a person next to them after a short introduction in couples. Coupled arrangement for a workshop is one of the dimensions of the representation. Another one is an interpretation of the instruction. Among major aspects of the life of a fellow participant, a sexual identity, partnership status, and in some cases a length of relationships were named.

Later at the same workshop participants were asked to make a free writing assignment about a topic “love”. I quote some excerpts from presented pieces.

I have 35 years of experience in a family life. I have a beloved husband, three children, six grandchildren (A mother of a gay, a woman around 55).

I wonder what is behind the idea of ‘me and a partner’. Love is a wide frame, this is why it is difficult to comprehend it. But if you will meet the requirements, it will bestow bliss, the same way as a god does (a woman, around 45)

In both quotations, romantic partnering is prioritized over other forms of connections and is distinguished as a major value, associated with “love”. In both samples, sexuality is coupled, in the first case heterosexual and reproductive, long-term. The second case illustrates already addressed discourses, concerning challenges and achievements in a partnership. In this sample, partnership appears as a reward for self-advancement and self-disciplinization. If to skip the first statement (“me and a partner”) the quotation would question erotic connection and mononormativity. Therefore, both examples contribute to the idea or respected sexuality,⁵⁶ taken as one of the conceptual frameworks of this thesis. Being a part of the LGBT event, and despite a clear heterosexual sentiment of the first speaker, they contribute to the process or representation and enforcement of the normative discourse.

⁵⁵ This idea was presented by Jack Halberstam at the public talk – presentation of his new book “Trans*: A Quick and Quirky Account of gender Variability”, Central European University, February, 27, 2017

⁵⁶ Despite it is not exactly sexuality, rather a social arrangement, on one of the previous pages I brought up an argument about their tight interrelation

Interviews, which complemented the results of my participant observation, confirmed my guess that the ratio of representation of different forms of partnerships is unequal. My respondents stated comparatively similar numbers. While the majority were estimating the shares in comparative adjectives “the most” and “less”, some provided relative numbers (#12, 13, 15). The share slightly varied, but a tendency was “90% monogamy, 5 % open relationships, 5% other” (#12). The informant was undecided what the “other” was.

SAME-SEX PARTNERSHIPS: BETWEEN INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL VECTOR OF DISCUSSION

I examine arguments of a widely-spread discussion, regarding same-sex partnership in this section. For the moment same-sex partnerships are exclusively for forms of social arrangements present in the political agenda of Ukrainian LGBT. Therefore, this issue can be considered in a borderline between internal representation – for the community, and external – for a broad Ukrainian society. For the moment a legalization of same-sex partnerships constitutes a significant part of an LGBT official agenda.

Before starting an exploration of the representation of homosexual partnerships, it worth to make a quick look at an existing canon of a “family” in Ukraine. The analysis of state’s policies, made by Olga Plakhotnik, reveals its strictly heteronormative character: “the family is represented as 1) responsible mother and father, 2) who do not resort to abortion, 3) give birth to two or more children, 4) heterosexual, officially registered marriage, 5) thereby reviving the “traditions of the Ukrainian people” and “family institution” (Plakhotnik 2011 n.p.) . The regime appears insensitive to already existing non-heteronormative kinships, concludes the author (Plakhotnik 2011). Moreover, it “builds on new practices of social inequality and discrimination.” (Plakhotnik 2011 n.p.)

All my informants expressed their support for the legalization of same-sex partnership/marriage. The majority of them do not see flaws in this institute (all informants, except #4 and 16).⁵⁷ My informants support the idea of legalization with an argument of equality (#4, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 20), rights/official status (#5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 20), security (#1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 10, 11, 15, 17, 19), protection of children in same-sex

⁵⁷ A major argument of the informants, who pointed out to flaws was a misfit of marriage as an institution to existing practices. This, however, does not mean that they oppose to the legalization of same-sex marriages. They suggested making changes in the institution, but not its annihilation

partnerships (#10, 11, 18, 19). I am citing a part of a contemplation, regarding a marriage and a partnership. My informants express discourses, inscribed in two legal formats, where achievable is constructed as desirable, and unachievable is seen as an unfavorable. This position is unusual among the interviews, it allows critical engagement with it:

I tend to prefer the institution of partnership more. Marriage as an outdated institution, it outlived itself, I think. Marriage usually, almost always, is connected to a religion very strongly. I am more attracted to the idea of a partnership because partnerships can be for heteronormative couples as well as for homosexuals, and this canon [of partnership] will not divide. So, if this criterion will not divide, the idea of a “same-sex marriage” [corrects herself] “same-sex partnerships” or “heteronormative partnership” will not divide. A partnership can also be in a form when let’s say two old ladies (babushkas) who don’t have children or grandchildren just live together and lead a common household because it is easier for them. This happens on every step here. This will not be that strongly bounded with relationships. I think this is quite an alternative approach, and also progressive. The word “marriage” confuses me. It is too tightly connected to frameworks, values, religion, why? This [legal partnership] gives opportunities to have the same facilities as marriage gives (bank loans, inheritance, visits at a hospital, the legal responsibility for partner’s children, if they die, etc.) (#7)

My informant’s assumption about equal access to benefits is insensitive to juridic differences between marriage and legal partnership. Despite this, her arguments allow opening a discussion about who constitutes partnerships. Andrey Sullivan in his critique of gay marriages speculates on “who qualifies”, listing “an elderly woman and her live-in nurse [...] [a] couple of uneuphemistically confirmed bachelors [...] two close college students, a pair of seminarians, or a couple of frat buddies” (Sullivan 1989 n.p.). In the same to Sullivan’s manner my informant questions religion, existing frameworks, traditions; still she remains insensitive to a number of participants, tacitly privileging coupledness. A significant digression from a normative narration of institutionalized partnership I see here in problematization of a sexuality as a ground for a “family”. Sexuality as a prerequisite “[f]or monogamy to exist” (Rosa 1994: 109) was already problematized. However, both – my informant and Sullivan – question sexual bonding as a part of emancipation, here coupledness still appears a condition. It is quite indicative that my informant practices a threesome poly-relationships herself. Her

point about a coupled legalized partnership testifies a solidity of compulsory coupledness imperatives.

Her narrative of a non-romantic character of relationships allows referring to the feminist critique of a romantic ground for privileging some kinds of partnerships. I would also address a class issue, which is justified by the current Ukrainian context, characterized by poor economic conditions.⁵⁸ I imply that ‘babushkas’ in the quotation represent a working class: middle and upper class have a better access to an assistance. My long-time single grandmother and her married neighbor were helping each other in small errands until my grandmother passed away. While a reason can be an association with a classed deficient access to resources, it does not exclude an emotional support in these relationships.⁵⁹ Therefore, even in a quite thought-provocative narratives coupledness is taken for granted and is not questioned.

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, made in this chapter, I claim that discourses about coupledness signify homonormativity and justify establishing coupledness as its a reference point. LGBT community constructs coupledness in accordance to the normative imperatives, reproducing its desirable, advantageous and respectful character. Its planned, not contingent character, together with long-termness work for strengthening a normative imaginarium about an ideal form of relationships. Discourses, regarding wellbeing as an effect of coupledness contribute to the overall image of a blessed sexuality. Coupledness is constructed as a partnering, which does not provoke jealousy. Discourses translate a unique for coupledness message, regarding the economy: coupledness requires only a fair amount of energy, it is energy-efficient. Couples are created by mature people, who acknowledge and able to control their desires, which enables a long-term stable dedication to one partner.

A magnitude of coupledness is discursively constructed through a so-called “added value”: coupledness is more than a relationship of care. It is simultaneously an instrument of self-advancement and a marker of personal qualities. Coupledness is narrated as a prerequisite for a

⁵⁸ Thus, GDP per capita in Ukraine is 7 668 USD annually in 2016, while in Russia it is 24 026 USD, and in the US 53272 USD . GDP is a generalized index, which does not include intersectionality of class, age, gender, place of living or family status. Still, it allows to understand an extent of economic insecurity of Ukrainian citizens. Statistics is used from this site <https://tradingeconomics.com/ukraine/gdp-per-capita-ppp>

⁵⁹ I consider the topic very rich for further exploration. The interrelation between friendship and class - in other words who can afford not to fall under romantic utopia – so to say a capitalist utilization of emotional bond, imposing task allocation and other variables in Ukraine.

full life, a significant constituent of a life's value. Coupledness is constructed on the principle of opposition to multiple partner relationships. Elevating a hierarchical position of an individual, long-term coupledness constitutes a so-called "major area of the contest"⁶⁰ (Rubin 1984: 152, diagram 9.2), becoming an advantage for marginalized groups. The coupled format is not problematized, it is present as a given even in quite liberal narratives. In narratives of LGBT coupledness has a compulsory character, contributing to an illusion of choice, which was discussed in Chapter II.

These findings allow me to claim that the majority of my informants reproduce imperatives of a normative sexuality, concerning meanings attached to coupledness. Discourses about coupledness testify its compulsory character for LGBT community, which representatives constitute my research group. I conduct an analysis of a less normative form of partnering – multiple partner relationships – in my next chapter. I aim to find out how meanings, proliferated in the group and attached to MPR contest or reinforce an overall homonormativity of the community.

⁶⁰ A place of negotiation of the borderline, according to Rubin, about who should be included and who should not. In her examples, the scholar refers to unmarried heterosexuals, promiscuous heterosexuals, masturbators or long-term lesbian and gay male couples. Also argued in a Literature review, Chapter II

Chapter IV. MULTIPLE PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS

Being sexually non-exclusive is not enough to change society

-- Becky Rosa

As a feminist, sensitive to an influence of a standpoint on a produced knowledge, I question a universality of this idea. I read this quotation as a correspondent to the Western context, where it was produced. Hence, I can assume that sexual non-exclusivity is “not enough” for Western society, but I wonder what if a sexual non-exclusivity function as a sufficient radical power for a non-Western one? Also, I question the role of sexual non-exclusivity for smaller subcultures. In this section, I explore a subversive potential of multiple partner relationship for a Ukrainian LGBT community. Do non-monogamies contribute to homonormativity of the community or undermine it?

I explore this, following the same set of markers, introduced in the analysis of a coupledness: what meanings do they have, regarding temporality and ethics, and how are they represented within the community and to the external audience. Namely, this chapter analyzes discourses and representation of multiple partner relations (MPR), simultaneously engaging with coupledness which was established as a reference point in Chapter III. As was previously said, both formats are tightly intertwined. Thus, meanings of MPR are formed through its comparison to a coupledness in the given context. Holding “repressive sexual practices in focus” (Rubin 1984: 277), if they are repressive in a given context, allows me to be sensitive to a general conceptual framework they influence.

The aim of this chapter is to explore whether MPR⁶¹ serves as a disruptive power for an existing mononormative status quo or rather reinforces it. One of the arguments of a non-radicality of MPR is that is not a stand-alone practice, but a reinterpretation of an existing idea of infidelity. In this case, multiple partner relationships only rename, yet signifying the same practice. As Arkles argues “Combinations of economic and sexual exchange outside of marriage, as well as other non-marital expressions of sexuality, have been criminally punished in evolving—but never disappearing—ways over the course of time” (Arkles 2013:16) This quotation underlines that non-monogamies have a non-historical character.

