MULTIFACETED BISEXUAL SUBJECTIVITY: NARRATIVES OF BISEXUALS FROM MOSCOW, RUSSIA

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ABSTRACT

This research analyzes how people narrate and construct their bisexual subjectivities. It argues that bisexual subjectivity can be understood as a narratively constructed phenomenon and not as an identity label that can be clearly separated from other identities. Based on the literature review, three topical clusters of meanings that establish bisexual subjectivity were first theorized and then found through discourse analysis: knowledge, gender, and space. The topic of knowledge production includes discourse on coming-out narratives, identity disclosure strategies, and the establishment of meanings behind bisexuality. The theme of gender is explored via gender stereotypes, gender disbalance in the bisexual population, gender role normativity, and the heterosexual matrix. Lastly, the topic of space is analyzed with themes of visibility and passing as focal points.

The data was collected via online interviews conducted with people over 18 years old who identify as bisexuals and live in Moscow. Overall, 19 semi-structured interviews were collected over the span of several months (from March until December 2020). The mean age for the sample was 22.8 years old (min 20, max 31). Most of the sample consisted of cisgender women (17), 1 person identified as trans man, and 1 as a non-binary trans*masculine person.

The interviews were analyzed with Foucauldian discourse analysis, which allowed to deduct discursive dimensions in three overarching themes. The discursive dimensions found in the interviews include ideas about other identities, like pansexuality, notions of safety, dispositions of openness, intimacy, and desire. While some discursive dimensions were more potent for one theme than others, ideas about heteronormativity and the West appeared throughout conversation points.

Despite not being central to its theoretical arguments, this work's location shaped how many found topics were connected to the existing literature. Moreover, the idea of "the West" is critically discussed and criticized, establishing the location of interviews and the research as

neither/both Eastern and Western. For most discursive dimensions, connections are made to specific local and global contexts, underlining the Otherness of queer individuals to Russianness while also being the Other to the West based on the Russianness.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word count for this thesis are accurate:

Body of thesis (all chapters excluding notes, references, appendices, etc.): 29892 words

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Signed Maryana Balezina

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1. CHAPTER. INTRODUCTION: BEING BISEXUAL IN RUSSIA

This research aims to give insight into the lives, thoughts, and conditions of bisexual individuals living in Moscow, Russia. This project is rather personal because it directly ties to my experiences as a queer individual living in Russian. Initially, the thesis was supposed to explore gender and bisexuality: a cross-group comparison of struggles and experiences. However, upon formulating a theoretical framework, finding participants, and conducting interviews, the topics I felt the need to discuss grew significantly. The work ended up being a kaleidoscope of conversations and experienced I had with fellow bisexuals from Moscow.

This research is a semi-ethnography and semi-discourse analysis: there are many quotes and explanations about the everyday that are connected to broader discussions that exist in an unbound discursive space. By focusing on contradictory and shared experiences across several topics, I challenge a simplified understanding of Russia as a homophobic state. This challenge is upheld by a complicated location of bisexuality ("nether that, nor other"), specificities of Moscow ("Moscow is not Russia"), and the gendered bodies of the interviewees. These three topics respond to the three analytical chapters, each trying to connect various dimensions to bisexual subjectivity standing in the center. The multifaceted experience, contradictory narratives, language, and discursive trends are then taken up to argue for the complicated relationship between "East" and "West" in Russian queer discourse and Russian general discourse.

Theoretically and practically, I find the ambivalent location of Russian bisexuals to be a critical place for theory elaboration and extrapolation. Russia is a marginal location in the mainstream queer research, while bisexuals are on the outsides of the mainstream queer academia. Therefore, it provides valuable data that enrich theoretical arguments and demystifies Russia for foreign scholars. On the ground, the research gives voice to often

ignored and forgotten individuals to speak to both outside and inside, the foreign and Russian academia, communities, and activists.

There are no specific research questions or hypotheses put up for this research. Instead, there are topics of interest that ended up being commented on via the interviewees' responses analysis. First, this thesis questions how bisexual people construct their subjectivity, particularly regarding space, time, and others around them. Question of identity disclosure, meaning formulation, and role of narrative and language are asked in various sections to describe multiple aspects of the process. Second, the topic of gender was introduced to add additional intersection points to subjectivity construction. Descriptions of gender "issues" were organized around particular topics put forward by previous research on bisexual individuals. Finally, the everyday, physical/spatial aspect of bisexual subjectivity was introduced as an additional dimension to complicate the existing arguments. That aspect included conversations about safety, metropolitan areas, and passing. By adding up those elements, themes, and experiences, I attempt to create an image of bisexual subjectivity as a multifaceted phenomenon that allows ambivalence, fluidity, and contradictions.

Note on concepts, lexicon, and translations

The concept used quite often in this work is the heterosexual matrix coined by Judith Butler (2011). At its core, the heterosexual matrix is a sex-gender-sexuality tripartite system, a cultural grid of intelligibility that supports normative ways of being gendered. The matrix describes how people are categorized based on sex/gender/sexuality and how various outcomes of the categorization later interact to support the current gender order. It also serves as a conceptual connection point between other crucial aspects of the gender order, like hegemonic masculinity, heteronormativity, monosexism. In this work, the concept is used to describe the

current cultural order and the normative understanding of the relationship between the elements within the matrix.

This thesis uses the terms cisgender and transgender in two ways: first, as a descriptive category and/or identity interviewees use to describe themselves or their experiences with gender. Second, as a reflection of how people talked about bisexuality and gender. While most interviewees did not support transphobic statements and rhetoric, some did. Personally, I strongly disagree with trans exclusionary politics and do not support such views and beliefs. However, transphobic comments were essential to include as they are a part of the reality and narratives of some bisexual individuals. To balance out the conflict between my views and opinions of some interviewees, I called out and noted that such statements were transphobic in all cases where the topic came up. Moreover, by using cis- and trans- I do not imply the critical or significant difference between people in these categories. Instead, they reflect ways trans- and cis- people talked about themselves and others in a non-transphobic way. Sometimes asterisk (*) is used instead of a hyphen (-) for trans* to imply a variety of identities/descriptions that might be included in the category. For instance, some participants included non-binary people into the category of trans* while others did not. The asterisk also implies the variety of ways one can encompass transness: instead of positioning trans- against cis-, trans* responds to a more fluid way to talk about gender. The word "queer" is most often used as a synonym to the LGBTQ+ community/people and not as a reference to a particular queer identity.

Sometimes in the texts, mainly when quotes are used, a Russian version of the words is put in cursive, either written in Cyrillic or transliterated to English if it is later used in paragraphs. That was done when translations did not seem to encompass all of the meanings the word had and placed for people who might be familiar with Russian. "Q" and "A" in quotes mark questions asked by me and answers given by interviewees.

2. CHAPTER. BISEXUALITY AND BISEXUAL SUBJECTIVITY

This chapter aims to overview research previously done on bisexuality. In particular, the chapter focuses on bisexual experiences, attitudes towards bisexuality, and the interaction of gender and bisexuality from various angles. It does not aim to cover all research done on bisexuality and instead focuses on aspects that would later be important in light of the results.

There is no specific approach to this chapter. The first section mostly cites sociology and social psychology research that assesses various everyday experiences of bisexual individuals. It gives examples of stereotypes in the discourse, as they would provide a structure for further data analysis for one of the analytical chapters. Moreover, as those stereotypes represent a discourse, comments are made regarding possible local specificities and geographies both in this and later chapters. The second section focuses mechanism behind the stereotypes, particularly heteronormativity, and ways it relates to ideas about femininity/masculinity and object/subject relation. The analysis is done under the influence of feminist scholarship on the objectification of women, which serves as a connection point between the first and the last sections. The notion of the "subject" is added to ease the transition from bisexual identities discussed in the first section to the term "subjectivity," which is primarily used in this research. The last section covers bisexual epistemology and bisexual subjectivity, arguing for particular elements within bisexuality as a phenomenon and explaining the use of "subjectivity" over "experience."

Bisexual men and women: prejudices and stereotypes

Many studies in various social sciences cover the topic of particular stereotypes and prejudices bisexual people experience. In particular, the exact negative characteristics prescribed to bisexual individuals can be easily located in various measures that target biphobia or binegativity. This section includes stereotypes found in statements from the following

measures: Attitudes Regarding Bisexuality Scale (ARBS, Mohr & Rochlen, 1999), Bisexualities: Indiana Attitudes Survey (BIAS, Friedman et al., 2014), Belief about Sexual Minorities Scale (BSMS, Eliason, 1997). The three scales were chosen for several reasons. First, while all of the measures were created in the U.S. and were initially based on data collected there, all were used in other countries under various researches, proven to be valid for other locations as well (for instance, ARBS adaptation for South Africa, Arndt & de Bruin, 2011). Second, the scales were created and used for measuring attitudes towards bisexual subjects with different logic. For instance, ARBS focuses on one's attitudes towards bisexuality in general, bisexuality as a phenomenon, and not attitudes towards bisexual men and women as people. BIAS measures attitude towards bisexual individuals and consists of two versions, BIAS-m and BIAS-f. The two versions do not differ in meaning but allow to see the difference in hostility towards men and women. More importantly, employing both BIAS-m and BIAS-f shows whether the same statements are being used to describe bisexual men and women. In turn, BSMS does not differ between gay men, lesbian women, bisexual men, and bisexual women and uses the same formulations to measure attitudes to any of these sexual minority groups. Besides, unlike the other two measures, BSMS focuses on prejudice, e.g., feelings that people have towards the group members, rather than particular characteristics prescribed to bisexual individuals. Overall, the variety between measurements allows to account for more stereotypes that might be prescribed to bisexual men and women.

ARBS has 5 negative statements about bisexuality, most notably painting it as a sickness, as immoral behavior, as something that harms the society and the "natural division between sexes," as a decline in (American) values, and as simply unnatural. BIAS describes bisexual individuals as confused, as somebody to be afraid of due to HIV/STD risks, as being "incapable of being faithful in a relationship," as promiscuous people who do not care to have sex with, and as people going through a phase. The latter also applies to bisexuality in general.

BSMS describes 6 emotions one might feel towards bisexual individuals (and individuals of other sexual identities), 4 of which are negative: tolerance (bisexual people might exist, but they should keep it hidden), disapproval (bisexual lifestyle go against one's beliefs, religious or moral), disgust, and hatred (bisexual lifestyle should be punished). Tolerance is framed here as a negative emotion as it does not really challenge the heteronormative order. As Michael Warner argues (2000), tolerance is an assimilation strategy that asks queer individuals to succumb to the existing ways of life or constructs queer individuals as an insignificant, tiny minority. In either way, heterosexuality stays the norm and/or the way to live for the majority, and therefore nothing is done to challenge the heteronormative order. Overall, for the BSMS, connections can be made between disapproval and call for morals in ARBS and between tolerance and the question of invisibility that is covered later in the chapter.

These measures were primarily created with heterosexual samples in mind, that is, to measure attitudes in straight men and women. Therefore, the measures do not include stereotypes that come from other members of the LBGTQ+ community. Most notably, I would like to point out two widespread attitudes, one from gay men towards bisexual men and another from lesbian women towards bisexual women. Those are important to note due to intersectionality: while people share a gender group within the two subgroups, their relationship might still be hostile with its share of stereotypes and prejudice. For instance, some lesbian women believe that bisexual women do not come out as lesbians due to compulsory heterosexuality, which was initially described by Adrienne Rich (1980). While Rich does not state in her work that bisexuality in women is exclusively the result of compulsory heterosexuality, many used the concept to de-validate bisexual women (Card, 1985). Moreover, some lesbian women do not want to date bisexual women because they might leave them for men, which is seen as a loss and a betrayal (McLean, 2008). Similarly, gay men sometimes perceive bisexual men as closeted gays who are too afraid to come out or as people who are

not willing to face the full degree of discrimination. Attitudes like this are based on two ideas: first, that bisexual people "have it easier" as they can exist in the heteronormative order if they happen to be in a different-sex relationship; second, the belief that bisexuality is a bridge between heterosexuality and homosexuality, a sort of middle point on the road from straight to gay. As the interview would show, bisexuals never actually belong to non-queer spaces, and queer transgression is a central part of the subjectivity building.

In Friedman et al. study (2014), the results showed that BIAS's statement about bisexual people as risky partners in terms of HIV/AIDS got the highest ratings for both men and women. In the study, the results are explained via the specific discourse during the AIDS crisis, where bisexual men were thought to be the leading cause of women getting the disease, as they were constructed as "transmitters" between the gay and heterosexual "worlds." That means that possibly, this stereotype would not be applicable to other settings, which is quite common for statement-based measures that are not translated or checked for different samples. This does not necessarily discredit the stereotype, but as mentioned, it is essential to remember that all the measures originate in the U.S. and are based on non-universal historically specific discourse.

Despite quite a lengthy list of stereotypes above, there are even more ways to discredit bisexuality. While in this section, the focus was mainly on un-gendered bisexual bodies and perceptions of bisexuality in general, the following section overviews elements of bisexuality with regards to gender through ideas about masculinity and femininity.

Bisexuality and the questions of femininity and masculinity

To start the topic of gendered bisexual individuals, I would like to bring in a concept of compulsory bisexuality, first researched by Breanne Fahs (2009). It describes cases where heterosexual women perform bisexual actions to please their male partners: for instance,

women kiss in a bar while men are watching. Under compulsory bisexuality, women feel pressured to perform same-sex behavior to satisfy their male partners, or otherwise, they would be considered boring, prude, and uninteresting. Compulsory bisexuality was described inclusively for women, as the male gaze is one of the central mechanisms of the phenomena. Consequently, one might argue that the difference in perception of bisexual men and women hinges on questions of femininity, masculinity, and gender roles. A male gaze is an act of power and hierarchy that allows certain men to "manipulate" certain women and limits possibilities for agency and subjectivity. Many find the roots of the male gaze in the "traditional" gender role distribution, where women were constructed to be objects in visual culture, and men were creators and distributors. This particular nature of the male gaze was thoroughly investigated for the case of media and art (Oliver, 2017), but the loss of subjectivity and agency seem to coincide with what Fahs describes as women feeling the pressure to perform certain acts and their location as sexual objects, and not sexual subjects.

Although it is an interesting case, compulsory bisexuality is far from a widespread phenomenon. The research on compulsory bisexuality was mainly done on young women in U.S. colleges and universities and does not include women who have same-sex experiences in same-sex settings, like all-women schools or prisons. Ideologically, compulsory bisexuality should work as a top-down, one-way hierarchical phenomenon, but behavior that might be considered compulsory bisexuality (e.g., a person not identifying as bisexual but exploring bisexual behavior) appears in other ways as well. It is a somewhat nuanced phenomenon that is influenced by many different aspects besides the male gaze, and focusing exclusively on men only complies with the heterosexist gender order. Yet compulsory bisexuality shows a gender dynamic that affects bisexual subjectivity and bisexual behavior, which allows to further hypothesize about other gender-related dynamics that shape bisexuality as a phenomenon, and bisexual subjectivity as one's perception of their own identity, behavior, and the future.

What allows the "male gaze" to work is the sexual objectification and fertilization of women who have sex with women and the general dismissal of women's feelings when they are not about men. What I mean by that is that men demanding women to behave bisexually are not worried about their female partners leaving them for other women. There is a degree of certainty that women are incapable of having strong feelings towards other women or the conviction that women can not have "full" relationships with other women. Here, compulsory heterosexuality and the heterosexual matrix merge with a benevolent view of bisexual behavior in women. This sounds somewhat contradicting, but under both the male gaze and the heterosexual matrix lies the same principles of stable gender hierarchy and gender role distribution, the separation of subjects (men) and objects (women). While the classical heterosexual matrix would not allow non-heterosexual behavior, it does pay no mind to what the objects (women) really think or feel unless it is not "approved" and "allowed" by the subject (men).

Due to the hierarchy behind the power of the male gaze, compulsory bisexuality works as a one-way, top-down phenomenon, and therefore no similar effects were found when it comes to bisexual men. On the contrary, bisexuality in men is often perceived more negatively than bisexuality in women (Dodge et al., 2016; Mohr & Rochlen, 1999) from all types of samples (heterosexual and gay, men and women). Heterosexual men tend to have higher rates of hostility towards bisexual men than any other gender x sexuality combination (de Bruin & Arndt, 2010). While many explanations exist to the exact reasoning behind the hostility towards bisexual men, one follows the previously laid-out logic of the heteronormative order.

Hegemonic masculinity was initially theorized by Raewyn Connell (1987) to describe the dominating imagining of masculinity in a particular place and time. The text was revisited a few times under various critiques, most notably adjusting the flexibility of concepts. Unlike the first iteration of the idea, revisited version underlines change over time and settings for

particular characteristics that are put into the hegemonic masculinity, as well as confirming the multiplicity of masculinities, complicating the term "hegemonic," and questioning the assumed one-way nature of hierarchy (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Despite a pretty significant re-iteration of the concept, the idea of masculinity as norms that moderate one's behavior in relation to notions of femininity still stands as one of the core structures of the idea. As it initially was theorized to be strictly related to "traditional" gender role division, men fell into the same subject/object dichotomy described above. However, where women live "under the radar" as their subjectivity (and importance) exists exclusively in their relation to men, the ultimate position of a subject makes men the center of normalizing behavior. When a man violates the "rules" of masculinity, he loses his subjectiveness, and therefore his status. One's choice to come out as bisexual, or simply exist as one, is an act of a role violation: heterosexuality is intimately interwoven into the idea of masculinity, as men's subjectiveness can come into its full potential when it stands near (or against) woman's objectiveness. Homosexual behavior is perceived as a threat to traditional masculinity because it involves a contradiction between an object/subject relation: the willingness to transform from subject to an object (in the eyes of hegemonic masculinity) underlines the dependence gender hierarchy has from concepts rather than material conditions. It undermines the complex under which men exist as subjects, where relationships can only be between subjects and objects.