61 In this chapter I do not provide a division to subgroups, identities, forms of multiple partner relationships, as it does not make an impact on the research question. However, I acknowledge that non-monogamies or non-coupledness, which are synonyms to multiple partner relationships here, is an umbrella term for many other subdivisions. Non-monogamies are divided on the ground of temporal/permanent partners, on disclosure or open communication, and many other parameters, which are not significant for a given research.

On one hand, a feminist critique claims that MPR does not problematize heteronormativity as its basis is sexuality. Despite its format implies an extended number of participants, the Foucauldian surveillance, and control, performed through sexuality, are applicable (Foucault 1995). To similarities between coupledness and multiple partner relationships I would also designate prioritizing of romantic connections over other connections/relations, perpetuating a power structure; according to normative imperatives, sexuality becomes a constituent of an identity. Based on this, multiple partner practices comply with major normative prescriptions.

However, there are also differences. By being public, multiple partner relationships change their discourse to more acceptable, consequently, less marginalized practice. Radical honesty and consent are two components of ethics, which make a shift in the construction of this forms of bonding. In this chapter, I explore meanings attached to MPR in a Ukrainian LGBT group. My question is whether non-monogamies acknowledged, respected, promoted equally with other forms of relationships or rather repressed, underrepresented and negatively connoted. Based on this arguments, I can imply whether the discourses and representation of MPR contribute to homonormativity or appear as a practice, which problematizes normative arrangement.

To establish a focus more properly, I introduce my interpretation of multiple partner relationships. There are many different interpretations of what non-monogamies.⁶² One of the most matching for this thesis is given by Steff: “Polyamory is a form of relationship in which people have multiple romantic, sexual, and/or affective partners. It differs from swinging emphasis on long-term, emotionally intimate relationships and from adultery with its focus on honesty and (ideally) full disclosure of the network of sexual relationships to all who participate in or are affected by them.” (Sheff 2005: 252). This definition shows the array of forms and the vagueness of classification. My aim does not include further classification or its adaptation to the given context. I consider MPR as a stand-alone practice. Someone can object that non-monogamies as a separate practice are well-known for cultures, for whom polygamy or polyandry constitute a part of a tradition. This comment originates from the heterosexual matrix and legitimizes both concepts, which I question in my thesis: heterosexuality and

⁶² As was already mentioned in the Introduction, I use terms as multiple partner relationships interchangeably with “non-monogamies”, “non-coupledness”. Despite my major focus in on the social arrangements, “compulsory coupledness, compulsory monogamy and compulsory sexuality” are tightly intertwined together (Amil 2017). This allows me to use terms “poly-relationships” / “polyamories” and “non-coupledness” together with “multiple partner relationships”, however, being aware about the differences between social arrangements/kinships and sexuality. Also, my informants in their responses used “open relationships”, “polyamory”, “polyamorous relationships” interchangeably or in one line with “multiple partner relationships”. As drawing a distinction between practices, sexual orientations, romantic inclinations and identity is not a goal of this paper, this allows to consider these terms as synonyms for this thesis.

gender binary. Despite the variances in a framework, it still can be counter-balanced by the argument that both polygamy and polyandry recognize non-monogamy for only one partner of a certain gender, bolstering heterosexuality, while polyamory does not restrain a number of partners, genders, and sexualities (Sheff 2005).

I distinguish three major arguments of the critique of multiple partner relationships,⁶³ which problematize its seemingly non-patriarchal nature. Firstly, a subject is still surveilled and disciplined (Foucault 1995) through their (sexual) relationships with other person(s). Non-monogamies are more complex, yet, multiple partner relationships are premised on sexual/romantic ties (Luna 2017; Rosa 1994; Budgeon 2008). Secondly, multiple partner relationships are constructed through their disposition to monogamy. For MPR monogamy remains a reference point. This statement not only reflected in scholarly works (Anderson 2010), (Rosa 1994a), Budgeon 2008), but also expressed by my interviewees. In addition, there is an idea of a “monogamy gap” (Anderson 2010:10) that goes beyond questioning the destructive character of adultery, claiming its surprisingly consolidating impact: “Participants who cheat do so not because of lost love, but instead cheating represents an attempt to rectify conflicting desires for monogamy and recreational sex” (Anderson 2010: 2). Thus, non-monogamy solidifies monogamy through adultery. Other scholars point to the conservative agenda of political demands, risen by poly-people globally. Some scholars even see a split of the global movement of polyamorists into feminist emancipatory and conformist conservative discourses: “The political critique of monogamy and the patriarchal family (important for the left and feminist movements) is absent at an agenda of a polyamory movement; on the other hand, feminists who practice non-monogamy as a conscious gesture since the 1970's may not even mention polyamory. Thus, there are two critical narratives of non-monogamy, a theory that deconstructs an existing political institution based on analytical knowledge, and a bottom-line practice that creates a new symbolic discourse through self-discussion.” (Zlobina 2012: 67). There are other arguments that critique or indulge MPR. Zhu claims that non-monogamy is a particularly subversive practice (Zhu 2017), while Evans does not see a relevance for any – adultery or serial monogamy – for modern life (E. Emens 2004: 281).

One of my informants expressed a point, which reflects on the Foucauldian governmentality

through sexuality (Foucault 1995) and a feminist critique of MPR. During her speculation on the topic, she came to a conclusion that polyamory is a conservative practice, a form of compliance with power imperatives:

Even if they are a polyamorous family, they are still a family. They are connected, [so] they can be easily counted. [...] Any family wants a welfare. Any family can fall under a legislation. Calculation algorithms can be applied to it. Prognosis of the behavior of these individuals can be made. (#4)

This is a close paraphrasing of a feminist critique of poly relationships that I referred to previously. Rosa (1994) and Willey (Willey 2017) would argue that the number of partners is enough to subvert homonormative hegemony. As long as multiple partner relationships (or any other, based on a romantic intimacy), engineered for dominant sexual relationships and are identified through them, they belong to the same system that generates normative prescriptions.

The representation of multiple partner relationships in a public discussion appears to be unequal. Still, this quantifying parameter itself is not enough to imply its marginalized position. The underrepresentation could also be explained by an argument of a developing phase of a practice for the given moment. A lack of a relevant information can be a cause and an effect of the position of MPR.

The analysis, conducted in Chapter III, allowed to start the exploration of discourses related to MPR through comparing coupledness to it, simultaneously establishing coupledness as a normative canon. IN this regard this reference point is justified also by an observed practice of construction of discourses of partnering through comparing them with a coupledness. I consider this fact a quite significant argument for homonormativity when a normative practice constitutes the hegemony of a normative, and “other formats”. In this chapter, I conduct a comparative analysis of both forms of social arrangements too. They appear to be co-constitutive in narratives of my informants. I focus on non-monogamies, exploring whether it contributes in a homonormativity or acts as a subversive power. Purporting a coherence, I analyze the same categories, as I did in the previous chapter: discourses of temporality, ethics and also a representation of multiple partner relationships in a given context. Results allow establishing connections with homonormativity.

TEMPORALITY

LONGEVITY AND STABILITY

As was already stated in a previous chapter, discourses, regarding coupledness connote its stable, long-lasting temporality and a planned character. For Ukrainian LGBT context, both temporality and ethics become markers of a discursive difference between the practices. As was already cursory mentioned in a previous chapter, multiple partner relationships are seen as unstable and temporal (relevant points were expressed by the majority of my informants: # 4, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13,17,19). Next quotation connotes a discursive difference for two forms of partnering quite clearly:

Would your relationships become less important or less serious, if you would hear that [your partner is a polyamorous person]? – No. [But] they would become less serious if there were relationships, to which I have invested much [from the beginning]. If a relationship is just a relationship, let's say, sex and a time spent together today... this presumes wide opportunities because tomorrow is still open. When there is much done from a perspective of tomorrow, the day after tomorrow and out of consideration of a year, and there are steps made from a reason of achievements of these milestones, and suddenly you understand that this is not that stable or [your partner] has some other/different interpretation, in that case there is a feeling that your efforts are devalued or your desires are devalued. (#4)

This answer illustrates both temporal (“a perspective of tomorrow”) and ethical (“just relationships”, “time spent together”) aspects and their discursive differences. While stating no difference in treatment of both forms of social arrangements – thus a conscious treatment is equal – the discursive construction of her narrative allows to track a dissenting thought. Polyamory for the informant is acceptable, but with a proviso - for a short-term and not committed relationships. When relationships are “not that stable” (as monogamous?), the informant feels devaluation of efforts. This is another marker of the rationality of investment (stated openly – “invested much”) – an economy of love. This brings a discussion about a secondary; still important, discussion about a capitalist idea of economy, regarding commitment.

Discourses of non-monogamies can not compete with connotations of coupledness, because a paired structure is by default seen as a perfectly efficient allocation of investments: a deployment of resources like care, time or emotions are justified. Their benefit is an image of

a future “a perspective of tomorrow” – quite a capitalist approach of investment and profiting in some time. If investments are made wisely (to a committed coupled relations), long-term benefit is probable. A tacit association of coupledness and long-lasting relationships sound problematic but fit well to discourses, produced from the heteronormative perspective. Despite this point appears as a secondary, I underline that the argument of investment and profitability, together with an economy of resources is a widespread argument in discussions about non-monogamies. Hence, discourses of coupledness are constructed in a way this form is a unique beneficiary of relationships.

A penetration of capitalism in human intimacy constitute another argument of a feminist critique that was addressed in Chapter II. The appropriation of care was recently outlined in an article titled “Romantic love is killing us” (Luna 2017). The author calls to critically engage with the allocation of care and prioritization of romantic relationships over others (like friendship), investing in them as in one major source of future profit. This leaves aside other important people, who are left aside by the exclusivity of the system of romantic imaginary that even yields a state of “being *singled*” for them (Luna 2017). The author comments on the constitution of some relationships as intimate, nurturing and satisfactory (commitment), while others are not. “I do not want to feel obligated to reserve the love and care I have for a single person, because this not just loving and caring for one person but doing so at the expense of loving and caring for everyone else. [...] I want to build a world where romantic love is not a prerequisite for these investments[...]” (Luna 2017, n.p.). Another contribution of the significance of coupledness for heteronormativity was observed by Warner. He claims that every social system is based on the heteronormative idea of relationships of care⁶⁴ (Warner 1993). A modern social system creates an infrastructure, relevant exclusively for normative people: “This means that all social relations and all forms of thinking that exist with these relations are heteronormative” (Sumatra и Davis 1999): 202).

Multiple partner relationships connote an inefficient input for the economy of relationships in a current heteronormative hegemony, defined through linearity and prudence. Thus, firstly an association of non-coupledness as a temporal partnership, and, secondly, a negative connotation of the brevity of relationship itself yield its overall discursive deprivilege, which contributes to community’s homonormativity.

⁶⁴ “sexuality and its regulation are generally linked to views of social institutions and norms of the most basic sort” (Warner 1993: xiii)

Another indicator of a temporality is a stable character of attachments. “A nonmonogamous society would not presume, - states Rosa, - that because a woman felt closer to someone one today she would not necessarily feel closest to them the next day, week, month or year” (Rosa 1994, p 118). By this observation, Rosa rises another issue. Should relationships be analyzed through their longevity at all? Longevity-brevity dichotomy acts as a reproduction of normative optics. If so, what criterion can work if any?