Contradictory to the disbalance between social and political rights in men and women, "traditional gender roles" (those that lie at the basis of hegemonic masculinity) assume more sexual freedoms for women than men, particularly relating to same-sex partnerships, desires, and practices. Men have fewer possibilities to express their sexuality and gender; that is, the variety of ways men can express their masculinity and still keep it intact is lower compared to women. An example of this would be same-sex friendships and intimacy (physical and emotion) within those: some research points out that women tend to have more close physical

interaction in their same-sex friendships than men (Bank & Hansford, 2000). Some argue that this is due to the formulation of intimacy as feminine (the domain of care), which threatens masculinity by default.

Altogether, there is a strong connection between gender and bisexuality through ideas of femininity and masculinity. Moreover, people react significantly differently to bisexual men and bisexual women, creating a difference between bisexual experiences among men and women. This means that when speaking about the bisexual subject, one can not simply hypothesize about one type of subject, about one type of experience. This is why, in the following section, an argument is made for "subjectivity" over "experience": to navigate bisexual ways of life, one would need to take into consideration other categories, like gender, to get the nuances of anxieties and identities.

(Bi)Sexual subjectivity: components, contradictions, effects

To describe bisexual subjectivity, I would like to recite Claire Hemmings (2002), focusing on her arguments for bisexual subjectivity over bisexual experience, as well as particular epistemological characteristics of bisexuality that she argued for. In *Bisexual Spaces*, Hemmings builds up a bisexual epistemology, drawing connections between experiences, stereotypes, and narratives. To underline the specificities of bisexuality, she uses the same data as described above, and therefore the links should be easy to follow. However, most of her arguments on subjectivity come from theoretical interventions with poststructuralist theorists, such as Sedgwick, Haraway, Probyn, and Braidotti, which are not covered in any of the chapters. I do not intend to repeat Hemmings' theoretical interventions with those authors and instead would like to focus on how that understanding would help this research. In particular, I will question the discursive similarity of the spaces Hemming's study and this research were conducted in.

Central for Hemmings is the consistent partiality and consistent presence of bisexuality (p. 42). Consistent presence refers to the role of bisexuality in the construction of "other" sexual identities. For instance, the conceptualization of bisexuality as the "bridge" between heterosexuality and homosexuality supports the dyadic system with two opposites. In turn, "bridge" does not exist without the two points it connects, e.g., bisexuality in this system is not constructed as valid or separate from hetero- and homosexualities. This leads to all sorts of stereotypes and perceptions, most notably, the formulation of bisexuality as a phase, as an incomplete coming-out, as not a real identity. In this system, bisexuality is needed to support the existing epistemological order but simultaneously must be unrecognized and othered in order to fulfill its supporting role.

In turn, consistent partiality describes the bisexual experience. In particular, it characterizes several everyday encounters that stem from the previously named conceptualization of bisexuality and its aftermath: invisibility and temporal inconsistency. Under the traditional epistemological system, people learn about one's sexuality through the sex of their (previous, current, or future) partner. The system assumes consistency in the sex of one's partner for both heterosexuality and homosexuality. In the case of bisexuality, it is only truly visible and recognizable if one has a simultaneous relationship with people of different sexes. Therefore the "ideal bisexual" is the one who is always present in this triad. While this "ideal" technically contradicts the monogamous nature inscribed into the existing epistemological system, it is the only occasion under which bisexuality is hard to not recognize. In traditional monogamous cases, bisexual individuals are usually read as either gay or straight, which shows that bisexuality is impossible to be read into the subject through conventional means of knowledge production. Bisexuality's existence questions one's methods of sexuality deduction through the strategical undermining of many assumed positions: namely, the assumed duality of genders and assumed duality of sexualities. A sort of prolongation of this

logic would be the idea of temporal inconsistency. The dualistic monosexist system, besides required monogamy, also assumes consistency in the sex of partners in the past, present, and future. For instance, some bisexual people experience recategorization of their experiences from "relationship" to "simply close friendships" as a way to deal with the inconsistency. The same goes for imaginings about the future, where the system requires consistency, and bisexuality does not provide that. The sum of experiences like these is described by Hemmings as "consistently partial."

The argument for subjectivity over experiences responds to a broader conversation between theorists/activists and feminist/queer scholars. As a theorist, Hemmings argues against the separation of gender and sexuality and against the division of feminist and queer knowledge production. The term "experience" often assumes that separation by underlining only one particular dimension stated before the word (e.g., "women's experience" presupposes a universal experience for women, without any considerations for other categories, leading to isolation of object of research). What is more, unlike "experience," "subjectivity" allows one to understand the subject in a process, as somebody "who is formed "through experience," and not prior to it" (p. 39). This, in turn, makes it possible to work with complicated in-the-moment processes of knowledge production, adding other categories, like sex and gender, to the analysis.

For this research, focusing on subjectivity and not experience provides an opportunity to work intersectionally and analyze changes in a temporal cut. It also shifts attention from identity politics and identity construction towards in-the-moment narratives, producing knowledge about oneself with regard to knowledge already present in the discourse.

A few things are essential to note to balance out and refresh arguments taken up from Hemmings. While the author does not assume universality in bisexual epistemology, that is, she notes about the geographical limitations of her research data, the arguments are sometimes

read as universal, which is quite common for things concerning epistemology. Book's arguments rely heavily on the existence of a dominant paradigm, with the duality of sexualities and genders being the system's center. While it would be wrong to say that the system changed significantly in 20 years since the book's publication, I believe the discourse did develop somewhat by being self-reflexive and innovative. I don't think that the idea of bisexuality as a "bridge" is necessarily relevant, as such imagining rarely comes up when bisexuality is discussed. Moreover, with the critique of identity politics in mainstream movement, the idea of sexuality as one's stable characteristic also became less prevalent among queer activists. That said, biphobia is still prevalent, with the same ideas about "a phase" and "closeted gayness" still existing in the discourse.

3. CHAPTER. GEOGRAPHY: (BI)SEXUALITY IN RUSSIA, QUEERNESS IN MOSCOW

This chapter aims to give an overview of the queer lives people in Russia had in the 20th century and have now. I do not intend to cover the political history or even the queer history of Russia in the 20th century and early 21st century. The aim is to situate and contextualize the research, the data, and interpretations. At the center of this chapter is what some call "queer lifestyles" (Bell & Binnie, 2004; Chaney, 1996): ways people lived with their same-sex desires and what practices they had to act out to live out queer desires. Surrounding this overview of lifestyles is historical accounts of public discourses, particularly medical, political, and legal changes queer individuals witnessed. As it would become clear, various conflicting discourses had mixed effects on the lives of Russian queer individuals in the 20th and 21st centuries.

The sections develop in a time-linear manner. I find it fitting to connect ideas and events from the previous political system to the current changes surrounding queer individuals and queer lifestyles. To keep the contextualization relatively short, the overview starts with the early-Bolshevik era of the 1920s, when the most rapid political changes occurred. The final section covers the most recent interventions of legal and political discourses up to the year 2020.

Through the sections, attempts are made to connect discursive changes in the USSR and Russia to "Western" discourses of similar topics in respective periods. Some of the connections are made following other scholars and their accounts, while others, the more contemporary ones, are made by me based on my experiences and understanding of the mainstream pro-queer discourse. The exact meaning of "Western" and Russia's location in the East vs. West paradigm is discussed more closely in the final section.

Following Donna Haraway's ideas on partial objectivity (1988), I would like to explain my location and establish my research position. I find it fitting to expand on this topic in this

chapter because the site for the research was chosen almost exclusively due to my personal experiences. I consider myself to be a Moscow native, as I lived most of my life here. I am familiar with the city's urban history, customs, significant sights, and places queer people use to hang out. I am also submerged in some public discourses, follow several mainstream Russian Moscow-based queer activists, read multiple Russian pro-queer media, and support some Russian oppositional movement agendas. My involvement in city living provides both an advantage and disadvantage to the research. On the one hand, I had no problems understanding the queer language my participants used and did not have to ask questions about the city and specific locations within the town during interviews. On the other hand, due to my immersion in a very particular media bubble (including mostly queer-friendly oppositional "liberal" online media outlets), I am unfamiliar with anything that happens outside of the Moscow auto-ring (the circular highway that goes around Moscow as an unofficial border; some areas outside the ring are still zones that are technically a part of Moscow but in people's speech they are configured as the "new Moscow"). I have been living my whole life in residential areas on the outskirts of Moscow (*спальные районы*; commuter "towns," or rather enclaves, still within the city limits), I come from an upper-middle-class family and rarely had troubles with "marginal" groups (e.g., drug users and drug dealers, *gopnik*s), never experienced physically violent interactions, and do not feel particularly in danger when being out on the streets. Due to my limited experiences, when talking to my interviewees, I asked questions about their encounters in other cities, even when those cities were technically a part of Moscow oblast'. Moreover, my media bubble does not let me estimate with any certainty the actual amount of queer-friendly and queer-phobic media and publications in the more prominent discourse.

In the chapter, the words "homosexual" and "queer" are used as synonyms for two reasons. First, most of the historical accounts used as sources describe the lives of "homosexual individuals," that is, gay cismen and lesbian ciswomen. None of the section's sources talk about

Russian bisexual individuals exclusively, but it is possible that the group "homosexual individuals" included those who used that label or displayed bisexual behavior. The group "homosexual individuals" seems to include people of other identities, yet due to the time of research and/or documents used for historical analysis, the term "homosexual individuals" was used as a broad category to describe non-heterosexual individuals. Second, the terms are used as synonyms to avoid repetition and partially underline how the word queer does not really have a strong border or sacral meaning in Russian.

(Homo)sexuality in USSR: ways of life

This section aims to cover some significant events of 20th century Russia that affected queer life and "subculture." Along with the thesis's focus, this section will mainly include legislative, political, and cultural pressings of LGBT individuals and how they managed to live albeit hostile environments. Generally, the part overviews queer people in urban areas, with "urban" usually including Moscow and Saint Petersburg as central locations.

In "Homosexual Existence and Existing Socialism: New Light on the Repression of Male Homosexuality in Stalin's Russia," Dan Healey (2002) overviews Soviet politics regarding sexual matters, connecting the particular communist project with specific sexual politics. At the turn of the revolution, Bolsheviks did not have a specific stance on same-sex love due to conflicting narratives: on the one hand, Bolsheviks hugely believed in science and not religion, and therefore, following contemporary scholars from the West like Magnus Hirschfeld, decided to decriminalize the sodomy law; on the other hand, the pleasure of sex was something only bourgeoisie and capitalists could afford, which was ultimately against the people's communist regime. In the masses, the attitude towards same-sex love was influenced by class, ethnicity, education, gender, and age. At that time, homosexuality was not conceptualized as one but rather existed as "a plethora of unrelated phenomena to be evaluated

primarily according to political values" (p. 356). Overall, it seems like "multiple European lenses" were applied to the question of same-sex love in the new Soviet Republic, and therefore the view also inherited many conflicts the Western thought had on the topic. During that period, urban gay culture developed in cities, establishing public cruising spots and a unique subculture. Some locations were kept as such throughout the 20th century and were primarily located in downtown areas: in Moscow, the square in front of Bolshoi Theater (very close to the Red Square), in Saint-Petersburg - Katherine's Gardens. Those places were mainly occupied by queer men, similar to Western locations where the culture of cruising and queer prostitution is primarily popular among homosexual men (Turner, 2003). Queer women in that period were mostly invisible in politics and did not interest officials of that period. The led to some women who loved women being openly queer if the heteronormativity aspect of the relationship was kept. There are stories about women in the army who loved women and whose "transition" to manhood was supported by their officers.

The "homophobic turn," as Healey calls it, began in 1933. In his account, the change in public attitudes to queer individuals was mostly due to the changes in economic systems under Stalin's leadership. In 1928, instead of mixed markets with controlled capitalism, a new system of 'socialism' was called upon. This led to changes in what counted as a desirable worker and desirable citizen, creating a category of "social anomalies," which included "city inhabitants who made a living from nonstandard, undesirable activities" (p. 360). At first, this category did not include homosexual individuals; however, strategies of the new economic plan included higher control over many marginal public spaces and non-normative ways of life, which homosexual individuals had. The new image of a domestic and international threat, the *pederast* (male homosexual, a slur), appeared in official discourses around 1933, causing secret police to raid homosexual salons and other establishments, with intent to diminish the market of male prostitution, along with the bigger market of female prostitution. The "pederast

activists" created two anxieties: first, around possible espionage and collaboration of homosexual men with Nazi Germany; second, a threat to normative ways of life of the new Social citizen. In 1934, finalizing the recent interest in the homosexual subculture, the anti-sodomy law (Article 121) was adopted, with the highest charge of eight years in prison for men. The *muzhelozhstvo* (dir. tr. men-laying) law only included men having sex with men and said nothing about homosexual women.

Female homosexuality, which was previously neglected by people in power before and after the homophobic turn, was put under the control and eyes of psychiatry institutions and mental health specialists. As mentioned, before the turn, psychiatrists generally followed "Western" trends and did not think of homosexuality between women as necessarily harmful. Yet, people in the psychiatry community of the 1920s had different views on what exactly they should do with homosexual women. According to Healey (2001), conflicting strategies were present in the medical discourse. Most specialists argued that psychiatry should aim to help queer individuals integrate into communities and accept their position. Central here is the question of an individual's ability to be a valuable working member of society. Some, without much support, argued for interventionists methods of work with homosexual women, proposing conversion therapies and surgical procedures.

After 1934, psychiatric institutions had to change their policies and views regarding homosexual individuals. While the law took charge of homosexual men, homosexual women were left for medical institutions and their pathologizing treatment and surveillance. While previously a small number of women who committed crimes were referred to psychiatrists by the police, now many women loving women were reported to medical specialists by their family members or the public to be enrolled (forcefully) into a psychiatric ward for treatment (Gessen, 1994). After a "successful" treatment, women had to periodically check with the medical professionals and could possibly be banned from certain professions (Essig, 1999).

However, according to Stella (2016), the medical gaze was not the only, or for that matter, the most important mechanism of control of same-sex desire. Moreover, the stories Stella collected show that the medical community was not aligned in their views on how female homosexuality should be treated. Some professionals saw no use in medical or re-educational treatments, arguing that same-sex desire cannot be cured, leading to a hands-off approach to homosexual activity and desires. However, the mere possibility of being deemed mentally ill was significant for many women experiencing same-sex desire, making some women to also act out their heterosexual desires.

Despite the hostile attitude towards homosexual individuals since the "homophobic turn," queer people hung out and created a life for themselves in the big cities. Notwithstanding the enhance of surveillance, attention from the police, and the possibility of ether years in prison or admission to psychiatric wards, queer people continue to meet, party, and occupy public spaces. The public cruising spots for men that came to be in the 1920s (boulevards, toilets, squares, parks) continue to exist as such; however, now one had to have homosexual friends and be themselves homosexual to know about places (Healey, 2002).

Another major shift happened in the late 1980s when the first queer collectives and NGOs appeared with the support of Western donors. This became possible due to changes in the political situation with Russian and USSR in general, as the borders of the country became more penetrable, and people of the West and Western public discourse became available to a small number of members of the public. Legend has it that queer activists from Finland, during their tourist travel to Saint-Petersburg, came across a cruising spot at Katherin's Gardens and talked with one of the men there. After the conversation, that man, Alexander Zaremba, created the first queer collective, *Golubaya Laboratoriya* (Blue Laboratory), in 1983 in Saint-Petersburg. That collective included Olga Krauze, who later published a semi-autobiographical book about that cruising spot and the history of *Golubaya Laboratoriya* (2017). The

collective's aims included educating Soviet homosexual people about Western discourses on queer individuals, calling for the decriminalization of homosexuality (the *muzhelozhstvo* law was still in place), and creating queer cultural public spaces. Since then, during the time of political changes when the USSR fell apart, many of those in the *Golubaya Laboratoriya* created separate organizations, journals, and collectives. In Moscow, the first queer organization, *Asotsiatsiya Sexual'nyh Men'shinstv* (Association of Sexual Minorities; ASM), appeared in 1989 and aimed to provide legal support for queer individuals. In the 1990s, ASM published a public letter to the president of the USSR in the *SPID-info* (AIDS-info) journal, asking to decriminalize and eradicate the sodomy law, as well as provide reparations and amnesties to those charged with Article 121 (Kon, 2003, 2010).

The appearance of specializing journals, along with NGOs and collectives, brought another vital shift to the discourse. The first queer magazine, *Tema*, was initiated by ASM in 1989 and produced by Roman Kalinin, aimed "to inform everyone about issues of sexual minorities, to fight for equal rights of all people independent of their sexual orientation, and popularize safe sex" (Gavrilova, 2016). The "informing" was done mainly by translating English articles about sexualities, gender, and non-heterosexual sex, meaning that the first major source of locally produced knowledge about queerness repeated the mainstream Anglophone discourses. However, important to note that it was not a replication of "Western" culture, but rather translation and production of LGBT identity politics discourse of the 1960s and onward produced by the U.S. The first information about possible ways to fight for LGBT rights in Russian was taken from American history of human rights movements with their specific politics. The fact that most independently published materials focused on newly found liberatory discourse of the West is not surprising, but it established the West (and the U.S.) as the source of many things queer, including knowledge about identities, labels, and ideas about how queer people should fight for their rights.