PLANNED OR CONTINGENT CHARACTER

Temporality can be also defined through expectation (planning) or a contingency. In narratives of both groups – with relevant to MPR experience and not – non-monogamies are connoted with a hefty level of contingency. As one of my openly non-monogamous informants said:

Once a realization occurred. I was in a relationship with a person... for six years at that moment. That was my first boyfriend, who knew me even before my transgender transition. I suddenly realized that I am in love with one more person. That was a shock for me. I never thought that was possible for me. And I didn't understand much how do people feel that. So, this kind of feeling. (#2)

As was already stated in a previous chapter, coupled relationships constitute one of the inevitable points in a logical linear time flow,⁶⁵ to put it simple – they are planned and expected. I relegate this marker to homonormativity, as coupledness is established as a reference point of a homonormativity. Consequently, a contingent character, which is illustrated in a quote provided, signifies a deviation from the norm. Non-monogamies, according to answers, occur accidentally, when a person is in coupled relations, and a desire to another person intervenes into a time-flow. At the same time, a reverse order – unexpectedly finding oneself strictly coupled – didn't appear in the answers. Thus, a contingency character appears to be an aspect of a deviation.

ETHICS

For the analysis of ethics, it is important to address a similar idea – infidelity, which I appealed to in the introduction to this chapter to show their confusion in a public discourse.

⁶⁵ This time flow is commonly presented as a sequence of expected 'natural' life events, like childhood (learning), maturing (mating), living (working and reproducing) growing old and dying.

There are differences between both, which is important to name, as these two forms of non-monogamies are sometimes confused in discourses. For this thesis, I distinguish next peculiarities of MPR. It is inherent in multiple partner relationships to have a public character; two categories of ethics – radical honesty and consent – serve to detach “ethical” poly-relationships from infidelity (Zhu 2017). The ways my informants construct ethics of MPR I examine in this section.

Some discourses are reproducing the sort of moral panics. For example, STDs were addressed as an expected consequence of non-monogamies. Some people referred to diseases openly (#12, 13), while the majority were mentioning them implicitly (#15, 17, 19, 20). The panics not only prevents from entering non-monogamous relationships but also suppresses a theoretical exploration:

No this is wrong. [...] I don't know about other [options, then a coupledness] and don't want to know, because... who knows (malo li) what else and even worse [than STD] can be. So, I don't support any other relationships, except own [monogamous] relationships. (#13)

Moral panics result in the creation of a stigmatization and a further marginalization of imagined sources of the threat, as it happened with a gay community in the 80s in the West (Epstein 1998; Takemoto 2003). They are built on emotional arguments. In the given scenario something worse, than STDs is inseparably associated with non-monogamies. Moral panics appear as an effective instrument in this case to assure inalterability of a coupledness's status as the optimal format of relationships. A manipulation through moral panics allows constructing “safe space”, associated with normative practices. An emotional component allows preventing a critical engagement with arguments. The consequences of this strategy are political: a disengagement with the non-monogamy and marginalization of those, who practice it.

The same idea of an ecology of treatment, related to a jealousy is narrated in two opposite ways by this, who stand for coupledness and those, who practice non-monogamy. Coupled people interpret ownership/belonging as an ecological format of treatment, which excludes jealousy on a ground of lack of incitement. Respondents, who experience poly-relationships consider ecology as a respectful distance, freedom of choice and acceptance. My non-monogamous informants seem to be extrapolating of the ideas of freedom and acceptance not

only on their partner(s) but to other spheres: “In general, I accept any information about myself normally. Like, oh, a hand – cool, I have it! I am in love with someone else – cool, even this happens! I do not have the kind of rejection (ottorzhenie).” (#2)

One of my informants (#3) expressed the observation between class and access to different forms of partnering. His idea was also related to an efficiency of resources, but this time material, rather than emotional. His point about a “classed issue” of MPR was supported by the arguments that non-monogamies are affordable for middle and upper-class people to physically surf between partners quickly or to accommodate all of them at the same territory. While finding myself empathizing with his regret about a high-class privilege, I imply that this point contributes to the argument about resource consumption, explored in Chapter III.

As a part of my reflexive gathering of a data, I want to address another observation. Talking to people, who practice non-monogamies, I had a feeling of acceptance, cognition interest, our discussion addressed issues quite critically. By this I do not generalize other interviews – many of my coupled informants were critical too, but many answers didn’t contain many pieces of evidence of a critical approach.

REPRESENTATION

Representation of multiple partner relationships is clearly one of the arguments of homonormativity. As was already stated in Chapter III, non-monogamies are represented in significantly lesser extent. I also observed statements that justify a purposeful exclusion of issues, related to non-monogamies, from external communications. Decision-makers of the community consider any representation of non-monogamies-related messages to the outside of the community as a strategic failure. They insisted that inclusion of non-coupledness-related issues in a general agenda would endanger expected achievements. Some referred to a ‘step by step’ tactics, claiming that there can be a ‘right time’ (#4, 6, 17, 20) for communication non-coupledness.

Some of my informants constructed their attitude towards non-monogamous people with an explicit disapproval (#12, 13, 17), some expressed their tolerance (#1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 14, 16, 18, 19); narratives of some of them contained a conflict – their formal expression was

tolerant, while the practice for themselves was constructed differently.⁶⁶ MPR is non represented and communicated as equal, which yields disadvantages for non-monogamous people within the community: “I observed the attitude from LGBT people that polyamorous relationship is a debauchery. And this is a standard approach.” (informant #2) Together with existing rational arguments, this pre-formed position confirms the vivid character of Rubin’s sexual hierarchy even in a micro-level within a marginalized group. The normativity maintains its status quo, “rationaliz[ing] the well-being of the sexually privileged”, sanctioning those, who practice non-normative partnerships (Rubin 1989: 151-152). Some of my coupled informants were self-reflexive about power relations: “Saying you are in poly-relationships... people think this is something crazy [...] In LGBT [community], I think I am more privileged” (#8). Easy “passing’ for a couple is one of the existing discursive privileges in the community.

The informants sometimes addressed a dynamics of representation of MPR in the community. Based on their testimonies, I imply that non-monogamies appear as a “fashionable” form of partnering at a certain time. In a given context, “fashion” has a meaning of a short-term raise of a popularity, a phase. It has a temporary character and also may serve a certain purpose – a provocation, an epatage. This dynamics of a fashion, being unstable and serving a certain interest, does not contest a homonormative canon, but strengthen it.

*Maybe this was related to the opening of a Queer Home Kharkiv⁶⁷ and [...] the access to the community for Anna ***. Quite many events were focused on this topic, it was widely discussed. On the first stage, it had a “domino effect”: Kharkiv event starts being discussed everywhere. Gradually, in one year the interest to the topic started flattening-out (shodit’ na net). I relate the popularity of the topic to its scandalous character. When for the majority this is something tabooed, previously the topic was closed, a sudden access to it evokes a lot of questions, not always positive. [...] On a certain stage community satisfied its interest or maybe polyamorous people were not ready to be so much open to maintain this interest with their presence in a dialogue. [...] Something else should follow. Nothing followed [...] at the end of the day this niche turned out to be empty. (#4)*

⁶⁶ I have already analyzed a relevant quotation in Chapter III.

⁶⁷ It was opened in summer 2015 https://upogau.org/ru/inform/ournews/ournews_2550.html

I am not in the community for three last years. When I was [...] there was a wave of polygamy, polyamory, it was a trend in our space. At that time, certain people and certain LGBT groups were practicing, hanging out and promote the ideas of polyamory. If we talk about the gay subculture. (#3)

The first quote belongs to a person with a great formal power in a community. She narrates non-monogamy as a marginal practice; her can words can be interpreted as a statement that only a small number of people practice non-monogamy; therefore, a splash of a popularity is a short-term incident. By getting an access to a platform, people who practiced non-monogamies used a chance to outspoken. A responsibility for a further discussion, “maintaining an interest”, is imposed on actors. No institutional support to disprivileged voices in the community was provided, including the organization, for which these people worked in the discussed community center. A power strategy of a delegated to actors responsibility perpetuates an inferior position of non-normative practices, which usually have less access to resources.

The second quote expresses a similar idea of a “trend”, a “wave”. If to track a timeline, the raise of the discussion about multiple partner relationships in the community was happening “three years ago” in a “post-Euromaidan” period. This allows to contemplate about an interconnectedness between political situation and homonormativity, which I address in my next section.

SILENCED DISCUSSION AS A STRATEGY IN THE CURRENT POLITICAL CONTEXT
In this section, I give an overview of the political context, which provides insights on reasons, due to which non-normative sexual practices within LGBT group are not represented for a broader Ukrainian audience.

The Revolution of Dignity played an important role in not only nation-building but also liberationist and emancipationist processes within the community.⁶⁸ The major belief that Ukraine approaches the European Union closely, as never before, evoked the raise of values, associated with ‘West’, among them are human rights, equality, open borders and freedom of

⁶⁸ Some informants were referring to “three years ago”. Three years previously to the interview is 2014, while the Revolution started in December 2013 and lasted until March 2014. Revolution of Dignity is also called “Euromaidan”. This term reflects on the main goal of the revolution – Euro-association (“Euro”) and the major site of the revolution – a main square in Kyiv, which is “maidan”.

expression. The promise of prompt Euro association enabled an intensification of self- and group-disclosure. However, soon after, when the expectations were not satisfied, as reforms were not implemented, the moods had changed from euphoria to concern. The positions of LGBT, who already broke into the public discussion, became precarious, numerous evidence of which is provided by attacks on any gender and sexuality-related events.⁶⁹ The situation is characterized by a prolonged uncertainty, in which Ukraine is balancing between East and West: “the latest conflict in eastern Ukraine has polarized the country more than any other in its post-Soviet history.” (Chausovsky 2015) This aided a rise of ultra-right political moods, for which LGBT is a threat because non-heterosexuality falls outside of “traditional values” of Ukraine; non-normative sexualities embody an invasion of an external cultural phenomenon⁷⁰.