Article 121 was eventually dropped; however, no amnesties were wade to those charged under that law. Since the 1990s and until the mid-2000s, queer individuals in metropolitan areas (particularly Moscow and Saint-Petersburg) had a chance to experience both queer-friendly discourses created by queer collective, journalists, and "progressive" media, as well as witness the backlash queer organizations got from the officials and the public. The queer "community" was also highly divided within itself: when in 1991 abovementioned Roman Kalinin, who was also one of the founders of Moskovskaya Asotsiatsiya Lesbiyanok i Geev (Moscow Association of Lesbians and Gays; MALG), put his candidature for the presidential elections, many news outlets paid attention and published homophobic articles about the organization and Kalinin himself. This led to some of the other queer activists being mad at Kalinin as they blamed him for the storm of negative attention he provoked by putting up his candidature (Kon, 2003).

It looked like, at the end of the USSR and the begging of Russia, the government had the potential to become more benevolent towards queer individuals. However, despite the work of organizations and attempts to create the queer revolution, e.g., the Russian "Stonewall" (Wockner, 2016), the events of the late 2000s seem to show a drawback in the "progressive" politics and turn against the Western history of LGBTQ+ movements.

From queer revolution to the "anti-propaganda" law

In the mid-2000s, LGBT organizations continue to appear in major urban capitals. However, the general discourse seems to be still somewhat ambivalent towards anything non-heterosexual. No specific laws were proposed to support or deny the rights of queer individuals, while LGBT organizations continued to fight discrimination by distributing educational materials, providing legal support, and organizing events. Many movie festivals that were started in the 1990s continued their existence, along with queer journals and publications,

particularly those about AIDS (though the topic of AIDS does not directly connect to issues of sexuality and non-heterosexuality, many publications in journals about AIDS covered sex among men and supported queer organizations in their fight). The idea of pride was circulating around, and for several years multiple NGOs tried to get approval for the official parade. Despite all the unsuccessful attempts, when people did walk on the streets, for instance, in Moscow in 2007, they were met with violence from the police, orthodox religious groups, and nationalists (Levy, 2007). The backlash from all levels of the public (the law enforcement, the religious groups, and political coalitions of nationalists) indicates that while legally LGBTQ individuals were not prosecuted in the mid-2000s in any way, the public was rather intolerant towards the sexual minorities. According to Levada-Center questionnaires of public opinion, in 2005, 49% did not agree that gays and lesbians should have the same rights as other citizens of Russia (Dergachov, 2019).

After the rather ambivalent period of the 2000s filled with contradicting attitudes towards queer individuals, a significant turn in politics happened in 2013. The famous "anti-propaganda" law was officially accepted by Moscow Duma in the summer of 2013. It was met with some protests and public resistance (Interfax, 2013), but queer and ally protestors were met with police violence, and some activists ended up charged with organizing an unauthorized protest. Before the law was finally accepted, on its previous stages of creation, some queer-friendly media, particularly online outlets, posted articles about the law's possible harmful nature: for instance, Afisha, a prominent online and offline Moscow's news outlet, dedicated a whole edition to queer individuals and their stories (Leonova, 2013). The anti-propaganda law was seen by many queer people and activists, including those interviewed by Soboleva and Bakhmetjev (2015), as a result of an anti-Western narrative.

It seems like similar to 1934, the law was produced as a result of several anxieties. In mainstream pro-government media, homosexual individuals existed as threats to the nation and

as a strong influential minority created by the West that imposes its lifestyle on others (Persson, 2015). Before that, according to Kon (2010), the Orthodox church and Communist party started a sort of "anti-sexual crusade" in 1997, being worried about pro-choice politics, sexual-positive narratives, and dropping birth rates among white "ethnically Russian" women. The campaign had a clear nationalistic and pro-life tone, worrying about Russian women and Russian families' purity and morality. Therefore, the first anxiety was a combination of worry about Russia and nationhood, resulting in the abolition of Western values and the establishment of a uniquely Russian way of life and citizenship, which did not include queer individuals. Second, a somewhat international threat of influence, hidden in worries about Russia's future, its children, and how the West in the bodies of queer people can influence the young minds. The "West," as Persson's (2015) analysis shows, is a region with a regime of "political correctness," "moral collapse," and general "decay," which resulted in the West's acceptance of gay marriages and support LGBT-rights politics. People in power seemed to be extremely worried about the legal changes happening in some European Union countries, where for several years before 2013, a few pro-LGBT legislations were accepted by national institutions, most visibly the right for same-sex marriage (Scherpe, 2013). As a fifteen-year-old, I remember mainstream governmental news channels streaming stories about Western Europe's craze around LGBT rights, primarily focusing on how harmful said laws would be if same-sex couples would be allowed to adopt children. The point was not to become like the "depredating, deteriorating" West and keep Russian traditional Christian morality and culture.

The crusade, combined with anti-Western narratives, led to the acceptance of anti-propaganda law, which stood out as a figurative confirmation of the queerphobic attitude officials were willing to promote. This also confirmed that the seeming neutrality of previous years was only a form of hidden hate. While it might seem like queer individuals had a chance to be included in nationalist politics, at least after 1991, it looks like the question was never on

the table. The anti-propaganda law was the final and direct confirmation of queer individuals being deemed un-Russian and undesirable.

Existing under the Code of the Russian Federation on Administrative Offenses, Article 6.21[1] states:

> "Propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations among minors expressed in the distribution of information aimed at the formation of non-traditional sexual outlooks among minors, the attractiveness of non-traditional sexual relations, a distorted idea of the social equivalence of traditional and non-traditional sexual relations, or the imposition of information about non-traditional sexual relations, which arouses interest in such relationships if these actions do not contain a criminal offense, -
>
> shall entail the imposition of an administrative fine on citizens in the amount of four thousand to five thousand rubles; for officials - from forty thousand to fifty thousand rubles; for legal entities - from eight hundred thousand to one million rubles or administrative suspension of activities for up to ninety days."

While the consequences of anti-propaganda charges might seem minor (it is a financial punishment and not imprisonment), this is not the law's primary effect. On top of previously established political meanings, the Article creates and clarifies three elements of the new anti-Western politics: non-traditional sexual relationship, propaganda, and "protection" of minors.

What exactly counts as "non-traditional sexual relationships"? The absence of accurate description points out several issues: first, the law assumes that everybody can understand what is "traditional" and "non-traditional"; second, it includes many things in "non-traditional sexual relations." While the two might seem slightly contradicting (people knowing what is non-traditional, yet this category having penetrable boundaries), what is understandable is "traditional." Paired with recent changes to the Russian Constitution made in 2020 (Sadowski,

[1] http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_34661/f385ab5d34de901b2e5f3d08ac0b454481377d6a/

2021), it is clear that "traditional" means heterosexual, monogamous, and registerable relationships. Therefore, non-traditional is everything that is not *that* – non-heterosexual and/or non-monogamous and/or not registered. When it comes to trans* identities, as they are not "sexual relations" per se, one might argue that they stand somewhat in the grey zone of this law, being culturally "non-traditional," but simultaneously excluded from the category "sexual relations." Moreover, trans* identities are rarely visible in the mainstream discourse as it still mostly focused on homosexuality. However, I would argue that trans* individuals and identities are also considered to be something this law prohibits: again, following some recent trends in law-making, particularly one legislative proposal made by E. Mizulina in 2020 and the pushback from the queer community it gathered (Zatari, 2020), I would include information about trans* identities as undesired propaganda. The "traditional" here might as well be described along the lines of the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 2011), with a nuclear family union of a heteronormative (cis-)man and (cis-)woman being the only acceptable way. The fact that the law does not say what counts as "traditional" only supports the similarity to heterosexual matrix: it is something most do not see any need to talk about; its invisible, because it is "normal".

While being clarified in later documents about the Article, the word propaganda does not have one definition. The law targets adults who share content with minors (people before the age of 18), or at least this is what one might think based on the formulations. However, in practice, this is not the case. The information does not have to be directly offered to minors but be *available* to minors. This includes Internet publications on both specific and non-specific forums and social media groups. This includes print media, audio media (podcasts), and visual media (films, music videos, video blogs). Mostly, publishers, authors, and content creators put 18+ markers to avoid propaganda charges; for offline lectures and other in-person meetings, most ask to bring a passport and show it before entering the event. In case the charges are

pressed against a particular publication or a piece of media, a special committee is called upon to determine the presence of "propaganda." Suppose the text positively displaces non-traditional sexual relationships (that includes a wide variety of materials, both in content and form, as established above), and no limitations for access are found (no 18+ marker on the material itself or the webpage). In that case, the material is deemed "propaganda-like." Moreover, the law works with non-material documents as well. For instance, Yulia Tsvetkova's works in kids' theater (the plays she directed) were first investigated by the police as a possible place of propaganda, albeit being closed-group projects she led in her local community (*FREE YULIA TSVETKOVA*, 2019). A demonstration of same-sex relationships can also count as propaganda: in 2019, a gay family of two men from Moscow was investigated and pressed by the police when one of their adoptive kids mentioned his "two dads" at the state hospital (Golunov, 2019). The law does not limit the kind of information, and therefore, as in the case of the gay Moscow couple, the existence of queer individuals can also be counted as "propaganda." Moreover, minors being the victims of possible propaganda does not mean they can't be deemed propagandists if needed: this year, 15 to 20 teenagers were apprehended by the police during a public cosplay meeting for taking pictures with an LGBT flag. They were all put in the police van and asked to write an explanation at the precinct without lawyers or guardians (Antonov, 2021).

Finally, what exactly are minors are "protected" from by the anti-propaganda law? As it states in the decree[2], published in 2014 to assure that the law does not intervene with Constitutional rights, the aim of Article 6.21 is:

> "… to prevent an increased concentration of [minor's] attention on issues of sexual relations, which, under an unfavorable combination of circumstances, can significantly deform the child's ideas about such constitutional values as family, motherhood,

[2] http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_169047/#dst100048

fatherhood, and childhood, and negatively affect not only his psychological state and development but also social adaptation."

According to Russian lawmakers, the law prevents unwanted information from affecting minors: non-traditional ideas intervene with governmental normative narratives and might complicate individuals' social and psychological well-being. Simultaneously, later in the decree, the clear divide between legal equality and cultural inequality between traditional and non-traditional sexual relationships is noted:

> "…imposing social attitudes that differ from those generally accepted in Russian society […] can provoke social alienation of the child and hinder his successful development in the family environment, especially if we bear in mind that constitutional equality, which supposes equality of rights regardless of sexual orientation, does not predetermine the existing difference in societal perception of people with different sexual orientation."

In this passage, the lawmakers do not hide the fact that technically, based on the Constitution, sexual discrimination is prohibited, or rather, every individual legally is equal before the law. Simply put, the problem is that socially and culturally, homophobia is prevalent, and therefore kids should be brought up with homophobic views, or otherwise, they will be alienated for their pro-queer outlook. The text actively tries to balance out legal neutrality with obvious homophobic subtext, making the child and the "protection" of the child its noble aim. However, this balance is rather hard to manage, particularly when the decree's whole aim was to say that the Article is correct, and everybody who does not like the law is wrong. Finding its peace in the possible "neutrality" of non-traditional propaganda, the decree states:

> "At the same time, the prohibition of the propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations itself - as an activity for the purposeful and uncontrolled dissemination of information that can harm health, moral and spiritual development, *including the formation of*

distorted ideas about the social equivalence of traditional and non-traditional sexual relations - among minors who, due to their age, cannot critically evaluate the information received, does not exclude the submission of relevant information in a neutral (educational, artistic, historical) context."

Here we finally learn that what at stakes in the following: child's health, child's moral and *duhovnoye* (dir. transl. spiritual; it is not necessarily about religious growth) development, child's social position, child's relationship with family and peers, child's outlook on equality between non-traditional and traditional sexual relationship. Despite the equality of rights between the two groups, the non-traditional is not acceptable: according to the later passage, the child must understand that cultural perception of non-traditional sexual relationships is more important than the letter of the law. It is somewhat ironic that this idea is stated in an official legal commentary document about an Article in one of the Codex.

To summarize, the anti-propaganda law created what is now (officially) is called a non-traditional relationship and established it as a danger to the societal way of living and, most importantly, children. Information, and not individual lives, was taken up as the prime evil of non-traditional propagandists to limit and regulate the access to information about LGBTQ+ topics in Russia and in Russian. This was substantial to the way activists and allies publish and distribute LGBTQ+ materials after 2013. Moreover, it officially established the government as anti-queer and pro-traditional, giving support to materials that paint LGBTQ+ in a negative light as well as backing individuals who want to harm queer people. I argued that anti-propaganda law, despite focusing on sexual relationships, also includes trans* and gender "non-traditional" individuals, as they go against motions of heterosexual, cisgender family unit and ideas about "motherhood" and "fatherhood."

Existing and speaking under the law: the Russian queer language

Despite lawmakers' desire to minimize the amount of information about LBGTQ+ issues produced in Russian, events, conferences, and publications were still made and organized after 2013. There are many dimensions of the contemporary queer lifestyle in Moscow, but I would like to focus on the language. The Russian queer language changed significantly compared to how people talked about LGBTQ+ issues in the 90s, and I believe it shows several important tendencies. Moreover, language changes relate closely to other significant shifts in broader social settings and marginalized discourses, which, compared to what is known about language in the 90s, can be tracked and compared against all the historical shifts mentioned above.

What exactly do I mean by "Russian queer language"? This category includes specific words and general ways to write and speak about LGBTQ+ issues and LGBTQ+ individuals. I use the term "language" and not "vocabulary" as I believe the ways some queer people speak also transform the Russian language's grammatical rules. This section's arguments are mostly based on my personal experience[3] of hearing, reading, and talking about queer subjects in formal and informal settings. I use snippets from public posts written by activists relating to the topic as a loose discourse analysis to supplement my personal experiences. The conclusions on the commonality of specific words should be taken with some doubts as there is no quantitative data to support my claims. In general, I believe my conclusions are relevant for the Russian-speaking younger generation of queer people living in big cities with Internet access.

There are not many words of Russian origins that are now actively in use by queer people and allies. Ethnographies from the 1990s usually mention *goluboy* (blue) and *rozovaya*

[3] It is important to note that class, despite not being in focus for this section and thesis in general, is crucial factor in what language is used by either queer or non-queer individual, particularly if class is organized along the lines of education. My grasp of queer language is greatly biased due to my proficiency in English, as many words come from contemporary English norms. Where possible, I included links to Russian sources and articles in popular media covering respective queer topics, to supplement my arguments with de-personalized sources.

(pink), words for gay and lesbian, that are now rarely visible in pro-queer writings and speech. The word *tema* (theme), which was actively used by queer people in the 90s to reference LGBTQ+, e.g., "in *tema*" would mean somebody is queer, now is not used. Out of 19 interviewees I spoke with, only 1 mentioned it in passing, and some of my queer friends did not know that it applied to LGBTQ+ issues. Older words like *tetki* (aunties or middle-aged women) used in imperial Russia to describe homosexual male sex workers re-emerged in the contemporary language only as a part of activists projects, particularly one done by Saint-Petersburg activist Nikita Andriyanov[4]. Moreover, terminology that originated in Russia is often used in derogatory ways: for instance, my first interaction with the words *goluboy* and *rozovaya* happened in middle school in a homophobic context, where "are you *goluboy*?" was used to bully boys. All insulting terms I often hear used are Russian in origin, including the words *pidor*, *pidoras, gomik, gomosek* (all mean faggot), and *kovyryalka* (dir. transl. picker, insult for queer women).

For sexualities, people usually use *gei* (gay), *lesbiyanka* (lesbian), and *biseksual_ka* (bisexual (wo)man). All of these existed in the 90s as well, but compared to that time's speech patterns, it seems like most of the "local" words completely went out of use by younger queer individuals, at least when spoken in a pro-queer context. Other notable words like *kvir* (queer), *nebinarnye* (non-binary), and gender [gendər] are direct transliterations from English. Those newer terms appeared after the 90s, and not many ethnographies of the past show those terms being used. I would argue that out of the three, the word gender is more widely recognized, as it has been actively in use in social sciences and the media, though the exact meaning of the words is hard to pinpoint.

The disparity in use between "local" and "borrowed" does not feel unique and fits the political arguments around the LGBTQ+ movement and the West. While activists in the 90s

[4] https://www.instagram.com/izvestnye_tetki/

used both adopted and local terms, contemporary queer language uses transliterated words almost exclusively. This might be called the "Westernization" of the Russian queer language. However, change in terms is not the only shift that happened in written and oral tradition.

Changes in Russian discourse about queer topics mirror the English-speaking (mainly U.S.) queer community: there is a noticeable move away from medicalized terms, from derogatory vocabulary to more inclusive and neutral language. Journalists who produce pro-queer texts for different media usually try to consult particular communities or invite queer authors or allies to cover some topics. Like *T-deystviye* (T-action, an initiative group focusing on trans* issues and individuals), some organizations publish guides on ethical writing to help out journalists. *T-deystviye's* guide on correct writing about trans* people and trans* issues was created by Sasha Kazantseva, a self-described trans* ally, LGBT+ activist, and one of the editors of queer media *Otkritie*[5]. She is one of those new media journalists who is queer and does not claim to know everything about the community: the guide was created by her in close collaboration with *T- deystviye*'s founder (Kazantseva, 2020). The guide is available online[6] and often referenced by pro-queer media. The fact that this guide is actively used by journalists shows one significant novelty of queer-friendly media: now, some authors feel responsible for writing "correctly," where the correct wat is determined by the community and not authorized institutions. This is a considerable change in the way journalists work and write, and while I do not have any proof, this seems like a general change in the world of Russian journalism, albeit being accepted only by the minority of people working in that area.