Giving my own analysis as a person, who evidenced all the processes, being a part of a community, I claim that early stages of post-Revolution period, were inspired by a new President’s promise to implement democratic reforms and to facilitate a process of Euro association. This promise conducted variable self-expression as the EU was becoming closer. The moods were optimistic, expecting that the association with the EU will grant freedom of expression and acceptance of queer subjects. In three years, in 2017, one of the official speeches provides evidences that despite Ukraine’s vector is the West, Russia still has a significant influence. Thus, in a Transcript of a scientific report on a meeting of a Presidium of a National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, conducted on March 29, 2017 a speaker denotes that European political vector, despite being inevitable, causes certain issues with adaptation: “Changing the civilizational paradigm of national development will inevitably lead to a number of complex social problems. [...] first of all, the establishment of the norms of tolerance, rationally justifiable justice, mutual respect, which provokes a great hardship in

69 The most recent example is a breakdown of ultra-right supporters of an event “The attack on the LGBT rights as a form of censorship: the experience of Russia”, organized by Amnesty International Ukraine in Kyiv, Ukraine on May, 11, 2018 («Ukraine: Attack on LGBTI Event Highlights Police Failure to Confront Far-Right Violence» 2018). There is a sheer number of similar examples. Almost every event that discusses gender of sexuality is attacked in a growing dynamics. (Rasulova 2017; «„Strongly built guys“ disrupted a lecture about the LGBT movement in Kharkiv» 2018; «How far will the nationalists of Frankivsk extend to fight for their family values?» 2018; «How right-wing radical groups disrupted the discussion about themselves» 2018; «Exhibition „Art of Female Orgasm“ in Kyiv canceled: Durex canceled a 7-day exhibition due to anonymous threats.» 2017)

70 While interpreting LGBT as aliens within ‘pure’ Ukrainian morality, right-wing supporters use a physical power to deal with a ‘threat’. The most clear testimony to the statement is open and unequivocal threaten life and health by right-wing political groups and activists to Pride March participants. Some attacks resulted in injuries. One of policemen, securing participants of Pride March 2015 in Kyiv, has died out of wounds, caused by one of the attackers: “First LGBT march after the Revolution dignity in Kyiv has ended barely begun. Opponents of the action - representatives of the Right Sector and Ultras tried to prevent the march and provoked several fights with the police. As a result, 11 policemen were injured. One of them was seriously wounded in the neck as a result of an explosion of firecrackers filled with metal fragments. 12 participants of the walk were injured. [...] Opponents say that such a campaign undermines not only traditional values of a family, but, above all, contributes to a destabilization in the country” («Legalization of same-sex marriages in the USA and the situation with LGBT in Ukraine» 2015). Also here «LGBT activists collected 10 000 UAH for a militiamen, wounded during gay parade», 2015; «The number of militiamen injured during gay parade clashes in Kyiv increased», 2015

culturally and ideologically cleft Ukrainian society.”(Pirozhkov 2017) Thus, the ideological split is acknowledged and addressed. However, it worth to refer to Russian-Ukraine geopolitical interests narrated here: “Ukraine has to solve the problem of civilizational confrontation with modern Russia in order to acquire a full-fledged subjectivity. It is important to realize that the confrontation between Ukraine and Russia embodies Russia's opposition to the Euro-Atlantic community, in which Ukraine acts as an entity, a part of Europe” (Pirozhkov 2017). The extended confrontation with Russia, together with the imaginarium of belonging to Europe, causes a fair share of uncertainty in the society. This uncertainty gives a rise to nationalist sentiments. As one of the Ukrainian political scholar states, European national radicalism is caused by Islamophobia. In contrast to that, Ukrainian right-wing moods are “consequences of long processes of eradication of ethnic traits and instilment of others, in particular, the language” (Chervinka 2016) . Thus, the current raise of nationalist sentiments can be considered rather a response to a threat, where a nation is seen as jeopardized by imposing of alien habits, constituting a leftist menace⁷¹. Hence, nationalism appears as a defender of a nation. This can explain their eagerness in suppression of any “leftist”-looking manifestations. Where everything that falls out of a canon of Ukrainian tradition is considered an imposition of an alien culture. This tension between essentialist and traditional and new, ‘external’, and ‘corruptive’ acquires dangerous forms, if to notice a violent character of the fight. This canon comes with romanticization of Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, and their weaponed unit - Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

I distinguish two possible reasons of fading discussions around non-normative practices. On one hand, it can be a concealment of queerness as a matter of safety. This point is fairly justified in a current situation of rampancy of right-wing violent menace, pogroms attacks. Their targets are various disprivileged categories, among which LGBT or Roma people⁷². Normativization here allows using an essentialist framework, not practicing any social queer

71 Most telling scandals in this regard are numerous pogroms of educational events, devoted to gender issues. The major argument of opponents is that “gender” posing a threat to Ukraine’s nation. One of the recent precedent given an ample publicity in social networks, however, remaining underrepresented in official media was related to the event organized by female students of one of the most antient and respected educational institutions – Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. The event was dedicated to attract an attention of official Academy’s power to the repeated acts of sexual harassment by a male professor and conducted at the territory of the institution. A group of thugs attacked a protest, covering themselves with messages of a “leftist threat”, as if this harassment was an attack on a patriot of Ukraine exactly because of political opposition. An administration and security remained inactive at first. Later on an administration tried to hush the incident and refused to prolongue a contract with the professor (Movchan 2017)

Later on radically-minded group of men torpedo a piecefull meeting of a “Gender club” in a National Pedagogical university. This time the official power not only remained inactive, but blamed victims, threatening them with sanctions (Matsyupa 2017). This article also provides an overview of other similar attacks, followed by an indifference of official power representatives

72 One of the most recent informational outburst was caused by the violent demolition of Romas’ camp by nationalist organization C14 in Kyiv («Amnesty International demands to investigate the pogrom of a Roma camp on Lysa gora in Kyiv» 2018; «Amnesty International demands to investigate the pogrom of the Roma camp in Kyiv» 2018; «Kryshchenko said what nationalists were doing in the Roma camp in Kyiv» 2018; «Pogroms in Kiev. Nationalists against Romas» 2018; «The border is being passed: Roma pogroms in Kiev were compared to the Nazis» 2018)

as an instrument of resistant to a system. Another option to comply with normative agenda is an attempt to fit in the idea of ‘proper citizen’. This appears as an instrument of adaptation to both – Western assimilationist politics and Ukrainian nationalist sentiments. While Western policies are homonormative and homonationalist, as was already addressed in Chapter II, flirtation with nationalist agenda results in a recent formation of a phenomenon of a “gay-patriot”, who “stands on Maidan” and “fights on the war front”. This tactic prescribes to hide non-normative sexuality at a site, because of a danger, but later to reveal it and retrospectively claim to belong to “good citizens”, in spite of homosexuality.⁷³

Moreover, in a current political situation, sexuality becomes a strategic deployment of the discussion around the EU and Ukraine’s Western belonging. Such statements as that ‘Europe’ propagate gay-sex as a part of a bigger plan to extinguish ‘Ukrainian nation’ and other related fears construct a new social panic.⁷⁴ Sexuality in this time acquires new meanings and a volume of political importance, it becomes a symbolic arch between Ukraine and a ‘Western world’. Homosexuality acts as an agent of construction of the division between ‘homophobic post-Soviet space’ (mostly associated with Russia) and a progress, embedded in Ukrainian formal and quasi-tolerant treatment of LGBT. The last point reflects on a localized interpretation of the Puar’s “homonationalism”, which is a part of an image-making activity on a state’s level.⁷⁵

I am talking about quasi-tolerance, implying a formal and superficial character of acceptance. Pride marches were recently allowed to conduct at main streets in two Ukrainian cities - Kyiv and Odesa. They were secured by immense police forces for the protection of participants due to numerous threats of physical violence, coming from right-wing supporters. Despite this seeming state’s support, discourses around non-heterosexuality have not changed. In many cases of attacks, the police are inactive or even conducts victim-blaming.

In this situation, LGBT finds themselves not only in a precarious situation of being threatened, while formally supported by official power, but also acquire new meanings.

73 There is an ample number of articles, which discuss gays on a frontline of the war in Eastern Ukraine, their presence in Maidan during the Revolution of Dignity. A case-story with a gay-warrior hit the news. (*dn.depo.uachannel* 2016; «Gays in ATO did not differ from other Ukrainian fighters» 2018; «I’m gay, I was in ATO, I saw death, and I’m a patriot of my country» 2016; «We stood on the Maidan together, now they are against us: LGBT marches were dispersed in Ukraine» 2017)

74 One of the quotations, which communicates this common fear: “Perhaps I sound xenophobic, but I am sure that the “rainbow tolerance” to the norms of a new European morality is in a sharp dissonance with the mentality of an average Ukrainian. Our society is not yet ready to take children to schools where homosexuals, lesbians or pedophiles teach! We can not endorse the adoption of Ukrainian children by the same-sex ‘families’!” (Starinets 2013)

75 More broadly was discussed in the Literature review, Chapter II

LGBT become a connection between a barbarous Post-Soviet space, inherited by Ukraine, and the progressive 'Europe'. Sexuality here acts as a marker of 'Western' citizens, who, at the same time, require protection. This point questions a chess-board world-map, testifying an emergence of "global subcultures". This term was defined as: "[M]embers of particular groups have more in common across national and continental boundaries than they do with others in their own geographically defined societies" (Robinson 2013:4). This argument allows seeing a contemporary geopolitical trend. I draw a parallel between Russian rhetoric "We will always defend interests of our people on the territory of Ukraine" (*TVCentre* 2014; *ntv.ru* 2014) – the political message, which aimed to justify their armed intervention to Eastern Ukraine. A precarious position of LGBT makes a similar case. The fact of fragility at a struggle to freedom of expression and authenticity imposes a pressure on the West to intrude the situation and somehow change Ukraine's political status, aiming the same - to protect "our people", who are endangered.

Ukraine instrumentalize the situation, and claims its symbolical belonging the 'West', manifesting its support, tolerance and a decent treatment of non-heterosexuals: while official power is tolerant (LGBT marches are approved and secured with by the state), there is an immense threat to non-heteronormativity, coming from a part of a society. The positions of LGBT are still precarious and demand to be heeded.

However, this point requires efforts from LGBT too. Being agents of Western belonging requires not only to be an openly gay but to be assimilative kind of gay. This appears to be a prerequisite in Duggan's "homonormativity" (2004). Not too queer, and not normative (because not heterosexual). The balance should be just enough to constitute a 'proper citizen', who is supportive of a state's politics, but also oppressed and discriminated to the extent that requires a change. I presume that exactly this idea of 'propriety' for gayness (not for queerness now, as it is not assimilative here) led to attenuation of polyamorists' voices.

Taking a closer look at a global political agenda of polyamorists, there is a tendency of polyamorists' resemblance to a conservative flow of gay political agenda (Aviram & Leachman 2015). Some scholars are concerned with the same path – a fight for inclusion into the institution of marriage – that was chosen by polyamorists. This tacitly signifies prioritizing of marriage over other forms of non-marital existence by the non-monogamists, which "is likely to reduce the complexity and transformative potential of poly intimacies,

limit the scope and reach of potential litigation, obstruct the capacity of poly activism to form alliances and increase the likelihood of poly activism to settle for legal solutions (i.e. marriage) that are exclusive and reproductive of a culture of privilege” (Klesse 2016) . The counter-argument that expanding marriage will lead to its destruction is being conquered by the concern that marriage is a too rigid institution to accommodate all the forms of non-monogamies. Therefore, whether it is marriage or already happening registration of civil partnership for threesomes⁷⁶, seems to reinforce heteronormative hegemony. Consequently, the best-case scenario is a split in the non-monogamous movement to conservative and radical approaches (Zlobina 2012). I address this cleavage only in a given chapter because other contexts do not produce the clear-cut to conservatism and radicalism through sexual practices. While coupledness acts as an unambiguously conservative practice, singledom is not discussed as a stand-alone practice and do not offer any political demand.