Ways to write, as in grammatical rules, are also changing for writings about queer individuals. Two innovations, the "_" and feminitives, represent queer political struggles for inclusive writing, one for gender neutrality and another for gender specificity. And while these

[5] https://o-zine.ru/
[6] http://t-action-team.org/book-how-to-write/

novel ways of writing might not be obviously connected to LBGTQ+ situation in Russia, I believe "_" in particular reflects English employment of "they/them" as singular plural. Above, I used "_" to write *biseksual_ka*: the under-dash symbol allows to work around the Russian gendered ending, otherwise known as *rod*. One can use the under-dash on several occasions: first, as in the example above, to refer to bisexual men and women simultaneously; second, as a gender-neutral descriptor for one person. For instance, queer individuals who use they/them pronouns in English might use under-dash to avoid locating themselves in a particular *rod*[7].

Feminitives tackle a slightly different issue. While the under-dash provides gender neutrality, feminitives underline the feminine gender of somebody. The need to do that also comes from the issue of *rod* and gendered ending, but for feminitives, the problem is in the neutrality of masculine *rod*: many words, particularly for professions, have their neutral form in masculine rod, meaning that when somebody is said to be an actor (*akter*) their gender is unclear. This creates a false perception that many professions are occupied by men, and due to the neutrality of the masculine *rod,* some women are misrecognized as men, especially if their names and surname do not display any gendered endings. Feminitives describe a strategic placement of feminine gendered endings to otherwise "neutral" masculine words: saying *avtor* (author) would work for both men and women, but one can say *avtorka* to specifically say female-author. This allows women to increase their visibility and avoid gender confusion for people with neutral names or people whose gender is unclear based on the name (Savina, 2018). Moreover, being created and implemented by feminist activists, feminitives undoubtedly have a strong political connection with the movement and particular politics of equality and visibility.

[7] For instnace see blog post by Tony Lashden, queer activist https://feminisms.co/zine/queering-as-a-way-of-survival

While those changes are present in some media publications and particularly noticeable in independently produced works by feminists and queer activists, these novelties are marginal compared to the overall body of texts publish about queer individuals. Unfortunately, due to the anti-propaganda law and general state-level homophobia, many outlets use outdated medicalized derogatory language and are unwilling to collaborate with queer individuals. Simultaneously, queer activists are often banned on different social media platforms due to the overwhelming number of homophobes' reports, making their calls for ethical writing harder to get across.

Additionally, the overuse of transliteration in ethical queer writing negatively affects the commonality and application of particular vocabulary. First, people who do not know English well might struggle with words that do not have any meaning that can be deducted from it. *Kvir* is one of those terms that have no political or linguistical history in Russian (unlike in English), and therefore it is unclear what kind of meaning it has for Russian queer individuals. Personally, I figured out the meaning of the word only due to my language knowledge and ability to read and comprehend complicated readings produced in the U.S. That does not mean that there are no attempts to explain the word (for instance, a publication produced for KvirFest, an offline educational queer festival by Drakon, n.d.), but it is an empty word with no meaning for somebody who never heard anything about it. This produces an educational gap in one's possibility to know more about LGBTQ+ issues, as all the new trends and words originate from the West, and therefore are written and discussed in English.

Second, another issue of transliteration is that it hints directly at the non-Russian origins of the words. As mentioned above, combined with a discourse on negative Western influence present in Russian culture, some people argue that if the terms are that foreign, then the whole LGBTQ+ agenda is Western propaganda. However, another, more personal way in which transliteration is detrimental is in one's desire to identify with the word. While many factors

influence acceptance of specific labels (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005), it hard to deny that if the word *kvir* does not really have a meaning, it's tricky to apply that word to oneself. Moreover, with newer identities like *nebinarnye*, one would probably need to explain what precisely that means each time the topic is brought up. While people in English-speaking countries also have to explain the meaning of non-binary gender identity to people who are not in *tema*, I think using similar terms in English like "gender binary" would ease the stress. I don't have many friends who are completely novel in queer topics, but for some, I had to explain what it means to be non-binary and use them/them pronouns in English. As somebody who studied queer theory, the explaining might be less challenging than for somebody who is made to explain on the spot without any preparations.

There are few alternatives to transliteration. I know some activists choose to reclaim the word *pidor*, which is the most common derogatory term. For me, this word strongly associates with homosexual men exclusively, though technically its gender and sexuality neutral. Therefore I, as somebody who rarely was called *pidor_ka*, do not feel comfortable reclaiming it. Moreover, I know people who would find that word extremely unpleasant even when used as part of reclamation, as it often ties affectively with experiences of verbal and physical homophobia. Words *gei* and *lesbiyanka*, due to their presence in the language for over half a century, hardly read as transliteration, and therefore become the most prevalent identity labels, along with *biseksual_ka*.

Despite being quite prevalent, the word bisexuality and its particular meaning is hard to determine. I believe it is most often understood and read as "two"-sexuality. How exactly one would interpret the "two" seems to be dependent significantly on the familiarity of one with mainstream English-speaking discourse. In the late 90s and early 2000s, a discourse around bisexuality was concerned with its possibly transphobic nature as the "bi-" underlined the gender binary, whereas pansexuality was seen as an alternative that encompasses all

genders (Lapointe, 2017). While some LGBTQ+ people might still perceive the transphobic notion of bisexuality, there is an alternative understanding of bisexuality as "my and other genders" that is inclusive of trans* identities (Galupo et al., 2017). However, that transformation of the "bi-" meaning did not happen in the Russian bisexual community or queer discourse overall, as questions of trans* inclusivity came to the front of the movement fairly recently (though trans* activists worked tirelessly along with other queer sub-movements since the 90s). It is impossible to say what kind of meaning one would bring to the notion of bisexuality when spoken to in Russian: many factors, including class, age, education, proficiency in English, familiarity with trans* inclusionary discourse, would determine one's reading of the word.

Not West, not East: the place of Russia and the location of queer individuals in Russia

In previous sections, several comparisons and arguments were made using the "West" as the reference point. For the historical account, the connections were made regarding medical discourse, followed by changes accompanied by people and organizations from the "West." For the anti-propaganda section, the "West" constituted an undesirable condition for the Russian nation, an opposition point. For the Russian queer language, the "West" is the place of origin; it is a place of knowledge production. So, how do all these configurations of the "West" locate queer subjects? Where do queer people of Russia find themselves in it? How do queer people of Russia see the West?

Is Russia an Eastern or Western country? While most usually Russia is added to the "Western" bloc, the question is a complicated one for whatever "Western" means. Geographically, Russia, a very long country, exists on the Eurasian continent and is divided by the Ural Mountains. Moscow, the location of this research, exists in the Western part of Russia, meaning before the Ural Mountains if one travels to the East. Therefore geographically, Russia

can be both deemed "Western" and "Eastern," as its parts are present in both European and Asian sides of the continent. However, the East vs. West confrontation is not so much about geography but about customs, culture, and power (Kulpa & Mizielinska, 2011). Referring to Russia as either Western or Eastern country locates and frames the country differently, particularly when the naming comes from inside.

As Persson (2015) accounted for, the discourse around the new law in 2013 was tightly connected with a specific image of the West and Russi's particular image as it opposes everything terrible about the foreign lands. More precisely, it is the Russian "traditional values" that compete against the Western discourse of universal human rights. According to Wilkinson (2014), "traditional values" were used to cause "moral panic over homosexuality as a source of societal corruption" (p. 367) and were used to establish Russia and its Orthodox Christian values as a "non-Western civilization" (p. 368). Surprisingly, the values were not described as Eastern, which would supper the traditional oppositional disposition. Instead of being a part of the region that might share a common colonial past, as in the case with many Eastern vs. Western discussions (Said, 1997), Russia established itself as its own closed-off system heavily dependent on governmental sovereignty and national politics.

As a result of the explicit anti-Western narratives, everything queer becomes anti-Russian in its essence. Even if queer people stand by and do not violate the law, keep things extremely private, and do not challenge the denial of their constitutional rights, the conflict of national belonging, citizenship and queer identity is always in place, at least politically and legally.

This thesis does not aim to challenge, question, or research the conflict of interest when it comes to national and queer identities. Instead, it is possible to find some backwash of this conflict in the interviewee's responses, particularly those focusing on queer subjectivity in relation to physical experiences in particular locations and the respondent's employment of

"West" as a category. Furthermore, previously outlined challenges regarding particular words, grammar, and ways to speak about sexuality can also serve as a sign of (un)comfortability with "Wester" discourses on sexuality as it stands against everyday experiences in Russia and in Russian.

4. CHAPTER. METHODOLOGY

The following chapter overviews the main methodological questions and methods used in this research.

Interview questions

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary method for data collection, with interview questions formulated according to the main research questions and areas of interest. The questions included nine queries divided into three subtopics: bisexuality and gender, bisexuality in relationships, bisexuality and space. Each category included two questions. One general question about current identity labels was added at the top of the list. The list of questions in English (Appendix II) and in Russian (Appendix III) can be found in the Appendices section. The questions were first formulated in English and then translated into Russian by the author and two native Russian speakers proficient in English. After a pilot study (two interviewees), some formulations were changed. Later changes to the formulations that happened during the main phase of data collection are discussed in one of the analytical chapters.

As the research design supposed interpersonal interaction with the subject, a consent form was created and signed by every participant before the interview. The consent form for the research described the general aims of the study and the rights participants had during and after the interview process. According to the consent form, participants agreed to being taped and for those recording to be transcribed and used in the final work produced by the researcher. The exact text of the consent form is available to read in Russian (Appendix IV) in the Appendices section. For offline interviews, consent forms were signed on printed-out versions. For online interviews, the consent form was read and signed via Google Form Sheet. This method was approved by the supervisor and the second reader prior to data collection.

All the information about the research was sent to the department's ethical committee according to the CEU guidelines for interview-based research.

Data collection and participant recruitment

Initially, the interviews were meant to be conducted offline; however, I decided to conduct interviews online due to the recommendation and restrictions around the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the regulations, I managed to conduct 2 offline interviews as part of a pilot study. These two interviews were included in the final data collection despite being conducted in a different format. The interview process (from the first call for participants being posted to the last interview being conducted) took around 10 months to finish, from March 2020 until December the same year. Most of the interviews were conducted in December.

Participants were mainly recruited through public Twitter call published on my personal Twitter page. In the Twitter thread, I included information about people I look for (over 18 from Moscow who identify as bisexuals) and followed up with a short note on the aims and reasons for research. I also added a small section about myself, which mentioned the name of the university and the program, as well as my previous experiences with interviews and the topic. I also asked my friends and followers to retweet the information so more people could see the call. To contact me, I have requested prospective interviewees to contact me via Twitter or via Telegram messenger.

After prospective participants reached out, I informed them about the general aims of the research and how it will be conducted. The date and time of the interview session were up to participants. I notified every prospective interviewee about the consent form, the audio-taping and let them ask any questions they wanted before committing to the interviews. The online interviews were conducted via Zoom or Skype, depending on which software the interviewee preferred. During all of the calls, I was present with my camera and my microphone

during the whole interview. While the camera was not mandatory, most (around 14 interviewees) used their camera during the call. Some asked if they could stay with the camera turned off, and I allowed that to establish trust and a sense of anonymity. Usually, those who wanted to turn off their camera notified me about technical issues with internet speed, video quality, and comfortability.

Overall, around 30 people contacted me. Approximately five of them were not suitable for the interviewing based on the required sample characteristics. Four people texted me after the sample was somewhat collected and outlined, and their input was no longer needed. The final sample consisted of 19 interviewees, 3 of whom I knew before the interviews. Out of 19 participants, 17 identified as cisgender women, 1 as a transman, and 1 as a trans*masculine non-binary person. In age, participants range from 20 to 31 years old, with a mean age of 22.8. Of those, 9 live in Moscow since birth, and 10 moved to the city. Out of the 10 people who moved, the minimum amount of time spent in the city was 3 years.

Because I used my personal Twitter page, some of my acquaintances and friends reached out with the intent to help if needed. In those cases, preference was given to people I do not know or those I do not know well to eliminate interpersonal factors that might influence the way people talked to me. While some gender scholars argue that interviewing friends and acquaintances is a valuable source of data (Browne, 2003; Harris, 2002), I believe that the topic's sensitivity might have implicated the way people were willing to talk and what they wanted to share. I was worried that my friends or acquaintance, with whom I have never spoken about bisexuality in informal settings, might get nervous or worry about the way I view them.

The sessions were audio-taped with my phone. After an interview, the audio recording was transferred to a password-protected folder on my personal laptop. The materials were kept locally on two devices with the informant's personal data completely absent from files' titles or audio descriptions. All of the personal data (names, ways to contact) was kept in a password-

protected excel sheet in hidden columns on my personal laptop. For each participant, a three-digit number was created that was used for audio materials and transcript files.

Foucauldian discourse analysis: framework, benefits, and limitations

Foucauldian discourse analysis was chosen as the primary method of interview analysis to answer the theoretical questions the thesis tackled. While there are no set rules for conducting this form of analysis, it generally follows three main ideas. First, the analysis includes historical inquiry; it is sensitive to the time and location of the analyzed material. This was achieved by connecting some topics discussed to linguistic practices and specific events crucial for LGBTQ+-related issues. Second, the analysis focuses on mechanisms of power and aims to describe them. This was done through specific topical lenses, like heteronormativity, found in various discourses. Moreover, attention was paid to "normative" as possible reasoning behind certain behaviors or experiences bisexual interviewees lived through. Lastly, the discourse analysis is directed to subjectification, which can be described as "material/signifying practices in which subjects are made up" (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008, p. 91). As the thesis was initially designed to question bisexual subjectivity construction, the analysis's emphasis on constantly forming subjective positions fitted the theme.

Foucauldian discourse analysis was already successfully used in research that worked with bisexual individuals (Jen, 2019). It has proven to tackle the ambivalence of bisexual identity and its possible changes of meanings. By focusing on subjectivity, historicity, and power, Foucauldian discourse analysis seemed to be the most efficient tool to analyze life narratives, reflections, and outlooks interviewees shared. Moreover, the absence of structure, or rather an absence of set rules for the analysis, allows propositions and interpretations that are sensitive to hidden meanings and linguistical nuances.

However, there are a few limitations to the method. First, the interpretations of the interviews should not be widely extrapolated and should always be looked at with a particular context of research location in mind. Moreover, the interpretations given to the interviews might have other power structures inscribed within them: a few other notable systematic structures of power include racial/ethnic hierarchies, gender hierarchy, class divisions, and more. While some of those were considered when they seem fit, the thesis, in general, focuses primarily on gender and sexuality-based systems of power, which ultimately limits experiences taken up by the analysis. Additionally, the method leaves all the issues related to translation to the author's personal choice and does not say anything specific about how to work with translated texts. This limitation was partially considered by implementing Russian words where the translation was complicated. This solution was not structured in any way; therefore, some hidden meaning might have been missed due to translation issues or the author's bias.

5. CHAPTER. WAYS OF SAYING, WAYS OF KNOWING

This chapter aims to locate knowledge production and identity formation practices participants experienced and navigated. Questions of "how one knows they are bisexual" and "how they let others know" are central to this chapter. Topically, those questions include bisexual experiences, identity formation, label changes, coming-out stories. However, instead of looking at those elements as different aspects of one subjectivity and personal history, I wanted to see how knowledge about bisexuality is formulated, produced, and distributed. This is not about different definitions people give to bisexuality, but rather about locating oneself in relation to bisexuality, building knowledge about oneself, and redistributing this knowledge outside of one's subjective self.

"Figuring out" in the temporal cut

In exploring knowledge production, first, I would like to analyze narratives about a time in the interviewee's lives that could be loosely called "figuring out." By "figuring out," I mean an unspecified time period where people were not sure about their sexual identities and/or sexuality in general. These periods could also be described as times where no particular sexual subjectivity was present, desires and practices were not put into words, and a degree of uncertainty in self-concepts was present in one's descriptions. As the general topic of the chapter is knowledge and circumstances surrounding it, I will be focusing on aspects that aided or confronted one's journey to self-realization and identity formation. Those common aspects include internalized homophobia, access to community and diversity of friend groups, romantic relationships.

While "figuring out" might seem like a process that has an end, I do not intend to talk about it as specific steps or as a journey with a finish line. Instead, I believe one's sexual subjectivity and identity constantly changes, reflecting shifts in discourse, individual

alterations, and contextual matters. By looking at knowledge as a broad category, which includes both internalized knowledge about oneself as well as familiarity with publicly produced knowledge (discourse), I want to show the dynamics of subjectivity formation, of the "figuring out." It is important to note that some people I talked to describe their current location as actively "figuring out." Instead of dividing stories on those that were told from the position of already fully knowing subjects from those who are still partially un-knowing, I intend to place them side by side, as it fits my understanding of the dynamic nature of subjectivity formation.