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter analyzes the extent to which Ukrainian LGBT community is homonormative, based on their treatment of multiple partner relationships. The critical approach to multiple partner relationship questions its contestation of homonormativity, as it is based on the same principle of romantic boundings. This point would be an important part of the discussion in case my analysis would reveal similarity in discourses and an equality in representations of multiple partner relationships, coupledness, and singledom. This is not the case, as an analysis of a data does not support the suggestion.

As I found out, there is a tendency to construct multiple partner relationships through a disadvantageous comparison to normative coupledness. Underrepresentation of non-monogamies from internal communications, together with an exclusion relevant for them issues from the political agenda results in their marginalized position within the community they belong to, based on other aspects of their non-normative sexuality. Homonormativity in relation to non-monogamies is embodied in a segregation to ‘proper’ members and ‘others’, producing marginalized members within the marginalized group, imposing Rubin’s “punitive stigma” to its own members (1989: 151).

⁷⁶ For instance, news about registration of civil partnerships for a “throuple” have already struck Netherlands, Columbia and the US consisted with the variable set of genders: all men, all women and one men and two women (Robson 2014; Brodzinsky 2017; Taylor-Coleman 2017; Belien 2005)

Answering the question about the radical force of sexual non-monogamy, rised at the beginning of this chapter. It would be relevant to provide an answer to the question if MPR would have been constructed in a sufficient way to compromise a status quo of coupledness. As non-monogamies are marginalized in Ukrainian LGBT context, it is meaningless to detect whether they could be enough. In a researched situation there is no clear potential for multiple partner relationships to become a subversive power.

Multiple partner relationships are acknowledged as a stand-alone practice, but in narratives of my (coupled) informants were also narrated as a phase. The same temporary character is underlined by a dynamics in a public discussion within the community, characterized as a “fashion”. This “phase” argument diminishes an importance of the practice, which I consider one of the power instruments. To other power instruments, I designate the combination of discourses regarding MPR with STDs and similar fears, which keeps the practice detached. The named above power strategy of constructing a practice as a “phase”, rather than a stand-alone practice, allows me to move to the next chapter, where I examine discourses and representation of singledom.

Chapter V. SINGLEDOM

As was already discussed in Chapter II, theorists presume a great potential of singledom to contest normativity of partnering practices. The point of singledom as a counterbalancing normativity was a reason for inclusion of this form of partnering in my research, as an aim to avoid reproducing a heteronormative canon.

Feminists claim that singledom questions not only social arrangements but also an imperative of compulsory sexuality. “Compulsory sexuality” is not stated, but is implied, for daily interactions: “Beyond the expression of sexual desire or specific sexual practices, sexuality encompasses a whole set of conventions which organize everyday life. In the case of heterosexuality, its constitutive norms have been institutionalized to the extent that the violation of these norms has both social and economic consequences” (Van Every in Budgeon 2008: 301). Additionally, singledom problematizes privileging of romantic bounds, with their “‘hierarchy of intimacy’ in which partners are afforded a privileged position over other relationships” (Budgeon 2008: 312). Singledom, like masturbation, is a “solitary vice” (Laquer 2003: 291). For a heteronormative governmentality, which is designed on a basis of romantic connections, singledom, and masturbation, appear as antisocial forms of behavior. As they are invisible and untraceable, they jeopardize Foucauldian biopolitical surveillance (Foucault 1995).⁷⁷ Both have social consequences; even though masturbation is about sexuality and singledom belongs to a social realm. This strong connotation of the implied unnaturalness of the practice of both singledom and masturbation sustains the compulsory partnership imperative: “that singleness of heart was beyond our nature” (Laqueur 2003: 292). Laqueur expressed that in regard to masturbation, but as I will analyze in the chapter, this idea is applicable for singledom too.

As singledom is experienced by everyone in their lifetime, this requires a different power strategy to sustain a hegemony of heteronormativity in relation to singledom. In this chapter, I aim to explore singledom-related discourses in LGBT community in Ukraine to reveal an input they make to homonormativity or its contestation.

⁷⁷ According to Foucault, life of species becomes permeated with a system of methods and technologies that interfere with the very biological level of life, becoming a power over life, which is coined as a “biopolitical regulation” or “biopolitics”.

In order to explore singledom, I use the same a set of aspects, as were applied to the analysis in the previous chapters. In case of singledom temporality and ethics are tightly co-constitutive and inseparable, then for other forms of relationships. The shortness of singledom is inscribed in every narrative; therefore, temporality becomes an inevitable characteristic of any discourse. As a result, in this chapter both temporality and ethics are analyzed together.

Another characteristic of discourses around singledom is a contingent nature. It appears as a side-effect, which occurs if relationships fail or when a person fails to meet a proper partner. Therefore, discourses related to a singledom circulate around its transient condition. Singledom is rarely seen as a self-sufficient if it does, it becomes an attribute of a political radicality. Singledom is intertwined with a failure, and never with immaturity.

I keep the “representation” section as a category of analysis; however, keeping in mind that singledom, as no other form of social arrangement, is covered with silences. Singledom is not fully silenced, per se, but it is indicative of what exactly is discussed in case of singledom. I tentatively divide a representation of a singledom as a stand-alone practice and a temporary state. Silence is indicative and becomes an important category of analysis for this chapter. Silence emphasizes a significance of what is not said. In case of multiple partner relationships silence consciously (and according to some – strategically) makes non-coupled experiences invisible, yet present for the community. In case of singledom, silence is not purposeful and can be an effect of a heteronormative dominance.

TEMPORALITY AND ETHICS

This section is named “Temporality and Ethics” because the temporal character is determinative for every singledom-related discourse, presented in the interviews data. The overwhelmingly vast majority of my informants reproduced a belief that singledom is universal – it is typical for everyone to be single for some time. This point promotes a very certain discourse of singledom, narrating it as a temporary state, rather than a practice. In this chapter, I talk about such concepts as “incapability”, “radicality”, “failure” and “social pressure”. I build the argument, using these concepts in this order, because they allow to reveal the construction of singledom as a practice in a certain progress. First three concepts attribute negative connotations to singledom, communicating it as a temporary state, while the last one – “social pressure” contains ideas, relevant for a stand-alone practice.

During the interviews, not any other question provoked such a perplexity and uneasiness. Firstly, because we usually do not consider singledom as belonging to the paradigm that we call “relationships”. The reason could be found in a critique, for which romantic bounds is a prerequisite for heteronormative imaginariu, therefore singledom possesses such an ample potential for a disruption of the regime (Rosa 1994a; Budgeon 2008a, 2015)

Possibly due to a proclivity to normativity, as mentioned above, answers firstly and foremostly brought up the discourses of singledom as a temporary state. Mostly incapability was shaped as a necessity of a recovery after failing in previous relationships. The very idea of a “recovery” is a worthwhile contribution to homonormativity. It implies that romantic relationship is an unquestionable good, and their termination is constructed as a problem. The idea of an ultimate goodness of relationships sends us to a compulsory character of a romantic partnering imperative. This was discussed in Chapter II and addressed through an interrelation between compulsory coupledness, monogamy, and sexuality.

After less formalized questions, like “Are there any other forms of relationships?” I offered a more explicit formulation “Do you know anyone, who would be single purposefully (due to personal or political reasons)?” When the question explicitly presented singledom as a separate practice, I was noticing a reaction of perplexity and confusion as a common response. Usually, this kind of questions took longer to be answered, or ever start being answered. Moreover, answers were uncertain. A telling example of confusion and uneasiness was expressed by one participant, who stated:

Hmmm... the interesting feeling I have right now. It's like... if I will call someone like that [single] I can offend a person. I mean it is interesting, why do I have a feeling now that if I would consider a person single I can offend them... (informant #4).

In this reflexive thinking, singledom has not only a negative but an explicitly offensive connotation. This allows implying that “singledom” can appear as an abusive term. This conclusion evidences a powerful negative connotation in this case is. My informant does not have any arguments for her perplexity, but she “feels” that this idea can be offensive. This confusion allows exhibiting a manifestation of homonormative pressure, which implies a compulsory partnership, as was already said. Another discovery this quotation provides is that singledom is not condemned per se. Until it fits the imaginariu of a normative prescriptions – a temporary state, which does not exceed a ‘normal’ length and purpose, it is tolerated. The

uncomfortable state of my informant was conditioned by a gesture that someone is not temporary single.

The most usual responses to this question were “I don’t know permanently single people” (#9) and “Maybe [I know someone], I should think about this more” (#19). My informants probably considered unethical to mark someone as a single person. This fact can be explained in the same way, as a previous quotation.

Singledom as a stand-alone practice due to a political or personal choice was attributed to radicality. In one of the interviews, it was associated with a radical feminism. “Singleness... maybe some radical lesbians. [...] I can not remember the exact person. But in our feminist queer community somebody can be [single].” (#9). This quotation belongs to one of the Ukrainian feminists. An attribution of singledom to political radicality within a non-normative group emphasizes its already established subversive meaning.

In the following contemplation, radicality of a singledom resonates to a Foucauldian idea of “governmentality”. According to it, we are governed by our embodied sexuality, for which a family as a social union, serves as a state’s approved watchdogs in disciplinization. Thus, singledom appears an escape from the supervision. My informant expressed an intractability of singles in this way:

[...] At the same time people who are not in relationships come into sharp opposition, well, maybe not that sharp, but still, it is an opposition. Accordingly, they become unacceptable. People who don’t plan to create a honeycomb become riots whether they want it or not. I mean, if they want it – ok, they may not comprehend reasons of opposition, but it still exists. We all are risen in a system when a family is a social unit. [...] It is primal, primordial (pervobytnyj) in us, the formation of a primitive communion. (informant #4)

In addition to the emphasis on radicality of singledom in this quotation, she corroborates another discourse – an ‘unnaturalness’ of a non-partnered status, which was discussed in relation to a “solitary vice”. This timeless character of a compulsory partnership⁷⁸ contributes

⁷⁸ Here I define it as a compulsory partnership rather, than compulsory coupledness, because my informant speculates on relationships, however, not necessarily coupled. To avoid an inadvertency to attribute a coupledness to her point, I name it in this new way.

to a general homonormative paradigm, for which singledom is a significant agent of disruption.

The narrative of emotional exhaustion and incapacity for (next)⁷⁹ relationships at a certain period of time manifested itself in many answers. They narrate singledom as a consequence of an emotional trauma.

As I understand, there was a great negative experience. A person is not eager to repeat it. (#1)

I know at least two people, they have enough personal problems, which they solve with a help of psychotherapy. There would be additional risks to establish relationships as relationships. Maybe it [relationship] plays a role of additional triggers for them. (#4)

Among other arguments, the informants named a lack of psychological resources in general (#1,4,6,10,11) or as a consequence of a difficult breakup (informants #4, 11, 12, 15), issues with the acceptance of their body, yielding avoidance of intimacy and so, relationships (informants #4, 20). The last argument gives a chance to elaborate on an idea of compulsory sexuality, presented in Chapter II. This imperative assigns that any sexuality as a better, than asexuality. Some forms of sexual expressions are being connoted as more ‘acceptable’, than others,⁸⁰ still, sexuality remains a prerequisite of normativity. A marginal position of asexuality was evidenced by silencing it in my interviews. Not a single informant named it in relation to singledom or otherwise. In my informants’ narratives sexuality, troubles with the implementation of sexual desires may exist, but asexuality is absent as an option.

There are two non-normative forms of partnering in my analysis and I think the comparison of their discourses would bring some light on power strategies. Despite both are contingent, so occur as unplanned phenomena, MPR is narrated as an abundance or an excess of sexual desire or love, singledom regard is constructed as a lack of resources, caused by an overall incapability, exhaustion or a trauma from a breakup or unsuccessful relationships in a past. Sometimes the reason is a lack of access to a target group, which is not rare in a given context for people with non-normative sexuality or gender identity, especially if they live in rural

⁷⁹ I put the word in a parentheses to emphasize that there is always an implication of next relationships, which originates from a homonormative imaginarium

⁸⁰ Thus, some informants discussed masturbation as a practice, which changes its connotation now, becoming less pathologized (informants # 5, 16)

areas. MPR extends the normative frame, while singledom stays beyond. In regard to personal agency, singledom is seen as a lack of influence on obstacles, any kind of impotence, and multiple partner relationships signify a redundancy of an agency – full control over obstacles.

Some of the informants explained a rareness of a singledom through an argument of a social pressure. Social pressure can testify an intolerance to singledom in both formats – as a state and as a stand-alone practice. This informant, discussing social pressure, narrates singledom as a stand-alone form:

You go out and see a constant propaganda of relationships! People, who chose singledom as a concept of their life, are in a certain way discriminated. Because all the infrastructure, public spaces, social groups - absolutely everything makes a pressure on a person in a way “You (he/she/they) necessarily must have relationships! 100%”. A severe pressure affects all people, including LGBT people. (#3)

For my next informant, social pressure intersects with an issue, risen by Michael Warner (Warner 1993). The scholar noticed that the organization of a social sphere and social services are built on a compulsory coupled heterosexuality. For the informant, to be in relationships are rather a securing of care and support in older age, conditioned by a correlation between relationships and (weak) health. She also admits that for her it is not easy to resist to a social pressure, even being acknowledged about it:

I am a little bit afraid, of course, but this social pressure - maybe. And my personal weaknesses. When I will grow old, become more unhealthy, than now... When I will have some problems. Whether there will be a person near me, who will support me and need my support too... A social pressure, of course too. I am ok being single now. I do not have great plans for my future life at all. My planning is very short. (#9)

This quotation adds a point to a safety, which was already discussed in regard to legalized partnerships (Chapter III). Safety to be in relationships, especially when you are vulnerable, can signify both – a classed issue (also risen in a relation of a legalization of partnerships) and a heteronormative imperative of a compulsory coupledness, according to which non-coupled person can be condemned and ostracized. However, the idea of a non-normative partnership as an ultimate matter of safety is not unquestionable. This is problematic for a country, where the expression of sexual non-normativity is dangerous, and also, it seems like for the territory of Ukraine it was not

safe previously either. Taking into account Soviet Union's pathologization and criminalization of non-heterosexuality: "male homosexuality was banned and, according to Article 121 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, was punishable by up to five years' imprisonment. Lesbianism and bisexuality were not subject to criminal prosecution since they were considered non-existent in the USSR, they were outside the publicly expressed symbolic forms of the Soviet era"(Temkina & Rotkirkh 2002).⁸¹ This quotation reinforces the homonormative idea that partnership is an ultimate advantage.

Despite the vast majority of answers construct singledom as a marginalized invisible and silenced practice, there was one interview, which appeared to be an exception. The informant made an unconventional statement. this person was the only interviewee, who named singledom without my direct pointing on it.

- *So, there are only two forms, which are discussed?*
- *Not, actually. It is an interesting moment. There is one more form too that sometimes appears, but is discussed really rarely. This one is just about that a person may not want to be in relationships, and this is ok. Because from what I see... this...is not normalized, but a popular discourse: if you are not in relationships, then something is wrong with you...*
- So now on Facebook or somewhere else the message started to appear that being alone is OK, too. This is a discussion about relationships and about sexual practices, like masturbation [...]. Like... if it is ok for a person then why not? I support that, essentially (v principle), and again, as a person, who lives alone... (#5)*

This example, despite being unique in a series of interviews, testifies about a creation of space for a new discourse, which defines singledom as a stand-alone practice. However, a quite impressive awareness of the informant does not fully liberate his thinking from an influence of normative imperatives. He mentions masturbation, which aligns with the compulsory sexuality, rather than to refer to asexuality in case a person refuses partnerships. Keeping

⁸¹ The most clear evidence of criminalization of sexuality is a Resolution of the Presidium of the USSR Central Executive Committee "On criminal responsibility for sodomy", adopted in 1933 (a crime punishable from 3 to 5 years in prison). More on this, including other forms of punishments and additional connotations are in (Stepanova 2016; H. Robinson 1992) Psychiatrization and silencing of women's homosexuality is evidenced by numerous case studies collected and analyzed, for example, here (Stella 2014)

contemplating about singledom the informant also came up with an immixture of class and social arrangements:

I was married to a man for 7 years [...] before I started my transition. But now I feel it is more important for me to be free in many different senses. [...] I am a person, who was born and grew up in the Soviet Union in a quite poor family. When you spend a half of your life, living in the same room with other people (at first with parents, then with a husband from the same poor environment) ... You comprehend that until 30 you have always lived in one room with someone... And at last you have an opportunity to have personal space, silence, and peace, you want it. (#5)

In this narrative singledom acquires a positive connotation, together with the idea of affordability, thus, an access to it. Together with a social pressure (a bargain with relatives), my informant constructs it as an elitist form of partnering, which finds connections with discourses, expressed by the previous speaker – affordability to stay unpartnered when becoming old and unhealthy. Another similar idea was cited earlier too in relation to multiple partner relationships, which are affordable to those, who possess a certain amount of financial and time resources to maintain multiple romantic relationships. Indirectly these points are connected with an economy of relationships, which states that investment in more, than one partner, is an insufficient expenditure.

Based on this, I imply that from the perspective of working and middle-class singledom has different connotations. For this informant (who is between working and middle class) singledom is associated with freedom and own space, it is affordable for those, who have more material resources. The single living is secured by a financial stability. In this narrative singledom is a matter of choice, unaffordable for working class. There is another tendency, indirectly stated throughout interviews. It connotes coupledness as suitable for every class, while other options are classed.

REPRESENTATION

As was already said, the dominant discourse, concerning singledom, is a state between relationships, rather than a stand-alone practice. A purposeful exclusion of multiple partner relationships from the LGBT political agenda was already discussed in Chapter IV.

Singledom experiences the same non-representation. However, the reason for this is caused by a different reason, namely, a deficiency of a formed subject of a communication. Silences

in both cases – MPR and singledom – are political. For MPR silence is explained through a conservative focus of an agenda -- an apprehension to fail an assimilationist struggle was openly expressed. In case of singledom the reason is not a trade-off, but a lack of critical approach. In this section I discuss scholarly findings, regarding discourses of singledom, proceeding with an analysis of representation within the community.

The political significance of singledom is a widely discussed topic in Western social politics. Both Budgeon (2008)⁸² and Wilkinson (2013) outline singledom as one of the major issues for a contemporary Western world. Wilkinson sees a shift in a British state politics, which major focus of a modern state's politics shifts from "compulsory heterosexuality" to "compulsory coupledness" (2013: 207). This contributes to a discourse as a stand-alone practice for singledom but also may influence its representation (Budgeon 2008a)

In Ukraine, singledom is not considered as a separate social problem, despite being addressed in media.⁸³ Russian-language sources usually blame women for a rise of the 'problem', using an "exposing rhetoric" in such debates (Shadrina 2014: 80), seeing roots in an influence of feminist emancipation. This point fits the idea that heterosexuality is an instrument of women's subordination. According to Shadrina's observation, singles in media are mostly connoted as vengeful neurotics, inclined towards alcoholism and suicides (Shadrina 2014: 81). The scholar observes that Western discourse depicts singles differently yet remaining in a negative part of the spectrum: "Among other things they are seen to be selfish, deviant, immature, irresponsible, lonely, unfulfilled, emotionally challenged, lacking interpersonal ties and strong social bonds" (Budgeon 2008: 309). The latter discourse supports conclusions made in a previous section: a single person is depicted as a non-achiever, incapable to establish relationships, however, not fully. Thus, the above arguments evidence a rise of public discussion about singledom in the West, despite conveying different contexts and messages.

⁸² Budgeon explains her interest to discourses around singledom by seeing an ample spread of the practice: "For instance census data and national surveys findings are often cited in the media as indicative of a demographic trend in which singleness is becoming more common. Statistics reveal that: the average age at which people marry is rising; the most rapidly multiplying household formation is the single person household; divorce rates are higher than ever; and single-parent households are increasing in number (National Statistics, 2008)." (Budgeon 2008: 310)

⁸³ Anna Shadrina claims that "In the countries of the former USSR, this social phenomenon is not only not studied, but has not even been formulated as a problem" (Shadrina 2014: 10)

I start an analysis of the representation of the practice acknowledging that there are factors of influence. One of which is its local discourses analyzed here. They shape singledom as a temporal state, therefore the discussions can be unreflective to the focus of this thesis. After the discussion of singledom as a stand-alone practice, my informants were cognizant about the focus of the question about discussions, related to singledom. For all my informants, except one person (#5) it was difficult to answer the question or the answers was stating that singledom as a stand-alone practice is not discussed. Therefore, I attribute these silences to a strategy of a normative power and refer to the same interview, where singledom was acknowledged.

I started hearing these voices on Facebook around 1,5 years ago. They were definitely [coming from] individuals. I don't remember, who exactly they were, but they were people from an [LGBT] community and from capital cities. I remember people from Moscow among them. Later from Kyiv too. I think there was someone from St. Petersburg, but who in particular I will not restore now. (#5)

In addition to the acknowledgment of a singledom as a free-standing practice, and attempts of its open communication within the community, this piece provides other insights. For example, a valuable geopolitical discourse. In a current prevailing nationalist narrative “Russia” is constructed not only as an enemy for a nation in a wide sense. This message is sustained with another one – a barbarian homophobic state, which is a fair successor of a Soviet Union in case of homosexual oppression and homophobia. This argument invests into a homonational idea, where a state is constructed through its endorsement of certain homosexuality, positioned against ‘the other’, who reveals their intolerant position. Thus, Ukraine grants its formal approval of proper gayness. It is indicative, for instance, that organizers of marches got a permission to hold Pride marches at central streets in Kyiv and Odesa in 2017. The history of the event in Ukraine evidenced its allocation even in an enclosed space – at a territory of a film studio (5 channel 2013; «The gay parade in Kiev was attempted to be cleared away by icons, prayers and crosses» 2013). Two last years the state provides an unprecedented security measure – two marches in Kyiv were safeguarded by a police force, which greatly surpassed the number of participants. Some claim a five times

difference in numbers in 2016 and two times in 2017.⁸⁴ The ration decreased at the expense of the increased number of participants.