Many "figuring out"s were tightly connected with experiences of internalized homophobia and built up against it. What counted as "internalized homophobia" was slightly different for interviewees, but more significantly, the ways homophobia played out varied considerably among the subjects. Overall, fourteen people mentioned it as part of their narratives, framing it as one factor that complicates relationships they had with themselves, the world around them, identity labels, and partners. Mainly, correlating with research on the topic (Eliason, 1996; Rowen & Malcolm, 2003), interviewees underlined how denial or misrecognition of same-sex desires (as a form of internalized homophobia) led to the exclusion of identity labels. Luba, who has been brought up in an extremely homophobic Christian family, shared that for a few years, she did not name herself in any way despite experiencing same-sex desires:

> "Well, it's pretty obvious that I thought, like all homophobic people, that this [non-heterosexuality] was some kind of disease or a mutation — something like that. And when I found out that it is kind of normal, that people are born with this, and it's a normal phenomenon, that there is an LGBT community… I was about, I'm kind of ashamed to say it… I was about 15-17 years old. At that age, I realized that this is normal, but I still had internalized homophobia, yet I tried to be more tolerant. And in

general, to realize my own ... Well, because in general, I have had feelings for women for a long time, I just did not perceive them as a feeling, it seemed to me that something was simply wrong with me. And when I clearly understood that I am bisexual, I was already 18 years old. When I accepted it, you can say."

The recognition and reconfiguration of previously felt desires, as well as slow acceptance of other's queerness and one's own non-heterosexuality, are pretty common narrative elements among different LGB individuals (Dunlap, 2014; McLean, 2007). Notably, homophobia towards others was more easily changed than the misrecognition of desires or categorization of one as being wrong. That is to say that quite often, the process of "figuring out" takes time and happens in a non-linear way, where accepting attitudes of others does not necessarily predict the recategorization of desires.

However, that was not the only way people experienced internalized homophobia in relation to labels. Nina, describing her journey towards bisexuality, underlined the significance of "empirical data," that is, experiencing both homosexual and heterosexual relationships to navigate labels:

"Well, I have this approach to myself… I used to call myself a lesbian because I did not have any experiences with heterosexual relationships, so I could not have known if I could be in one. Therefore, when I was with a female partner, and before that, I had not had any boyfriends, I thought of myself as a lesbian because, well, I had not been sure if I can be in a hetero relationship no matter what I think about it. So, when I got a boyfriend, I was like, okay, tick this box. Something like that. There was nothing principal in that, I mean, bisexual is okay, lesbian – also okay."

That does not mean that transformation from heterosexual to non-heterosexual identity went smoothly, even when it is just about experiences. While temporally, Nina did not experience any struggles in taking up the label, she, like many others, struggled with a sudden

change of status in other life aspects. During the first year of her first relationship, which happened to be non-heterosexual, she asked her girlfriend to look and behave more masculine while she could keep her femininity intact:

> "For the first year, I behaved rather strangely. For example, I demanded from her that she behaved like a man. I wanted her to be more masculine because I am more feminine. If you look at us, then yes, she is probably more masculine, but I understand that it is not so important in general, but sometimes it was important to me. I directly demanded that I performed such actions; I did such things. I remember that she behaved like that and dressed masculinely. Well, I just had some kind of inner... Well, not feelings, but some less recognized, less conscious things."

What seems to be the case is that acceptance of identity labels is not so much the core or central aspect of subjectivity development. Moreover, in the narratives that composed subjectivity, participants focused on interpersonal relationships rather than giving identity labels, which shows that identity labels are mostly used to simplify and categorize behaviors and desires. As Nina's story shows, her journey was more about heteronormativity and its effect on day-to-day practices of non-heterosexual individuals, rather than struggles with labels and identity overall. For Nina, it was not the name that was so traumatizing, but the hostility from family and the desire to still follow heteronormative order by keeping feminine/masculine balance in the relationship.

A similar issue of the complete lack of behavioral models in same-sex relationships was underlined by another interviewee. Olesya described her struggles at the beginning of her first relationship after taking up the label of "bisexuality." Those struggles lasted for the first two years of Olesya's relationship with her female partner, and she described it as being lost, as not knowing what to do:

"Q: How did the fact of having a girlfriend compare with this suffering about the homosexual part of bisexuality?

A: I would say that I did not suffer very much because of this in the abstract, but the presence of a girlfriend made me return to these thoughts. And that is, I understood that in general, I can have a boyfriend and maybe it would be easier. But when I realized that there was already a girlfriend... It was like a signal that something was happening, which leads to difficulties.

Q: And the difficulties ...?

A: Well, I think this is about some behavior model or something that you know, it is obvious and understandable how to behave with guys, but it is not very clear how it all works in some other relationship. And I ended up thinking that since no one has thought it over yet, then it all needs to be thought out, and everything will be crooked, incomprehensible, something else, and there will be a lot of difficulties because for people around it is also not easy... That is, even if everything is normal for the two of us, there are still a lot of people around. And that it is all some kind of difficulty.

Q: That is, it was difficult with both socialization and behavior within the relationship?

A: Well, yeah. It was just not clear what to do with it. […] I knew with my head that it would be easier without all this to go on a well-known topic, but you can't order your heart."

The lack of information about a non-heterosexual relationship or even understanding of ways to behave in a non-heterosexual relationship made Olesya produce her own behavioral model as a form of independent knowledge production. In her account, it was still internalized homophobia that contributed to the initial feeling of uneasiness, but with the support of her friends and partner, Olesya understood that she was the only one having issues with the non-heterosexuality and for no reason.

Nina and Olesya's stories are similar in that both experiences struggle in their first same-sex relationships due to a form of internalized homophobia that was not really framed as such. The discomfort that stems from inconsistency with heteronormativity, in one case, and absence of non-heterosexual models of behavior, in another, both share the similar root of heterosexist culture at its core. These accounts, unlike Luba's story with identity, focused more on behavioral consequences of internalized homophobia, that also took some time to resolve, complicating the meaning of "figuring out": it is not only about knowing one's category or identity, it's also about knowing how one can behave despite heteronormative order.

The significance of desire, which was partially mentioned in the quotes above, is somewhat ambivalent in its relation to the "figuring out." Many noted how desire was there, but they chose not to categorize it as a desire or purposefully ignored it. For instance, Tanya shared that when her female classmates discussed other women's bodies, she felt extremely uncomfortable and went on to completely deny any beauty in female bodies in order to support the illusion of heterosexuality:

> "I'm from a small town, and all of my female classmates from there, they are your typical girls who are like, "I kiss my friends on the cheek." For me, it was always super incomprehensible, like how you can do it. Well, now I understand why: for me, it is romantic, but for them, it's just absolutely normal. It's absolutely normal that they don't feel attracted to it; it's just a completely different perception of such things. And I felt super uncomfortable in all this situation, plus now I understand that there is little that connects me with my classmates, and somehow that is... In general, it was uncomfortable to admit that I like lesbian porn or something, and in the end, it all led to the fact that I denied my non-heterosexuality as much as possible. I did not let myself think about anything like that at all..."

Though desire is often significant, sometimes it is about the mere potential of same-sex relationships along with heterosexual partnerships. For instance, Marina mentioned how others have been calling her a lesbian, though she never was. At that time, she did not even have any established desires or experiences, and yet felt like bisexuality was inevitably about her:

> "I started feeling bisexual before I had bisexual behavior. Earlier than I had the experience of being in a relationship with someone, and even before I had the experience of being attracted to someone."

Unlike in the previous account, Marina builds a connection between labels and feelings, whereas other interviewees mostly talked about labels and behaviors. This locates attractions, and not other elements, as a central point of subjectivity building that is connected to other aspects of the system. Because of that center point, recognition of desire can lead to both behavioral and identity changes. For instance, Eva, who used to identify as heterosexual most of her life, only recently discovered that she is bisexual because of a crush:

> "Q: What led you to think you are bisexual? Something happened?
>
> A: Well, yeah, you can say so. I met a woman who I really liked, and that was the first time I felt these feelings, rather different feelings. And then I thought, well, maybe I just imagined something, that it was just a one-time thing. But when it happened again, I realized that something is happening to me. […] I always knew that bisexuality exists, that people like that are there, but I thought it was not about me. […] And I realized that I had options, yeah. Well, I thought I was like this [heterosexual], and others are like that [non-heterosexual], but it turned out that I'm actually like that as well."

The end of the quote points out the interchangeable usage of bisexual and non-heterosexuality. This interchangeability emphasized the multiplicity and ambivalence of bisexual, while non-heterosexual stands in as a rather straightforward characteristic in its oppositional force towards the heterosexual norm. On the topic of desire, important to note that

recognition of desire did not mean that the struggles ended there. Eva later shared how she wrestled with accepting her new characteristic, how this led to troubles with some of her friends, and how she had to talk about all of this in therapy.

Almost half of the interviewees mentioned other identity labels they used before using bisexuality. Four people used to identify as lesbians, three as pansexuals. Half of the interviewees named heterosexuality as their previous identity, underlining how that was not so much their choice but the primary category everyone was assigned to.

Overall, most interviewees spent a few years figuring out their identity and/or working around their homophobic attitudes. While many agree that desire and same-sex relationships were significant in the "figuring out," the way people reacted to these situations and feelings present a variety of ways one might experience the newly found non-heterosexual "status." There seems to be no structured one-way connection between label acceptance, affective struggles, and internalized homophobia based on the narratives gathered. For some, internalized homophobia was the reason behind label unacceptance, particularly unwillingness to relate oneself to other homosexuals and/or to a particular matrix of behavior and desires. For others, the issues arose not so much in the connection to a specific label, identity, or group but from day-to-day heteronormative order that had to be maintained or worked around. It can be argued that the desire to follow the heteronormative order is a consequence of internalized homophobia and manifests independently from label-choice and label-acceptance. Other factors connected to knowledge production about one's sexuality are discussed in the following sections.

The value of knowledge

In this section, I would like to explore how familiarity with LGBT+ discourse, be that English or Russian, affects one's understanding of bisexuality and sexualities in general. This

section also covers relationships with friend groups as they possibly affect the way people think about their bisexuality and serve as a source of knowledge about queer issues.

One of the interview questions, "how would you explain what bisexuality is?" was introduced as a merit of one's familiarity with trans-inclusionary/-exclusionary discourses that exist around bisexuality. In particular, the formulation of "bi-" as two sexes or as "me vs. others" was visible in some of the explanations. However, some definitions did not fit these molds, like one given by Kristina. Like some other interviewees, she was clearly familiar with transphobic meaning that can be read into bisexuality while also recognizing pansexuality as a term that is different from bisexuality. From her narrative, it seems like initial uneasiness with the term was created via the appearance of non-binary people around her, and the "bi-" felt extremely limiting:

> "So lately, literally for the last few months, I have become somewhat uncomfortable with the term bisexuality, because in my, well, in my dating field, so to say, people who identify as non-binary have appeared, and, as it were, even though for me bisexuality it is ... More general, that is, I can also feel attracted towards non-binary people without problems. To transgender people, too, I have no problem with that. And it seems to me that bisexuality, as a term, somewhat limits this. But until I find a more suitable term for myself, and it seems to me that now I still live in comfort, well, not very comfortably, but in a paradigm where I call myself a bisexual woman."

Upon elaborating on her feelings towards bisexuality and its potential limiting trans-exclusionary nature, she concluded:

> "It's not an attraction to a gender, but an attraction to sex. It's like you have twice as many options. I don't want to devalue the people who conceptualized themselves in gender identities [that are not in line with their sex], but I don't care for that stuff

personally. I mean, there are those, there are others, and others, and some more. I don't want to say all because that seems different, but just there are more options."

There seems to be no resolution to the issue of "bi-" as "two genders" that would allow Kristina to keep the identity and control the way others read it. A similar notion of multiple understandings was mentioned by Vera, who stated that while there are people who include trans individuals in the definition, she does not do it. Notably, she explained how her understanding was built up against her previous identity as a pansexual:

"A: And, at first, I rather thought that I was a pan and not bi. Now it's somewhat more manageable for me to identify as bi, although I don't really see the difference ... That is, I understand what the difference is, but in general, I don't really care, and I don't really want to get confused and confuse other people who do not understand all abbreviations as I, although I am also not completely aware of everything. Therefore, I now identify myself as a bisexual person with experience with both male and female sex, and I myself do not separate my own gender and sex, but I recognize the right of others to separate it. That is, I try to be respectful as far as it goes.

Q: What's the difference between bisexuality and pansexuality?

A: In general, judging by all this endless controversy on Twitter, the difference is that bi people sometimes do not accept or want to date another gender besides exclusively female and exclusively male [here meaning "cis-"], which I find rather weird, because… In the beginning, "bi" meant that you did not care which sex the person is. I vote for that. But, when I was 16-17, I considered myself to be a pan[sexual] because that responded to the fact that I did not care [for partner's gender and sex]. But now I understand that with some of my mental problems, I would not stand living with a person who may have problems due to gender dysphoria and the uncertainty of their [social] status. So I decided that just ... I like girls, I like boys, that's all."

Both accounts discuss possible interpretations of "bi" in line with the binominal understanding of gender but come to different conclusions around the place of bisexuality in relation to other identities. For Kristina, bisexuality is trans-inclusionary, but the problem is that not everyone reads it that way. For Vera, bisexuality is significantly different from pansexuality in its trans-exclusionary nature; however, she does not believe bisexuality is exclusively about that. Vera kept her identity because it correlates with the way she wants others to read her identity and perceive it as possibly trans-exclusionary. The two accounts differ in that one actively uses pansexuality as a point of opposition to bisexuality, as a point of difference, but the other does not.

Production of bisexuality against pansexuality seems to follow the English-speaking discourse of the 1990s and early 2000s, where pansexuality, a new sexual identity, tried to distinguish itself from bisexuality. Interestingly, pansexuality was mentioned by the minority of participants: only five people said it in their replies about labels or during an explanation of what bisexuality is. It seems like the knowledge of pansexuality might change one's view of bisexuality as previously it was built up against homo- and hetero-sexualities, yet now it also locates itself in relation to pansexuality, usually on issues of trans* identities. This double meaning of "bi-" is present in Russian-speaking queer individuals and in English-speaking communities, emphasizing the somewhat shared discursive space. Having experience with trans* individuals seems to be present in both accounts; however, its influence is non-linear. Kristina underlined the difference in her reading of bisexuality with possible readings by others, whereas, for Vera, those experiences only strengthen the trans-exclusionary understanding of the word.

Another thing is notable in Vera's account. Twitter and its place in this research need some contextualization. In general, Twitter as a place of self-realization, communication, and activism was mentioned in five interviews, proving it to be a sign of something rather than a

random mention. The majority of people I spoke with found out about research through Twitter, mainly through a call for participants I posted there via my personal Twitter page. Sharing this context of being Twitter users, many participants felt comfortable mentioning it and the website's specific mechanics in the conversation. Taya said she sometimes participates in Twitter discussions around LGBTQ+ rights through the Twitter reply system, where she fights homophobic arguments. Marina noted how she and her friends feel pretty positively about publishing their "bisexual feels" on Twitter despite its open-access nature. Fandom culture on Twitter and on the Internet, in general, helped Sonya learn about LGBTQ+ identities and talk with people "like her." Twitter as a place of knowledge production about queer issues was not central to this research, but for several people, that was the social network where they learn about contemporary debates, hear stories of homophobic and biphobic attitudes, and try to change someone's mind by taking part in heated online arguments. It's also a place where one can openly talk about bisexuality and make their identity visible via images, tweets, and retweets.

The way Vera looked at pansexuality vs. bisexuality is not the only outlook present in the data. Mila, who primarily identifies as asexual along with being pan-/bi-romantic, noted how for her, both of these identities are about sex and stand in opposition to asexuality, with no significant difference:

> "A: In terms of sexuality, I am leaning towards being asexual. In general, all life is vanity; relationships are needed only for the sake of support; somehow, this is how it now lined up for me. I used to think that it was more in terms of ... pansexuality or bisexuality. That is, I am interested in both those and other folks. But then I realized that I was not interested in them sexually at its core. That is, I have little interest in the part where we find ourselves in bed. Therefore, probably asexuality.
>
> Q: But do I understand correctly that bi-romantic is still applicable for you, or not?

A: Well, yes, biromantic, in this regard, yes."

Like in Kristina's account, Mila elaborated that due to trans* individuals around, she felt slightly uncomfortable with the term bisexuality. This, along with an additional understanding of bisexuality as a more well-known term, makes friend groups and real-life networks significant element of knowledge production and identity changes when it comes to bisexuality:

> "Q: You said that you were in the process of choosing between bi and pan. When was it? And why?
>
> A: That was probably since high school, when more serious relationships had started to form with people, in a global sense. And probably until… Last year? Approximately for four or five years of my life. In the beginning, it was bisexuality because I did not really know other terms existed; that is, I liked boys and girls, and then pansexuality because… at that time, a lot of transgender and queer people surrounded me, and so… Probably they do not really fit into the understanding of bisexuality, but they also could be liked by me as people, as possible partners, so that's why [I considered pansexuality]."

The role of diversity in friend groups in access to LGBT+ knowledge was seen in previous chapters as well: for instance, Moscow for many was a place where queer people are more open, and many found themselves surrounded by more queer individuals upon moving to the city. Research on identity development also underlines friend networks as a place where one can more and discuss their desires and struggles (Floyd & Stein, 2002). Knowing particular people, e.g., trans* individuals, affect one's understanding of bisexuality but with no specific result. What stems from the stories is the significance of discourse (for instance, what's seen on Twitter) along with friendship networks as valuable places for navigating the "bi-" in

bisexuality. Learning is not exclusively about reading but also about being familiar with particular identities, communities, others.

Overall, around half of the participants noted how for them, the process of learning about bisexuality and, by extent, themselves is still not done. I would argue that it never really stops for some, as the social contexts change and the meanings of words shift under the interpersonal experiences and general alterations in discourse. The following section develops the question of friend networks more closely from a perspective of social distance in identity disclosure.