Such a shift evidences an increased tolerance to LGBT from the official power.⁸⁵ This fact can be explained through Puar's homonationalism. When Ukraine's reforms in different spheres are critiqued,⁸⁶ treatment of homosexuality becomes an argument in a narrative of its Western belonging. Exactly homosexuality in an official difference of discourses constitutes a new borderline between Ukraine and Russia, according to which Ukraine's handling of the 'gay issue' allows to see it as inclining towards West, while gays are treated in accordance with a Western human rights canon.

However, the fact that Russia acts as a source of bringing some new, progressive discourses contradicts to a reputation, which is delineated by the major narrative. In this case, Russia appears to be as a source of an advanced knowledge, a progress and a challenge for existing beliefs. Kyiv, according to my interviewee, only follows voices who position singledom radically differently for an existing discourse. Moreover, regarding epistemology, Russia's ideas were always narrated as more familiar for a local context. In contrast to Western ontology, which can be interpreted as irrelevant for the local context. This example evidences a contradictory image of Russia for general Ukrainian audience and LGBT. However, does it question Russia's outdated treatment of homosexuality that acts as a dividing line? If yes, this fact jeopardizes Ukraine's homonationalist reputational efforts. Before a start of the war conflict the idea of Russian advancement was common for both audiences, hence, the dynamic of public discourse shows a shift, regarding Russia. However, as this single case testifies, the national ideology does not necessarily affect a narrower LGBT audience.

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In discourses analyzed singledom appears as the most ambiguous and complicated construct of the research. A temporary character of singledom is a determinative for discourses,

8484In 2016 "Overall, more than a thousand people took part in the "Equality March". The police organized an unprecedented security measures in the center of the capital: more than 6 thousand policemen guarded people who came to the parade, more than a thousand of which are the National Guard's soldiers." («A Gay-Parade was held in Kyiv. Every pederast was guarded by five policemen» 2016) In 2017 "According to police, 2500 people took part in the March. Security of the participants was guarded by 5 thousand law-enforcers" («Bright costumes and thousands of policemen: how the LGBT March was held in Kyiv» 2017)

85 A significant change also happened in regard of trans-rights too. I have to leave this topic outside of the scope of my thesis for space reasons.

86 "[...] The Ukrainian government does not fully reach the benchmarks outlined by the EU and the IMF, so there is a risk that the course of reforms in Ukraine will slow down and even roll back," the diplomat said. European partners of Ukraine believe that incomplete reforms lead to fatigue and frustration among Ukrainians, and expect the results of the 2019 elections." («„Friends of Ukraine“ in the EU want to prevent Kyiv from curtailing reforms» б. д.)

concerning singledom as a state. It can be implied that brevity acts as a borderline a practice to distinguish two meanings, ascribed to singledom: a temporary state and a stand-alone form of a social arrangement. In contrast to multiple partner relationships, where brevity is a flaw, for singledom shortness is an advantage, which is encouraged. A prolonged singledom can be explained by an intensity of an emotional trauma. Long-term purposeful singledom associates with political radicality or incapability, it is condemned. Thus, longevity acquires a reverse meaning here. For coupleddom, long-termness is desirable, for multiple partner relationships is unachievable, for singledom is encouraged. This fact shows a fluidity of the idea of normativity.

Singledom possesses a potential to threaten a hegemony of coupleddom, built on identification through romantic bounding; therefore, enables a slip from a surveillance (Foucault 1995), and makes biopolitical governmentality invalid (Foucault 1988).

I distinguish two different power strategies for singledom. They are used to keep alternatives to a coupleddom in unprivileged positions in a heteronormative matrix.⁸⁷ Singledom is partially covered by silences and partially associated with limited interpretations: its visibility is strictly shaped, it has its visible and hidden parts. What is communicated and what is not, becomes one of the important characteristics of the strategy: it is silenced in its radically subversive part, yet leaving some of its characteristics on a surface of a social conscience.

Silences in singledom are different from silences in MPR. Multiple partner relationships' agenda exists. It appears in positions of activists, their public discussions or statements in social networks (albeit in a lesser amount, then coupleddom). This agenda is co-opted through instruments of inclusion into a formal power of non-normative people, which leads to silencing of their voices.⁸⁸ Thus, in general, representation is rather absent due to unrecognition of singledom as a stand-alone practice. However, there are some exclusions, which allow not only to analyze the emergence of new discourses but also to make some geopolitical speculations.

⁸⁷ A term, offered by Butler, which explains a tight interconnectedness between sex gender and sexuality, which are co-constitutive and produce a rigid gender-sexual regime, which inevitably imposes a compulsory sexuality (Rich), being built on the latter idea itself.

⁸⁸ I assume that a reason in a jeopardy of "common interests", which is a manipulation of the idea that LGBT is a homogenous or mostly homogenous group with more or less common interests. This allows to silent voices in favor of normative agenda. This topic requires future investigation. Due to a focus of this thesis I can address it only cursory

A discursive controversy is embodied in a geopolitical origin of “voices”, which convey discourses singledom as a stand-alone practice. Russia’s appearance in a sexuality-related domain is constituted through two contradictory vectors for the community. On one hand, it is a progressive country for a queer context, a source of new nontrivial ideas and tendencies. On the other hand, Russia is a country with a legalized homophobia, imposed from top to bottom (*BBC News Russia* 2017).

The overall implication of this chapter is that discourses and representations of singledom in Ukrainian LGBT contribute into a homonormativity of the community with some minor exceptions.

Chapter VI. CONCLUSION

THE MAIN FINDINGS OF THE THESIS

This thesis explores the ways Ukrainian LGBT appear homonormative, through the analysis of forms of romantic partnerships. Conducting a discourse analysis of meanings and analysing representations of three forms of social arrangements -- coupledness, multiple partner relationships, and singledom -- I found out that the Ukrainian LGBT community appears homonormative to a great extent.

My evidential base is built on the analysis of discourses, which according to Foucault, not only reflect an existing situation but are involved in a chain of production of knowledge, which is closely associated with power. Thus, coupledness is the most enthusiastically discussed and positively connoted practice for the majority of my informants. If it does not appear privileged purposefully, the narration-building process allows to find out discrepancies between coupledness and non-monogamies in discourses. Coupledness inevitably serves as a reference mark, multiple partner relationships and singledom are consequently produced as “other forms”.

I examined multiple partner relationships and concluded that power strategy to keep them inferior is mostly concentrated in re-producing negative connotations,⁸⁹ inevitably comparing this form with coupledness. I must admit that a negativity towards MPR is rather a tendency, to which I met exceptions. People, who practice non-monogamies express their satisfaction of a form of bonding; however, perpetuating its construction in relation to coupledness. For a majority of m informants multiple partner relationships appear to be chaotic, temporal and excessive; they are mostly exhaustive, unethical and unprofitable in regard to emotional economy. The share of representation of MPR is substantially smaller within the community, and poly-related issues are underrepresented for a broader audience.

89 Despite I proved a tangible difference between infidelity and MPR (which is in a radical honesty and consent, MPR's publicity) connotations for non-coupledness for many are significantly more negative in comparison to coupledness.

I analyzed discourses relevant for singledom and concluded the greatest subversivity of this form of partnering among analyzed samples.⁹⁰ The power strategy,⁹¹ regarding singledom, is in a concealment of its full connotation through constructing of this form of social arrangements by a limited number of meanings. Singledom is constructed as a temporary state, while only scattered voices address it as a stand-alone practice.

To sum up the discourses, coupleddom appears as a reference point in a discourse-formation process for all forms of relationships. Thus, in the majority of my informants' narratives, both singledom and multiple partner relationships are compared to coupleddom and constructed through this connection. Moreover, they are inevitably designed through a contradiction to coupleddom. The clearest differences are communication of temporalities: the alternatives are short-term and contingent, while coupleddom is seen as a life-long and planned partnership. Regarding ethics, alternatives are constructed as superficial emotional bondings, inefficient investment or stipulated by deviant/disabled emotions – a failure. Coupledness, remaining a canon for this discussion, overshadows other forms of bondings. Coupledness signifies a self-advancement, while non-coupledness is constructed as immature, excessive or incomplete. Singledom can be tolerated, while it is a phase, and is condemned as an ultimate failure, when exceeds the boundaries of a time and a purpose. An indirect evidence of a mystery of a singledom is negative feelings of confusion, restriction, and anxiety to offend, which some of my informants communicated during the interview. This strategy's output is an incomplete exploration of singledom, mixed with a confusion to approach a contemplation about it.

To sum up, I examined power strategies, which maintain a status quo of coupledness suppressing a representation of other forms of social arrangements. Based on this, I claim that coupledness appears as the most respected practice. Despite many informants formally approved multiple partner relationships, in their narratives non-monogamy appeared to be inferior, which was exposed due to a discourse analysis. Despite minor exceptions, singledom as a stand-alone practice is absent from both public and private discussions. According to all named above factors, I conclude that Ukrainian LGBT appears to be homonormative to a great extent.

⁹⁰ My finding conforms Western theoretical findings, discussed in Chapter II, where I refer to the idea that prioritizing romantic relationship over others is a part of heteronormative hegemony

⁹¹ This type of power was named a "biopolitical power". According to Foucault, life of species becomes permeated with a system of methods and technologies that interfere with the very biological level of life, becoming a power over life, which is coined as a "biopolitical regulation" or "biopolitics".

IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS TO A BROADER SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT

To connect my findings with a broader socio-political scene, an imagined political benefit of a current process can be next. As I have cursorily mentioned in Chapter I, homosexuality is used as an argument in a geopolitical discussion. As a result, if the state's politics tolerates (albeit formally) a Ukrainian 'gay subject', it discursively associates with a "progressive, liberal, Western" state. These new connotations set Ukraine against Russia's (presumably homophobic) zone of influence. In this way, homosexuality becomes an innovative token of a geopolitical process of "passing". Russia's homophobic initiatives⁹² make the instrumentalization of LGBT in Ukrainian politics even clearer. While other Euroassociational reforms turn out to be inefficient or fail an adoption, a change in the treatment of homosexuality by the state becomes apparent. The backlash of this change is an unprecedented rise of a threat, which comes from ultra-right-wing political supporters. While the official government provides a formal support, securing various gender and sexuality-related events by police forces, formally independent radical groups of people are given an indulgence to disrupt events. I claim an indulgence because based on the best of my knowledge there were no cases of any kind of punishment for those, who attacked gender- and sexuality-related events last four years. In a few such cases identities of attackers were established and reported; however, there was no activity followed.⁹³

This phenomenon enables me to apply, albeit very carefully,⁹⁴ that Puar's "homonationalism" works in a certain way. The local context does not meet the idea of a "good gay subject". At

92 By Russia's initiatives I mean a "gay-propaganda", which was recently declared to be homophobic by European Commission on Human Rights (*BBC News Russia* 2017) There are plenty of other cases too («Four years of state homophobia. Homosexuals and transgender people in Russia are fired, humiliated, beaten, tortured and killed.» 2017; «The Interior Ministry proposed to criminalize the propaganda of homosexuality» 2017)

93 There were many attacks on gender-related events recently. I have already referred to one of them, organized by Amnesty International. Another indicative case happened at the end of 2017 year. The specificity of this case is that a group of students of a Pedagogical University attacked an event, organized by their colleagues from the same university. Attackers were recognized and stated to a police force, including personal data of attackers and testimonies of victims provided. In result there is a complete silence from the police and a refusal of administration to exclude one of the students from the University: "Unfortunately, despite appeals and statements, the administration of the educational institution does not provide the incident with publicity and does not resort to the necessary actions. The requirement to exclude a student who has committed an attack is also ignored" («Right-wing radicals attacked a gender club in the NPU named after M. Drahomanov in Ukraine» 2017)