Telling others: problematizing the closet, the coming out

In general, most of the interviewees rarely revealed their identity through labels. In terms of phrases, the most common way of hinting at one's bisexuality was either by mentioning desires or by mentioning previous partners. Many tried to reveal their identity casually in passing, particularly with new acquaintances and/or friends. The conceptualization of coming out as an identity management practice seemed to be the understanding participants had when answering the question. This conceptualization of coming out, previously outlined by Orne (2011), allows us to look at coming out as a continuous, almost everyday practice of situational identity management and not as a stage of development. While the factors that seem to arise from my data do not fall in line with Orne's conclusion, I believe this understanding to be more beneficial for data analysis.

To clarify, in Russian, coming-out exists as a transliteration (*каминг-аут* read as *kaming-out*), while the metaphor of the closet is present in the discourse as a translation (*shkaf*). This led to some mash-up between the language used by participants and the researcher. To avoid that, I mainly tried to use one formulation and talked about "identity disclosure" instead of coming out. "The closet" (*shkaf*) was used only if the interviewee mentioned the word when

answering the question. The absence of an established idea of "coming-out" as a stage of identity formation, which, according to some scholars, is present in English-speaking discourse (Savin-Williams, 2011), might explain why people were hesitant to talk about identity and instead spoke about behaviors or desires.

The first strategy that came up with regard to identity management was the way people choose who to tell. Quite often, coming-out narratives frame the act of telling others about one's identity as a sacred process done only to close friends. However, for most of my interviewees, social distance from others was not that important when deciding whether or not to share the information. This was true particularly for cases with peer communications and informal hangouts. This is not to say that people were not in any way "checked" before identity disclosure: eight people noted how they first try to see if the person is "adequate," "non-aggressive," "modern," and then decide if it is safe for them to disclose or mention their bisexuality. Moreover, if the person "did not pass the check," interviewees did not see any reason for further conversation. As Taya described it:

> "I am not talking about this with those who may perceive it inadequately. And with friends, with some new acquaintances, on Twitter, I can easily tweet, "jeez, I feel so bisexual today." I have no problem with that. If I see that I can trust a person, that he adequately relates to this… for me, this is not a sacred knowledge (*сакральное знание*) about my personality."

Most importantly here, however, is the view of sexuality as something sacred, something that should be kept as a secret. None of the eight people who shared this strategy view sexuality disclosure as crucial for who they are, e.g., bisexuality was just a part of their everyday existence and not the most significant characteristic they have. Combined with new ways of communication framed by the Internet and social media, such attitude to sexuality construct it as just another abjective or just another identity one has.

While many were pretty comfortable hinting to others that they are bisexual, some were less hesitant to talk about it, even with closest friends. Eva noted how despite her friend eventually being okay with it, she still feels uncomfortable due to the initial reaction her friend had:

> "A: Well, I remember when I told my best friend. She reacted very… reservedly. And in a way… Maybe she was scared, maybe she did not know how to react, it was unusual for her. And for some time she tried to overcome her feelings, and then she told me: "I'm grateful that you told me because I grew up in a family where…", well, she told me that she grew up in a family where it was unthinkable, unacceptable. But then she said: "It's still you, so I would not love you less because of it, as long as you are happy." I remember when she said exactly that. Recently she kinda repeated that that moment was important for our relationship. And then she told her husband about this moment in our relationship, and he was also like: "you were wrong; you should have supported your friend." And I like his attitude, and they both kinda support me. I still have this embarrassment inside because of how she initially reacted, that I should not tell her more about all of it. But now I see that she responds pretty well, asks questions. In general, everything is fine. But yeah, in general, I rarely tell anyone, only to those who I trust very much. I do not post… I don't know. I think nobody could understand [that I'm bisexual] based on my social media; I try not to flaunt it (*не отсвечивать*). […]
>
> Q: Why do you not really "flaunt it"?
>
> A: I think… it's similar to shame or embarrassment that things are different for me. People who know me for a long time… I feel very unprotected. I am afraid that I will be treated with disdain, although I understand that this is probably not the way it will go. I even know that this is not how people will treat me, all of my new friends, they

will not do anything like that; but I still feel that I am somehow afraid of something like that… As if I am worse or something like that."

While this is not explicitly said, bisexuality feels somewhat sacred in Eva's story; it is configured as something that should not be seen, should be protected. This account is more similar to classic coming-out narratives, underlining the place of social distance in identity disclosure processes. I also believe that initial negative experience with reaction to coming out complicated the role of social distance, maybe somewhat devaluing it as a factor. While some other interviewees also noted adverse reactions, particularly from parents, it did not seem to have a similar effect. Unlike in Eva's case, people ended up losing contacts, but that did not really make them more reserved in their identity disclosure.

In other social contexts, e.g., at work and at places of education (universities), many factors influenced how people disclosed their identities. For work occupations, answers varied significantly along the lines of professions. Three people who primarily work as journalists all shared that most people in their work network are open-minded and accept queer identities. Zhenya, who works in HR for a mining company, noted how disclosure in any way would only worsen the working conditions and might get them fired. Some universities were described as more queer-friendly than others: Taya, who studied in art college, mentioned how no one was surprised or really cared about her non-heterosexual identity. What mattered is a general atmosphere in the university or in local queer communities. Kristina, who often seen biphobic remarks from queer members of the closed-off local university LGBT+ community, was less willing to share her identity with the community members and eventually lost contact with the group.

Coming out to parents seemed to be a very different form of identity disclosure, maybe more similar to the developmental descriptions of coming-outs. None of the questions really targeted the topic of relationships between interviewees and their family members, so not all

people ended up mentioning identity disclosure to their parents. Some interviewees who were completely open to their peers, friends, and acquaintances were "in the closet" to their families. A few people that did speak with their family members about bisexuality mentioned how that conversation was quickly forgotten or ignored by the family members. Five out of six cases of coming outs to parents ended up not changing much in the relationship. For instance, Taya described coming out to her mother as a lesbian (prior to identifying as bisexual) in the following way:

> "Well, my mom, for example, is the only one from the whole family who knows that I'm not heterosexual. And that was ... Well, I texted her, said it. When my girlfriend left [after visiting], I texted my mom: "you know, a friend who visited me... she is not just a friend." Well, she reacted really calmly; there were no tantrums. It was, of course, "you haven't decided yet; maybe you will find yourself a boyfriend." So when I go out if I say that I'm going out with, say, Masha [female name] or I'm going out [in a non-romantic way] with Vasya [male name], she immediately is interested in Vasya, all like "Who is Vasya? What's his occupation?" I tried to fight it. I said, "Mom, I told you, I'm not interested in men," but she ignores it all. Like "if I ignore it, maybe it will go away." Well, in general, it's sad. I am not going to tell my father and grandparents, God forbid. They'll have a heart attack or go into a ten-hour hysteria that does not stop."

The part about ignoring is similar across five narratives. This type of attitude may come in slightly various forms, for instance, forgetting about a child's same-sex relationships, only assuming a heteronormative future, being more invested in heteronormative relationships. All five interviewees noted that they don't see any point in arguing and just "roll their eyes" every time some misrecognition is in place. They are "out of the closet," technically, but due to this continual refusal to acknowledge, most do not actively talk about their bisexual experiences or feelings with their parents. This complicates the closet's assumed transparency and stability.

For most, the location was ambivalent, with the technical stage of the coming out behind them but still being invisible.

A more "successful" case of coming out, or rather outing, was shared by Nina. Her religious family figured out she had a girlfriend independently of Nina's actions because she was in high school and still lived with her parents. After a few years of quite hostile relationships, with scandals and accusations of "sinful actions," Nina moved out, and the relationship somewhat became more benevolent. When Nina broke up with her partner and started dating a guy, her mother was happy because "finally, her daughter started dating boys." While this might seem like an inevitable erasure of bisexual experience, Nina does not think her mother forgot she is bisexual:

> "At some point, I was mentioning in passing my bisexuality, just in a general conversation. I became rather brave in these matters. At some point, we were talking about a wedding… And I was like, "well, mom, you know if I ever have a husband or a wife…", and she was like, "Nina, don't do that." She did not argue; she was just boiling over it very performatively, as a joke."

In Nina's family, after her high-school outing, the topics of non-heterosexuality now seem to be more openly talked about, or at least do not provoke many conflicts. It runs as a reminder of the bisexuality of the eldest daughter, which all the siblings support and sometimes use to pick into their mother's slight homophobia.

Overall, all accounts support the idea of multiple coming-outs rather than coming out as a singular event. Moreover, the way interviewees disclose their identity is based on desires and relationship history, rather than identity labels, which is more common for coming out as a milestone in sexual identity development. This proves a more recent trend of understanding identity development as a contextually based process that is flexible and dependent on other characteristics such as age, gender, class (Diamond, 2006; Katz-Wise, 2015; Morgan, 2013).

6. CHAPTER. BISEXUALITY AND GENDER

The thematical dimension of gender was initially introduced as a point of interest due to a pool of data suggesting a significant difference between bisexual experiences for men and women (more in Chapter 2). The chapter was meant to overview how interview subjects narrate themselves with regards to their gender and the gender of their partner. This led to two subtropical developments: first, the chapter had to include stereotypes and the way bisexual people reflected those in their narratives. Second, the chapter had to navigate the question of partnerships, the consistently partial and consistently present experience. While the first topic was rather straightforward in its theoretical framing, for the second one, the category of monosexuality had to be brought about. Most narratives included in the chapter describe non-monosexual experiences and their effects on bisexual subjectivity. Monosexuality, being a part of the heterosexual matrix, has to be analyzed and noted along with gender-related issues created by the heterosexual matrix. Unlike with gender, not much was said about the non-monosexual nature of bisexuality in previous chapters. I believe that to be the case because it always ends up being incorporated into the gender-theme angle, which is technically correct, but ends up mitigating the effects that particular characteristic of bisexuality has on subjectivity building and narratives. Therefore, in order to locate the heterosexual matrix in its various representation, sections one and two deal with monosexuality, while the last section in this chapter focuses on gender differences in experiences. To summarize, the chapter uses the axis of the heterosexual matrix to analyze specific discursive conflicts along which bisexual subjectivity narrative is build using gender as its guideline.

Before bringing forth the interviews, I would like first to make a few valuable notes on the way questions about gender were structured and understood by some of the interviewees. Initially, this chapter was designed to focus on the differences participants noted and how these differences affect their subjective attitudes towards bisexuality and themselves (being gendered

bisexual subjects). The interview questions on the topic of gender were design to fit this mold of data analysis and included the following formulations: “In your view, does gender identity in any way relates to your bisexual experiences, and if yes, how?”, “Do stereotypes and cultural beliefs about the sexual freedom of men and women affect your relationship with bisexuality as an identity?”, “Generally, do you think the experiences of bisexual men, bisexual women, and bisexual, non-binary persons differ?”. However, only one of those questions, the last one about differences in experience, was met with recognition and answered in most interviews. The other two, particularly the one about gender identity, mainly were met with confusion and misunderstanding on the part of participants.

What exactly did I mean by that question, and where the meaning got misrecognized? Initially, the question was designed to start the conversation around different experiences for bisexual men and women present in sociological research. I mainly wanted to see if any of the interviewees noticed how their experiences of, say, same-sex desire might be shaped by their gendered upbringing and (non-)normativity of same-sex socialization. That question was designed as a general overarching question that was later developed into two more precise questions about gender stereotypes and different experiences. However, the questions were not understood as such. The translation of this question was rather direct, with lateral transliterations/translations used for “gender identity” (*гендерная идентичность*) and “bisexual experiences” (*опыт бисексуального человека*); therefore I doubt that the issue was one of translation. What seems to be the case is that interviewees did not recognize what exactly I mean by gender identity in this case. Many replied as if I questioned their cisgenderness, as if the question assumed any *transness* in connection to bisexuality: some stated that they never felt like other genders and could not understand what I mean. The reading of *transness* into question about gender identity was also met in the first interview questions where I asked interviewees to say their current and previous sexual and gender identities. Some, upon

replying, said phrases like "I always felt like a girl," "I never doubted my gender identity," "I never had troubles with that." While in of itself, those replies do not seem significant, taken into account with the responses I got later might suggest that for questions that included "gender identity," many thought about non-cisgender identities or experiences instantly, reading *transness* into "gender identity" rather than perceiving it as having both cis- and trans-experiences. This would explain people's confusion about the question: if they are cis-gender, what exactly can they say about *transness* and bisexuality? The question was not intended to invite any conversations about transness, but it was recognized as such. This is important to note because it might explain the ways conversations would later develop within an interview. It seems like talking about exact, everyday experiences and/or particular stereotypes was more relatable for interviewees, and it shifted their attention from transness to gender normativity and gendered experiences. Starting at about the 10th interview, I started asking the following question when the interviewee would not understand or reply in a way that showed misrecognition.

The second issue that arose from the way research was conducted provides an additional contribution to the theme of gender and bisexuality. There is a substantial gender disbalance in the sample – most of the interviewees are ciswomen (90%). I struggled to find cismen in any social groups and communities willing to participate in research. Moreover, upon asking some of my participants if they knew any bisexual cismen, many replied negatively. The issue of the disbalance was added as a discussion point to some of the interviews when it seemed fitting. Theoretically, as discussed in Chapter 2, some factors allow ciswomen to adopt the term "bisexual" more easily: normalization of close female friendships, sexualization of same-sex female performances (male gaze), positive stereotypes. Interviewees with whom I discussed the issue also noted how it's usually more challenging for men to come out as non-heterosexual in Russia due to high levels of homophobia to all, but towards men especially. Therefore, some

argued that bisexual women are more visible than bisexual men. More on this will be discussed in the following sections.

This chapter starts with discussing responses to interview question that was not directly connected to the theme of gender. As seen in previous chapters, a partner's gender played a role in one's identity management, coming-out stories, and struggles with internalized homophobia. When talking about relationship status and history, many noted how they felt different being with a partner of one or another gender. This is in line with previous research on bisexuality, particularly the idea that one could not be truly bisexual – to "truly" fit the label, one needs to have a simultaneous relationship with partners of two/several genders and be seen as such (Hemmings, 2002). As the responses to the question of relationship history were tightly connected to the theme of gender and previous research on the topic, it seemed fitting to start this chapter with a broad discussion about "feeling bisexual" and partner's gender.

Invisibility, misrecognition, stress: bisexuality under partner's gender

As seen in the previous chapter, one way a partner's gender influences the visibility of bisexuality is through the refusal of acknowledgment. That is, as noted with the examples of Taya's and Nina's stories with "coming-outs" to parents, there is a difference in how one's bisexual subjectivity is perceived or not perceived depending on partner's gender: if it's a same-sex relationship, bisexuality is recognized in its wholeness, with the possibility that in the future one might be in a different-sex relationship. However, when a bisexual individual is in a different-sex relationship, their bisexuality becomes more easily dismissible and leads to a conscious refusal to acknowledge either bisexual experiences of the past or various ways of life in the future.

The same issue of false recognition can be seen in other cases, where it is not so much about information that was shared but about information that is read into something. For

instance, Max described how she was read as heterosexual in one case and as a lesbian in another depending on the gender of her partner:

> "When I just started meeting my boyfriend's friends, they all thought I was heterosexual; they did not even think otherwise. Only when I said "my previous girlfriend" they started asking questions… And before that, when I dated a girl, some of my new acquaintances, upon figuring that out, clarified, "are like a lesbian or…?". I think these two cases are kind of different, but they kind of have the same core (*суть*)."

According to Hemmings, "passing as lesbian, gay or straight is inevitable a formative part of what it means to become bisexual" (p. 43). This is precisely what is happening in the account above. While usually passing describes a possibility for one not to be read as queer (Lingel, 2009), bisexual individuals passing as either heterosexual or homosexual is equally problematic. More broadly, passing is discussed in the next chapter. For now, I would like to shift the conversation slightly towards other influences of the partner's gender to one's subjectivity.

In general, many of the interviewees agreed that being in a same-sex and different-sex relationship is significantly different. Those differences can be topically divided into several areas, including personal comfort, feeling like a part of a queer community, and safety.

Personal comfort included ideas about one's behavior and general well-being in a relationship. It also included differences in same-sex and different-sex relationships described through individual changes and factors rather than social or situational influences. For instance, Rita noted how seeing the possibility of non-heterosexual same-sex relationships lead to personal growth and exploration:

> "I'm not in a relationship right now. I think [the relationship] affected me because… I became more attuned to myself, I started listening to my desires. For a long time, I imagined myself only in heterosexual relationships, and everything else was

entertainment, and at some point, I realized that ... It was a discovery for me that if a girl would have appeared in my life, and we would have a great emotional and sexual content, that would be much better for me that some of my previous relationships with the opposite sex. I think I became more open in that sense. I stopped paying attention to any imposed attitudes."

While this example is not direct underlining of difference between different relationships, it shows how heteronormative and non-heteronormative relationships lead to other personal explorations and develop one's subjectivity in various ways. Rita had to take some time to become comfortable with the taught of fulfilling same-sex relationships, while the same was not applicable for her experience in a different-sex relationship.

A different form of personal comfort would be gender-based solidarity or a sense that same-sex partners might understand some aspects slightly better. For instance, Polina noted how with her girlfriend, she felt more comfortable discussing menstrual pains because her partner could relate:

"Well, I think it was easier for my girlfriend and me to discuss some topics in comparison to conversations I had with my boyfriend. I mean, she understood when I felt sick because of period pains because she had the same experience. And that's not like only because they were different people, that's for sure… It's just, she understood some of the gender stuff, which were hard to explain to my boyfriend."

Similar to Polina, Egor mentioned that his bisexual preference for women is partly due to a lack of trust towards people with male gender socialization[8]:

[8] Male/female gender socialization (мужская/женская гендерная социализация) is often used by Russian (radical) feminists to describe the difference in upbringing between men and women. It is usually used to explain different behavioral strategies, preferences, and struggles. It is also sometimes used by Russian TURFs to argue for inability of trans*women to be "real" women due to the lack of female gender socialization. In the quote, the term was used in a non-transphobic way to describe AFAB (assigned female at birth) and AMAB (assigned male at birth) people, because "AFAB/AMAB" abbreviations are rarely used in Russian spoken language.

> "I also wanted to mention that in my case, bisexuality is still moved [towards women], but not because of my attractions (*влечения*), that is, not because I simply like girls more, but because I often find [people with] female gender socialization to be more trustworthy, than male gender socialization. Therefore, people who have gone through male gender socialization automatically cause mistrust in me. They have to earn my trust by spending a lot of resources, whereas I have a credit of trust towards people with female gender socialization, and they have to do something to ruin it."

Somewhat connected to the area of personal comfort, or instead, bisexuality management strategies, Vika shared how after breaking up with her girlfriend, she had a period where she tried to focus her attention on men exclusively, searching for a heterosexual relationship:

> "When I broke up with her, I had a long period of time where… Well, to pay more attention to men, and not women. I understood that I would never come back to being heterosexual, and I would not want that, but still. That period lasted for a while, but then I realized it was stupid, to just neglect all other girls because of the falling out I had with one girl."

This story is slightly different from those above. It does not necessarily cover the period of time within a relationship but rather focuses on its aftermath for "bisexual behavior": Later in the conversation, Vika agreed that this was a sort of equating of gender preferences, e.g., an attempt to move oneself closer to the center of the Kinsey Scale. I believe this to be a form of personal comfort as the effort was to made desire correspond to the image of a bisexual individual, to align one's subjectivity (e.g., desires and behaviors) with a broader discourse. It was partially about comfort in specific sexuality, which leads back to unrealistic prototypes for bisexual individuals.

Most accounts about LGBTQ communities and interactions with people of other queer identities were rather positive across the sample. Similar to the stereotypes discussed in Chapter

2, several people recited attitudes they have seen online and\or heard in person. A few interviewees discussed their worry of not being accepted in the LBGTQ community or feeling like they must prove their bisexuality if currently, they are in a different-sex relationship. For instance, Sonya explained:

> "I sometimes ask my lesbian friends if they still think I am a part of the community… It happens rather rare now, like, I became more confident, but I used to have this feeling that… well if I like a guy, I'm not truly experiencing non-heterosexual struggles… I know it's not like that, and my friends always supported me, but still, it was a very vague pressure. "

On the topic of safety, some noted how they feel more comfortable holding hands on a street with a partner of a different sex than with a partner of the same sex. This topic is discussed in more detail in the next chapter, but what is essential is the connection between being read as heterosexual and a consequential absence of homophobic hostile interaction.

More elaborate notions of safety were also located in discussions on queer rights and the difference of possibilities in same-sex vs. different-sex relationships. For instance, when discussing biphobia, Zhenya used the word "safety" to describe the mismatch between his relationship history and gender preferences:

> "… I have a strong preference for women, I usually like them more, but I often had long-term serious relationships with men because this is more accepted by society; it's quite often the basic question of safety and opportunities. That is not because my bisexuality is fake or anything… It's just because society is terrible and prevents me from identifying as I want and behaving as I want."

When asked what exactly they meant by "opportunities" (*возможности*), Zhenya mentioned the ability to get married, visit a partner in emergency cases, share taxes and bank accounts. He is not the only one who used these markers: four other interviewees shared how

they would like to be able to marry and have all the legal benefits that follow. These examples of "opportunities" are often used in LGBTQ+ legal rights discourse under a more general human rights paradigm. While some argue that those quite repeatedly exclude bisexuality or make it invisible (Marcus, 2015), they matter in contexts where no discussions of LBGTQ+ rights exist in the official, dominant discourse. To reiterate, while narratives in mainstream LGBTQ+ rights discourse might neglect bisexual identities, they seem to be the only point of reference available in some settings.

As a loose conclusion to the topic of difference in same-sex and different-sex relationships, it is essential to note that some did not see any difference between them. For some, every relationship is different independent of the partner's gender because they are first and foremost about different people and not about people of different genders.

Identity invalidation: "bisexual experience" as a double edge sword

Outside of being in a relationship, a few interviewees mentioned how their bisexuality was doubted based on the absence of bisexual experience (e.g., romantic relationships with same-sex and different-sex partners). For instance, Tanya told how when she was talking to one of her university coursemates, he questioned her bisexuality through experience:

> "A:… And my (male) coursemate was like: "Did you ever had a relationship with women? Did you have sex with them?"; and I was like, you've never kissed a girl, how do you know you're straight? You've never kissed a girl either. It's a very bizarre question, and I remember standing there and being just, like, okay, sex education goes out the window, I guess.
>
> Q: So when you said you were bisexual, he asked you to prove it by experience?
>
> A: Yeah."

While for some, the absence of bisexual experience is something that does not let them identify with bisexuality in the first place or supports their bisexual identity through the history of relationships, for others, the experience might be a tool people around could use to doubt their bisexuality. Here, Tanya's acquaintance assumed she is heterosexual unless she had proof of non-heterosexual behavior, which shows the assumptions made under the heterosexual matrix and an ambivalent location experience regarding bisexuality.

Another common way to invalidate bisexual identity based on experience is to formulate it as an "experience" and not a stable identity. When talking about the hardships of bisexuality with Rita, she explained that for her, the most challenging part of bisexuality is to deal with invalidating comments that assume bisexuality as a temporary behavioral shift:

> "Well, the hardest thing was to overcome opinions that say it will pass. That is that I have to always argue for the seriousness of my plans to be in a relationship with a woman. Because we all know what people say, that you had male partners, therefore this [bisexuality] is a just a period (*просто период такой*). I think for gay people, it's slightly easier, at least in my opinion. Because at some point, people get off your back and just accept your position. But with bisexuality, people always doubt you, doubt the things you do."

Both quotes talk about a complicated relationship bisexual experience has with bisexual identity in the eyes of others. The first one shows an example of gender affecting one's perception of other's sexual experiences and desires, while the second one emphasizes the way the non-monosexual nature of bisexuality comes through. While for some, having proof of "bisexual experience" would make one's bisexuality valid or visibility, that experience can also be easily dismissed if that's the aim. It relates to a lot of other stories already told about conscious misrecognition, about forgetting on purpose.

"No one has it easier, it's just different": sexism, stereotypes, and gendered bodies

Chapter 2 cites a few stereotypes about bisexual individuals mentioned or discussed in some of the interviews. In this section, I would like to focus on a specific intersection between sexism and stereotypes about bisexuality as a way to apply the gender dimension to the analysis. This section will not include general perceptions of bisexuality and instead focus on stereotypes about bisexual men and bisexual women as separate, significantly different subgroups.

To start, one of the most prevalent gendered stereotypes that were not overviewed in Chapter 2 is the threesome. A few studies mentioned how bisexual people, particularly women, are assumed to be ready and up for a threesome, where a threesome consists of two women and one man (Alarie & Gaudet, 2013). While in itself, this stereotype might be viewed as a prolongation of the "bisexual as promiscuous" trope, I would argue that there is a discrepancy in threesome offers to women and men. No research was found that focused on that discrepancy, but no research on threesome offers to bisexual men was found either.

One example of a setting where a threesome might be offered to a bisexual individual was described by Nina. She shared how when she started going out on Tinder dates with guys, some would bring up threesomes after she would mention her bisexuality. Even when topically, that seemed out of place:

> "A: After this [bisexual identity disclosure], some men would start to hint at threesomes, that [identity disclosure] was a convenient filter, because if you dated a girl, then you'll be fine with a threesome offer. Just after I said "bisexuality," jokes about threesomes would appear. That connection was weird to me, but when it came up, I just stopped communicating."

Overall, 6 interviewees mentioned threesomes as a stereotype around bisexual identity.

What is the connection between threesomes and sexism? Similar to the way compulsory bisexuality works via the male gaze, it also works because of women loving women (wlw)

fetishization. This topic was wildly explored through the phenomenon of lesbian porn that is produced for men and the result it had on the "normalization" of wlw sexual interactions (Puhl, 2010).

This fetishization was something almost half of the participants talked about when mentioning the difference in perception of bisexual men and bisexual women. Kristina, when explaining her fears of performing romantic behaviors on the streets, gave examples of interactions she counted as unwanted:

> "A: Somebody might whistle, maybe somebody… I don't know; I mean, it's an irrational fear. Would people beat me up? No. But they will turn their heads. Maybe they whistle, clap. And then they follow to see where you go. It is not a fear of physical reprisal (*расправа*), but a desire to not attract attention by a non-standard (*нестандартная*) situation. Well, in general, as a girl in Russia, you try to not attract any attention to yourself, especially in the dark, especially with a non-standard situation.
>
> Q: Will the clapping and whistling be approvingly or positively?
>
> A: Well, it's positively fetishized. Like how gay men are bad, but lesbians are beautiful, in that kind of way."

As seen from the quote, there is a benefit that comes from fetishization: it lowers the possibility of physical violence. In turn, the rare violence towards bisexual women is balanced out by higher chances of physical violence towards bisexual men. As Vera explains it:

> "A: It's harder with men… I mean, I can't really speak from their location, but as far as I understand, they [bisexual men] usually have more tragic stories with acceptance, with relationships. Because in general, well, it's as if it hits them harder because of masculinity, because of [men's] harshness (*грубость*). And when, say, bisexual women would accidentally flirt with a heterosexual woman assuming she is bi or not-

hetero… She will not be beaten up (*получит по морде*). But a guy probably will. He would be lucky if he would not be kicked on the ground (*забьют ногами*). I mean, psychologically, both are having a hard time, but physically it is harder for guys; it's scarier for them. Thought, on the other hand, women are always scared because it's Russia."

At the end of the quote lies the critical ambivalence central to the question of bisexual women's experiences. Sentiment in Vera's last sentence mimics Kristina's concern and relates to insights from other interviewees: while fetishization lowers risks of physical violence, there are still risks of sexual violence that exist for all women living in Russia. Moreover, in some cases, fetishization might include some forms of sexual violence, like harassment, with invasive questions about threesomes being an example of that. Therefore, in terms of violence, it is not a question of "a lot of violence vs. no violence"; it is a question of situational reactions and type of violence.

7. CHAPTER. NAVIGATING MOSCOW, AVOIDING THREATS: IDENTITY DISCLOSURE AND PUBLIC SPACES

This chapter analyzes responses to one of the interview questions focused on Moscow and its significance compared to other places in Russia and elsewhere. The question read as follows: If you had to compare your experience as a bisexual person living in Moscow with experiences of bisexuals from other places, what would you say is different about it? More often than not, additional questions about Moscow were asked as part of clarification: Do you feel in danger while being in public? Where in the city do you feel safer? For participants, who have experience living in other cities before moving to Moscow, additional comparative questions were asked: How do you think your city is different from Moscow? Does the life of queer individuals differ between the cities?

The interviews are discussed in light of several queer phenomena and topics, such as passing (Lingel, 2009), in/visibility (Hemmings, 2002), and heterosexual matrix (Butler, 2011). There was no particular prior hypothesis made regarding these interview questions, as initially, those were supposed to frame contextual parts of the theoretical chapter. However, upon hearing and reading the stories, intriguing similarities of experience were found across participants that can be of interest in light of urban and queer studies.

Moscow is not your regular Russian town

Being the capital of Russia, Moscow is the most densely populated city, with approximately 12,5 million recorded citizens and 15 million citizens overall (UA REGNUM, 2019). It ranks highest in almost all economic metrics, such as GPD, GRP, and consumer expenditure, compared to other cities of Russia. It also has the highest numbers of higher institutions like universities and colleges. Many say, “Moscow is not Russia.” What this means should become apparent towards the end of this chapter.

Upon comparing Moscow to other cities of Russia, most respondents noted how Moscow is similar to Saint Petersburg and how both of them are different from other cities. People in Moscow and Saint Petersburg were mostly constructed as more tolerant of sexual minorities, more diverse, and more open-minded. Egor, when comparing his small hometown with Moscow, noted:

> "There [in the hometown] was always a possibility of bullying based on sexuality or something, but in Moscow, even when you arrive, you can feel the freedom; whomever you meet, almost all of them will understand, especially the younger generation. Even the older generation is much better; here [in Moscow], I, for the first time, met people whose parents reacted [to coming out] normally. That is, you can calmly say [about your sexuality] to almost a stranger ... That is, you feel safe when you open yourself to a stranger."

When asked why they think Moscow is more tolerant towards sexual minorities, interviewees argued that Moscow, in general, has more to offer, and therefore people see more varieties in others. People in Moscow also might have more resources for traveling. For instance, while comparing Moscow and Crimea, Rita argued:

> "… Muscovite travel and see other ways of life and other norms in foreign countries. For instance, people in Crimea mainly travel around their island and do not see the difference [between local and foreign customs]. Obviously, two kissing women in a café would stir awful butthurt because people don't get it. People in Moscow just have seen more."

The verity of people noticeable in Moscow is not about LBGTQ representation in particular, but rather about the general amount of people that produces said variety in educational or organizational settings. Lida shared that she changed her homophobic attitudes

and learned about different sexualities, mostly from new friend groups she established upon moving to Moscow from a small suburban town near the city:

> "… Like many other ideological changes, [change in identity and homophobic views] was connected to my environment: I got a few feminists and LGBTQ people in my new friend group… Only because non-heterosexual people appeared in my life, and I was friends with them, it became hard to keep my homophobic beliefs."

Similarly, Tanya expressed how the university atmosphere affected her comfort in her bisexual identity. Upon switching universities, she moved from a somewhat homophobic hostile environment to one where a lot of LGBTQ people were open, and nobody explicitly produced any homophobic attitudes:

> "… In my current department, everyone has piercings, and a guy can come wearing a skirt. All of this is normal. But in my previous uni, things were very different. They approve very formal style, which strongly associates with heterosexuality in some way, and I knew that informality and non-formality were not approved. They shit on my current uni for how many gay people study here. They shit on feminists. I've been bullied for being a feminist. And there I did not feel safe, like, at all. I still don't understand how people who do not identify as heterosexual study there because I think it's very hard."

The significance of informal vs. formal appearance and style will be discussed later. Notably, both universities Tanya attended are located in Moscow and occupy relatively high places in university ratings, but indeed have different statuses and stereotypes attached to them. This shows the variability of options available in Moscow, even when its variability in levels of homophobia within institutions.

Moscow's description as a place that has "more to offer" was also about resources. According to Sonya,

"… its easier to find a public screening of LGBT-themed movies in Moscow. Or to find a reading group. Or to go party with people who are similar to you. In that sense, Moscow's infrastructure is very developed."

The perceived tolerance of the city does not mean that one does not feel a sense of danger. Unlike Egor's feeling of freedom and comfortability with telling acquittances about his sexuality, most respondents noted how one needs to be on their toes and keep an eye out for possibly unwanted interactions: Taya described that as a general feeling of uneasiness she feels in public when showing affection and that "it's better not to risk it." What exactly there is to "risk," and what kind of violence queer people anticipate will be covered later. For now, I want to discuss two particular locations people mentioned in their mappings of the city: the metro and the city center.

Moscow's metro and the city center: unsafe vs. safe

In most interviews, participants mentioned the metro as one of the sites of possible danger without any prompts given. In 13 out of 19 interviews, the metro was one of the locations for possible unpleasant interactions, while the city center and the streets were ambivalent in their safety/danger aspects. Verbal and physical harassment was the most prominent type of possible violence bisexual individuals fear might occur. Most common, people were worried about drawing unwanted attention (10 narratives), strangers making verbal comments about one's sexuality and/or appearance (7 narratives), and strangers approaching with questions (5 narratives). In all narratives, a pattern of unwanted recognition was discovered. Respondents were worried that people around them would perceive them as LGBTQ and act in line with their hostile views or interest. For Polina, the fear was not so much about simply provoking somebody, but about not having control over the situation, in comparison to verbal identity disclosure in conversations:

"Q: I wonder if you felt safe telling others that you have a girlfriend, knowing that we live in Russia?

A: No, of course not.

Q: Okay, can you tell me why you were scared? Why did you not feel safe?

A: Because you can be beaten up, you can be spitefully laughed at. But mostly, the beating up is scary. It's like that for everyone.

Q: So there was a fear of reaction in the form of physical violence to a greater extent?

A: It's not even when I tell somebody [that I do not feel safe]; it's more than when you're taking the metro and say you hold hands. Something like that. When you tell someone, you usually do that when you feel secure..."

While holding hands is only one "provoking" element that possibly paints one as an LGBTQ person in the eyes of others, other material and behavioral cues that interviewees were mindful about appeared across several interviews. "Holding hands" was one of the most prominent, along with having material objects (clothes, pins, bags) with LGBTQ colors/flags. Vera, when talking about being and feeling like a part of the LGBT community, noted how her appearance and particular objects play a part in the recognition and a sense of danger:

"A: … You know the LBGTQ-flag tote bag from Tiger? I sometimes wear that, and it's sometimes scary. It's uncomfortable to take it to Moscow's metro. Usually okay, but unpleasant. I try to keep my girlfriend and me safe, and I try not to get involved in anything…

Q: Just to clarify, you said it's scary to walk around in Metro with Tiger's tote bag. What exactly are you afraid of?

A: Unwanted attention. Even from the police. In general, someone shouting, disapproving glances. You can survive them, but it's uncomfortable, and then you still feel it for a long time."