94 I want to emphasize that the US's contexts, where Puar produced the term "homonationalism" is different from Ukrainian. The US fights a terrorism, which is spread around the world and does not have a clear source. This fact produces a generalized character of a danger, while Ukraine has a very clear enemy, embodied in a country-aggressor Russia. The US is a multicultural country, which confuses a clear distinction to who bears a danger, where patriotism plays a great role. This factor is similar to the Ukrainian context. At the same time the extent of patriotism is very different. While Ukraine is threatened by a frenzy of right-wing supporters, who openly and aggressively proclaim fight against "leftists" (discussed in this chapter), in the US patriotism is non-violent to own population, which again constructs a difference in contexts. This makes it problematic to claim a complete applicability of the theory, however, there are similarities, which I acknowledge.

the same time, official power approves conducting Pride Marches at central streets of big cities. The government provides security measures by means of its official institutions: a police force and a military service. In this way, the situation, explored through the framework of homonationalism, allows noticing a dynamics of a kind of alignment between LGBT and an official state power. In the US context, the main effort of the union is stacked against Muslims, who are considered as terrorists. In the Ukrainian context, a “proper gay subject” is produced in a public discourse, not through an explicit construction of “other”, but to as an argument of the state’s “Europeanization”. This argument is close to another one, applied by Puar in her further essay (J. Puar 2013). The scholar referring to Israeli-Palestinian conflict claims another implication of the instrumentalization of homosexuality expressed in: “civilizational narratives measured by (sexual) modernity” (J. Puar 2013). Homosexuality appears not only as an excuse for occupation and a warfare but as a way to reshape a narrative from an aggressor to a defender of humanitarian values like human rights and liberal democracy.⁹⁵ Correspondingly to Puar’s separation to “proper” and “improper” citizens, Ukraine is transforming to a seemingly LGBT-tolerant state, while excluding other deprived categories of people from the canon of “propriety”.⁹⁶

Together with claiming a legalization of a same-sex marriage/partnership, Ukrainian LGBT actively and voluntarily engages with another state’s institution – an army. Inclusion into a military service becomes a prerequisite of propriety as a citizenry, supporting the message of sameness and shared values. This involvement in the current war and a preceding revolution aimed to expose a similarity in values and a manifestation of intrepidity for men, which constitutes normative masculinity. The possibility is provided by a current war in the Eastern Ukraine (2014-present times). Hence, a new emerging narrative of a ‘proper’ (militarized) gayness becomes another argument for assimilation: “masculinities of patriotism work to distinguish, and thus discipline or incorporate and banish, terrorist from patriot.”(J. K. Puar 2007). Gay-patriots stood on Maidan and claim recognition for being the same revolutionists: “It’s a pity that the guys with whom we stood side by side on the Maidan are now against us”

95 Among other relevant similarities I would lay emphasis on the emergence and open communication of messages, that align with state’s politics and avow legitimacy of state’s institutions for LGBT. During both KyivPride2017 and OdesaPride2017 march posters and slogans ideas of human rights, equality, freedom, tolerance, peacefulness of queer. A detailed analysis of that messages is beyond the scope of this thesis, however, I claim that “human rights”, “equality” and “tolerance” ideas are produced in accordance with the idea of sexual citizenship, which alligns with homonationalism. Thus, some posters openly communicated messages that LGBT are “decent taxpayers” and “law-abiding citizens”, while a major slogan of the KyivPride2017 was “State is for everyone”

96 This claim is supported by the fact that a construction of tolerance to LGBT is accompanied by a construction of a contrast between “decent homosexuals” and other deprived categories, who at the moment are excluded from full citizenship (Roma or homeless people)

(Golovastov 2017). Military service on a frontline for gays underlines their commitment and stereotypes of masculinity: many men avoid general levy nowadays («I'm gay, I was in ATO, I saw death, and I'm a patriot of my country» 2016; «Gays in ATO did not differ from other Ukrainian fighters» 2018).

Together with decent citizens and brave defenders of the state, LGBT knows a 'right time' for their self-representation in a public. This additional narrative of a 'propriety' appeared after homophobes performed a provocation to discredit LGBT protesters during the Revolution (2013-2014). A handful of dressed up 'as gays' men made a masquerade on the major site of the revolution - Maidan («"Gay-titushki" held an LGBT march - what was it???" 2014). The event caused a condemnation from both: the community and the broad Ukrainian society. As a reaction to this, LGBT organizations publicly stated their nonmembership in the event. Moreover, as a part of this disengagement, they articulated messages, which communicated a new idea: 'real gays' know when to draw attention and when to blend in with a crowd. Which means in tough times 'proper gays' do not claim their rights but stand with others for common values. Some scholars named this phenomenon an appearance of a new "correct gay identity" (Martsenyuk 2016). For Martsenyuk a "juxtaposition of two potential political vectors," which are "the global West as the norm" and a "pro-Russian" interest create a nutritious ground for the above-named phenomenon (Martsenyuk 2016: 66).

Thus, an unprecedented tolerance toward LGBT for Ukraine, implemented officially,⁹⁷ becomes a powerful argument in a narrative-building, according to which Ukraine belongs to the West. Therefore, I imply that gay subject becomes instrumentalized by the state. At the same time, an acquired data allows to draw a line between the homonormative character of LGBT and their will to include themselves in the state's manipulative rhetoric, expecting benefits like an inclusion into state's institutions. This topic has a potential to a further development, including a political science scrutiny of an inter-influence between political changes and sexualities in such a rich socio-political context as it is in Ukraine.

97 The analysis of the Decree in a sphere of Human rights, which contains a national strategy in Human rights sphere, bearing the date of 2020, reveals Ukraine's pro-Western direction, including LGBT. Despite this is a first formal document, which addresses a wide range of LGBT issues, it imposes the same heteronormative framework. Thus, it reproduces the idea of two genders, two types of sexuality (same-sex, opposite sex), coupledness (which the main subject of the thesis), etc.

Appendix 1. Questionnaire

ACTUAL PRACTICES

Do you associate yourself with any of the letters: LGBT? If not, what is your sexual-political identity, if you have any?

Do you have a partner at the moment?

Yes - Is it important for you? Why?

No - Do you want to have a partner? Why is that important for you?

If your partnership status is ambiguous, how would you characterize it?

COUPLEDOM

Are your relationships mostly coupled or not?

Why do you do that in that particular way?

MULTIPLE PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS

Do you discuss (have you) “open relationships” with a partner?

Do you consider having multiple partners? Why?

How would your perception of your relationships change, if you found yourself in open relationships or relationships with multiple partners (polyamorous relationships)?

Would they be more or less strong/serious/perspective/etc? Why?

What are personal and social consequences of poly relationships (with multiple partners), how do you personally think?

Do you know about other forms of organization of domestic and nuclear family life, except coupledness or singleness?

SINGLEDOM

Why do you think people may be single? What are reasons of their singleness?

HIERARCHY AND QUESTIONING THE IDEA

Is consciously single or a poly trans person queerer, than a coupled gay person?

Can queerness be to a certain extent, to have a degree?

What do you think is the most respected or desirable form of relationships in LGBT community: couple, multiple partner relationships, single. Range them, please.

At Pride and in a community how do people talk about the same-sex relationships and affinities? How do you see activists represent that?

How do you feel about that?

Can you recall any activities during the Pride week or in the community in general that reassured you that being in a partnership is an important part of a personal life?

Did you ever find yourself in situations, which made you question the idea of coupledness?

Do you know a consciously single person? What do you think about them and their way of private life? Did it (and how) change/undermine your way of thinking personally?

SAME-SEX MARRIAGE/PARTNERSHIP

Do you support the idea of marriage for same-sex partners? Why? What are reasons to support it for you personally? How does it influence the community in Ukraine?

Do you think the legalization of a same-sex marriage is more feasible lately? What political or social events had to influence that?

Do you see any flaws in this idea?

How would you change it to be ideal?

NATIONAL BELONGING

Are you a patriot and how do you understand that term?

Do you have a nation-state identity? What do you think about the recent political situation?

Appendix 2. List of informants

Informant 1 – MTF, around 36, LGBT NGO worker, Kyiv, June 2017

Informant 2 – FTM, around 34, human rights activist in past, Kyiv, June 2017 “I had an experience of a transgender transition. Some time ago I’d call myself a gay, but after I revised my gender, I revised this too. So, everything becomes more interesting”⁹⁸

Informant 3 – FTM, around 32, Kyiv, July 2017. “I am a person, who has a trans experience and the one, who practice social queer.”

Informant 4 – bisexual, political lesbian, 37. Managing director of LGBT NGO. Kyiv, July 2017 “In general I am bisexual, but politically I am a lesbian, a political lesbian”

Informant 5 – FTM, 35, human rights agency worker. Kyiv, July 2017. “I identify myself with T, because I have a relevant experience.”

Informant 6 – gay, 18 yo. LGBT activist. Kyiv, June 2017.

Informant 7 – 27 yo, affiliated with LGBT NGO, activist. Odesa 2017. “I don’t identify myself, as it is difficult to do. It is a rare situation when I like people, so I prefer not to concretize which gender I like more.” She a part of multiple partner relationship

Informant 8 – lesbian, 21 yo. Kyiv, July 2017

Informant 9 – bisexual, cis-woman, 33 yo, activist and feminist. Kyiv, June 2017

Informant 10 – queer woman, 34 yo, volunteer of one of LGBT NGO in past. Kyiv, June 2017. “I am a lesbian, but I like ‘queer’ more, as it doesn’t impose any restrictions on me”

Informant 11 – bisexual, around 39, activist, closely affiliated with LGBT NGO. Kyiv, June 2017

Informant 12 – gay, 16 yo, activist of a regional center for LGBT, Odesa, August 2017

Informant 13 – gay, 15 yo, activist of a regional center for LGBT, Odesa, August 2017

Informant 14 – FTM, 20 yo, volunteer for a regional department of an LGBT NGO. Odesa, August 2017

Informant 15 – lesbian, 22 yo; activist, KyivPride volunteer. Kyiv, July 2017

Informant 16 – gay, 22 yo, activist. Kyiv, June 2017

Informant 17 – gay, 30 yo, activist, volunteer of a regional department of an LGBT NGO. Odesa, August 2017

Informant 18 – lesbian/bisexual, 22 yo, activist. Kyiv, June 2017

Informant 19 – demisexual, around 33yo, manager of human rights NGO. Kyiv, July 2017 “I love a person, not a gender”

Informant 20 – gay, 19; activist. Odesa, August 2017

98 As a feminist researcher I share my power in this researcher-informant interplay and recognize the right of my interviewees to define themselves in this regard and in others, too, if they do that in their responses. I avoid forcing them into the ascribing any identity to themselves. This seems to me a way of leaving the space for resistance to the Foucauldian surveillance through this non-identity, which is a rare occasion in Ukrainian history for non-monogamous people

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