Vera's strategy of interaction avoidance relates to Polina's sense of losing control. By taking away recognizable elements of LGBT belonging, be that material object or particular behavior like holding hands, both navigate metro as public transportation system where, on the one hand, nobody knows you personally, yet, on the other, you are visible to everyone.

The two abovementioned accounts also talk about different threats. While Vera mentions verbal aggression and "passive" reactions (disapproving looks), Polina was primarily worried about possible physical aggression in the act of beating. Another possible physical interaction is harassment, as in Tanya's recollection of her lesbian friend experience in the metro:

> "… My friend had this situation when she and her girlfriend were holding hands in the metro, and a random stranger approached them asking if they want to have a threesome with him. And all of this is very unpleasant, obviously."

Why metro, specifically? For one, it's a form of public transport that many citizens use on a day-to-day basis, making it the most recurring and universal experience. It's a particular public space with its customs that can be described as individualistic and non-involved. That is, usually, strangers will not interact on metro trains or stations; they also will not be eager to help anyone or "get involved." That is why unconventional interactions with strangers stand out amongst routine experiences of everyday travel, and it might be easier to remember those events, especially if they were unpleasant. Moreover, Moscow's metro is a place of many crimes, including sexual violence and racial profiling (JURIX, 2006). Similar to major metro systems in other megalopolises, like San Paulo in Ceccato and Paz's account (2017), it is a place for short-term sexual harassment of various degrees, experienced mainly by women in metro trains (see particular reports Shaveshova, 2019). It's a public site that both familiar to many and beneficial for certain forms of crimes.

The city center is another area that appeared with some frequency in participant's stories. Usually, when asked about where exactly in the city they feel safe, interviewees responded with locating the city center as opposed to areas on the outskirts of the city. In conversation, as an interviewer, I did not feel the need to ask where exactly that center starts, though some mentioned particular borderline that divided a city for them: mostly, when people talk about the city center, they mean areas within a ring, be that a metro ring line or the Sadovoe ring, which is an automobile road circling the "city center." The significance of those borderlands was not central to this research, so the question of city center geographical nature will remain mostly unclear. However, the way most called it "the city center" and recognized the particular nature of the downtown area makes me believe that most would agree on the names when asked about particular streets, stations, and neighborhoods.

Unlike the metro, the city center had mixed feelings regarding safety. On the one hand, most participants mentioned how downtown is something safe compared to more populated areas on the outskirts. For instance, Polina, following the short note about the metro, added later:

> "Q: So metro is one of those public spaces that can produce sudden reactions, where else in Moscow you feel safer and less safe? In terms of recognition.
>
> A: I feel safer in the city center, but whenever you go further than that, say in small streets of my neighborhood, then I feel less safe. The closer to the city center – the safer."

The words Polina used for "small streets" (*закоулки*) can be translated as "nooks" or "corners": it has a sense of darkness, of a hidden place, of an area that is not visible from the main, broader streets. For me, this also meant not being visible to others, not being able to call for help. In that, it related to interview moment with Max, where she shared how the city center, with people being out on the streets, stops possible violence from occurring:

"… In the center, the chances are for somebody to jump you with fists is smaller because, well, people are around, and you can call the police; maybe people on the street will help."

For Rita, "a fortunate resident of the Central Administrative District," this was not so much about LGBT-related violence, but a general sense of safety:

"Q: And inside the city, do you have any geographical division based on where you feel the most comfortable and where things are slightly scary or uncomfortable?

A: Well, yeah, but this does not connect to bisexuality. In general, which I think is quite natural, Lyubertsy, where my parents live, is not the most comfortable environment to anyone, albeit of who they are."

In Rita's account, the liking of the city center is not connected exclusively with LGBTQ-related violence. According to some studies, Moscow is a relatively segregated and divided city (Vendina, 2002). Everything outside the city center might be seen as more marginalized and riskier, as the stereotypical beliefs about crime rates outside of the city center prevail.

While for some, the uncomfortable feeling in certain areas does not connect to LGBT violence, others heard about particular anti-queer attacks in their neighborhoods. Vera, commenting on safety in the city (public) space, shared:

"I've heard a lot of stories about killings, and they triggered me a lot… Somebody was killed within 300 meters of my home simply because of who they are. It's unpleasant, scary. Because of that, I do not show myself in public space, and we were never holding hands in public. Things feel safe and comfortable within university walls, but not outside of it."

Homophobic crimes are indeed something that happens in the city; however, there is no way to say for often and where exactly most of them occur. Unfortunately, the police's

official statistics are unreliable, as only a small portion of crimes are reported and discussed due to stigma and police hostility towards minority groups (Kondakov, 2017). Those crimes are also hard to distinguish among other types of law violations, as their connectedness to LGBT revolves around reasoning and motivation, rarely crime itself.

Similar to Vera, without any specific stories, Lena felt like the violence that is possibly threatening her on the streets was more about being perceived as non-heterosexual or non-normative, above anything else:

> "Q: If you map Moscow, where would be the safest and least safe places?
>
> A: Well, if describing figuratively, then within the Sadovoye ring, it is safer to look extravagant than outside of the ring. Let's say walking with a guy whose face is covered with glitter is safer in the city center than in Perovo."

For Lena, looking extravagant and standing out was the danger of being in the streets: for an LGBTQ person, that would be "looking queer" and not passing as a straight person. This relationship between in/visibility of bisexual individuals will be discussed in the next section.

Dangers of being seen: in/visibility of bisexuality and *neformal'nost'*

As seen from interview quotes mentioned, several possible elements might trigger one's recognition as an LGBTQ person: holding hands with the person of the same gender, looking non-normative, having LGBTQ symbols (flags, colors) visible. Being visibly non-conforming or non-normative is something many respondents did not like or prefer to avoid. However, some, like Mila, found benefit in it. Describing her attire and appearance as rather non-confirming, as something that creates "a gay aura," she noted how people are not surprised to learn that she is bisexual. On the contrary, due to her non-normative (*neformal'nye*) looks (piercing, tattoos, colorful hair), people assume she is non-heterosexual:

> "When I dated girls, we could absolutely easily kiss on the streets. People looked at as aggressively, but oh well, what can they do? I do not propagandize anything, but people looking at me might as well think that I do, that I am propaganda. People kinda hoped I am in that sense [non-heterosexual], so I have to match [their assumptions]."

This account of non-normative (*neformal'no* technically translates to "informal," but the meaning in these cases is closer to alternative/non-normative) looks is not about bisexuality in particular. Here it is being incorporated in non-heterosexuality, which reflects several things. First, it underlines bisexual invisibility, especially as it reflects in interactions with partners and how those are perceived. Second, combined with other interview insights, it shows what is read as "queer-looking" and how it fits into the heterosexual matrix.

Previous research on Russian youth culture in the 90s also underlined the connections between *neformal''nost'* debates and concerns over same-sex socialization. However, in those days, the conversations were mainly focused on men (Pilkington, 1996). At that time, discussions were rarely about queerness or the possible non-heterosexual nature of gangs and new youth movements. In Pilkington's account, the culture of *neformaly* was focused on traditionally masculine features, with women being consumed as goods, which fits the basis of the heterosexual matrix. While women did have their own gangs and collectives within those clusters, homosexuality was not present in public discourses, making it unclear how the lives of *neformaly* women were with regard to queerness and non-heterosexuality. However, *neformal'nost'* in women was regarded as a failed tradition, as a fall of gender roles, making it a form of perversion for women, but not men.

The connection between *neformal'nost'* as a form of gender roles violation for women can then be tied to the heterosexual matrix, where detaching from gender norms would also mean separating from heterosexual norms in the eyes of others. Essig, who conducted research no longer after Pilkington's studies, notes how the heterosexual matrix also works for Russia:

"Perverting gender roles is, to both the Russian and the American reader, a sign of another sort of perversion - crossing the clearly marked boundaries of heterosexual desire. That a failed gender act comes to mean failed heterosexual desire in two separate symbolic systems reveals the way gender and sexuality are caught up with each other in both cultures" (1999, p. 109). Therefore, it is not surprising that for Mila, a self-described *neformal*-looking individual, the connection between her appearance and her sexuality is not a question. While this was not discussed clearly, I believe the transgression of gender norms mediates this tie between the two.

Going back to the topics initially put forward in Chapter 6, when interviewees mentioned the act of holding hands, most often, they meant it with regards to the partners of the same gender. The recognition bisexual participants were anticipated was not that people will see them as bisexual, but that others will categorize them as gay or non-heterosexual in general. The recognition of one as non-heterosexual also happened (or was anticipated to occur) based on an object of a particular design — the rainbow-colored tote bag or a pin with an LBGT flag. This makes bisexuality both invisible (in itself, as something separate from other sexualities) and visible (as a part of non-heterosexual sexualities). Most interviewees used the words bisexual and non-heterosexual interchangeably, often using the second one for public situations where others deduct or assume their identity. I believe this interchangeability exists due to the position of bisexuality in this in/visibility.

Rural vs. urban: comparing queer lives

One of the dimensions along which people answered the question about queer life in different parts of Russia is the dimension of smaller and bigger towns. Usually, in the literature on queer lifestyle, this dimension is described as "rural" vs. "urban"; however, in the case of the current sample and particular examples people brought up, I believe it makes more sense

to speak of "big cities" vs. "small cities," or even about "capitals" (metropolitan areas) and other cities. Out of nineteen participants, only five lived in Moscow their whole life. Out of fourteen people who moved to Moscow, nine did that upon entering university. Therefore, when responding to the question of different experiences in Moscow and other towns, many used their experiences in hometowns in different parts of Russia. With people who lived in Moscow their whole life, I asked to assume what might be different, based on stereotypes, general perceptions, public discourses, or familiar narratives of friends. As a result, despite the different sizes of participants' hometowns (varying from million-plus cities like Samara to Orekhovo-Zuyevo with hosts no more than 200 thousand people), several familiar narratives emerged under the comparative framework.

As mentioned before, Moscow stood out along with Saint Petersburg from other cities of Russia as more tolerant, more accepting. However, some differences between the two "capitals," as they are often called, were present in 3 out of 5 narratives that mention Saint Petersburg. The three respondents agreed that St. Petersburg is even more tolerant in some ways than Moscow. The visibility of queer couples was something those stories shared. Marina, when comparing Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and other big cities of Russia, noted:

> "… When I was in Saint Petersburg, the most shocking thing was seeing lesbians pass me by on Nevsky prospect… And nobody gives a fuck. And I was like, "well, maybe it's time to move to Saint Petersburg, I might as well just live here." This feeling was confirmed by my gay male friend, I don't know how true that is, but he said, "so I moved to Saint Petersburg from Moscow because it's more comfortable here, I do not feel the Putin's pressing hand here. I do not feel like I can be taken into custody just because I'm of a different sexual orientation."

For Marina, as discussed after the interview off the record, Saint Petersburg was also a place where more queer-friendly parties happen. She mentioned how she used to travel to the city regularly for those events before because similar parties were not happening in Moscow.

Interestingly, Nevsky prospect (one of the central streets in Saint Petersburg) appeared in another narrative about the city regarding seeing somebody non-heterosexual as well. Nina, who used to live in Saint Petersburg before moving to Moscow for university, answered the questions about the difference between two "capitals" in the following manner:

> "I still, for some reason, see more female homosexual couples in Saint Petersburg. I understand why that was the case when I was in 11th grade because I wanted to see homosexual couples everywhere because representation mattered. Then I watched some movies, started following several bloggers, and representation stopped being urgent, but even then when I come to Saint Petersburg… I still see many couples. Maybe I'm just paying attention; maybe there are really more of them around…."

Trying to find the explanation for the discrepancies between the visibility of queer couples in two cities, Nina later noted:

> "Well, I would say that Saint Petersburg is more cultural, not queer-friendly necessarily, but rather more culturally *neformal'ny*, *neformal'ny* city. But again, I can't say that my experience is objective since I was a teenager in St. Petersburg, and I hung out and went to underground places. And in Moscow, I study and work. In Moscow, I study in university, have two jobs, and I still need to sleep somehow. In Moscow, I do something else ... Well, yeah, St. Petersburg is a more subcultural city, it's freer."

The reemergence of *neformal'ny* in the city's description adds to the previous section's argument: the non-normative, the subcultural, is connected in the eyes of bisexual individuals and general Russian discourse with non-heterosexuality, with "queerness."

The noticeable difference between Moscow and St. Petersburg might be explained historically, particularly by looking at what is known about queer life in both cities. According to Kon (2003), St. Petersburg was always more Westernized than Moscow: due to its location on the sea trade routes and closeness to contemporary Northern Europe (Finland, Norway, Sweden), St. Petersburg had more people from Europe living in the city or visiting it as tourists. As described in Chapter 3, most of the first LGBT collectives and NGOs were created in Saint Petersburg and not Moscow. Only in the later 1980s, first organizations appeared in Moscow, probably due to the need to fight for LGBT rights politically, and most events related to the changes in political systems were happening in the capital.

The distinctions between the two "capitals" are minor in comparison to other cities of Russia. All interviewees noted how Moscow is more tolerant than any other city in Russia (except Saint Petersburg): the dangers of living in other, smaller cities were more articulated, and in general, people argued that LGBTQ people struggled there more. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Moscow is usually thought to be less homophobic and more tolerant due to the number of people, access to better education, resources, and higher economic well-being.

Several people noted how it is harder to find other queer people or get into any LGBTQ *tusovka* (community) in smaller cities. Lena shared how queer people in smaller cities live more closeted life than those in Moscow due to safety concerns:

> "It seems to me that in small towns, the farther from Moscow, the more closed and isolated these [queer] communities are from each other. That is, if it's lesbians, they most likely know each other in a small city. Most likely, everyone met each other. And in Moscow or St. Petersburg, the stream of people is a little more blurred. And there are no boundaries or borders; everyone slept with everyone in Moscow too, but there is no closeness to the community."

The absence of queer people or queer *tusovkas* produced a feeling of loneliness and was commonly related to the lack of education. This, undoubtedly, was not the issue for Moscow. These findings support previous works that compared queer *tusovka*s in Moscow and smaller cities, like research conducted by Stella (2016) in the late 90s. In Stella's ethnography on lives of lesbian and bisexual women, Moscow *tusovka* was more prominent and easier to get into, while Ul'yanovks *tusovka* was not clearly outlined or visible (2012).

Nonetheless, there are ways in which less-populated areas might be safer for queer people. Olesya, from a small town of R. (350 km from Moscow), shared how knowing everyone in town due to small population provides problems and benefits in her case:

> "A: … The difference [between Moscow and R.] is that R. is less populated, so there is a 100% chance that you will meet someone you know on the streets. Therefore, I control myself more in a sense because my parents work with my girlfriend's parents, and my girlfriend's parents do not know [about the relationship]. And we want to keep it that way.
>
> Q: But your parents know?
>
> A: Yeah, mine know.
>
> Q: Hm, so you would not wear rainbow-colored socks in R.?
>
> A: No, I wear rainbow-colored socks here; I did that yesterday. But people pay less attention to stuff like this here, and people don't know that [non-heterosexuality] is possible. I can have an LBGT flag on my shoulders, and some grannies might ask, "what's that?" and I can simply tell them whatever. Or for instance, I have a bi flag, and I took a picture of it and posted it on Instagram. And one of my relatives saw that and asked, "what country is it?" and I was like shit, I really need to come up with something… So in that way you feel more comfortable. You can come up with

anything, like, you can just say, "I like rainbow colors." In Moscow, if a *gopnik* sees you, you would not be able to get away that easily."

In Olesya's case, two consequences of a small city population can be found. First, people know each other, and therefore the risk of being outed is higher than in Moscow, where the chance of meeting people you know randomly in public is lower. Second, there is a lack of sex education among the general population, and therefore the unwanted recognition, which worries many bisexual individuals, is lower. The latter outlook stands out as almost a counter-narrative to most discourses about the dangers of small towns.

When asked about possible reasons for the difference, a few, besides mentioning population, also talked about general open-mindedness and social well-being. Polina, who grew up in T. (230 km from Moscow), attributed negative attitudes to the general spirit of the town:

> "People who live in T. are simple; they work at factories, stuff like that. Also, there is a lot of criminality in the city. And everyone is living with some pre-soviet mindset. And their brain is somewhat staggering. Also, they are very angry: because the salaries are small, the roads are always fucked up. And when you are angry, you need to re-invest those feelings to somewhere; gay people are a good choice for that."

This shows the other side of high social and financial well-being people in Moscow possesses, according to Rita's story at the begging of the chapter: while Moscow has more economic and financial resources to provide dissent living conditions, people in T. are left with unrepaired roads and absence of economic growth. This, in turn, creates a strong affective background for those in the city that motivates hatred towards minorities. Combined with lower education and absence of opportunities, that leads to risks of verbal and physical aggression towards somebody who is categorized as queer.

Not everyone who moved to Moscow in their young adulthood could clearly compare their hometowns with the capital. Some, like Kristina, never considered staying in her hometowns, so it was hard to connect her bisexuality with being there:

> "And I never really thought how hard it would be to live in that city because I never really imagined my future in T. I was not going to live there. In that sense, it's both easier and harder to answer your question. It was easy because I never felt limited in any way. I always had a feeling that I can leave. I can always move to another city, to another country. It always was there. The possibility is always there, even when things get bad."

Kristina's outlook opens up a question of migration and queer migration in particular. Unlike gay migration conceptualized for the U.S. (Weston, 1995), none of the interviewees moved to Moscow due to the inability to "be gay" in their hometowns. There seems to be no particular sexual imaginary that connects "capitols" with the gay lifestyle, which makes sense in light of the dangers present in Moscow. Even European towns, like Berlin and London, were ambiguously viewed by respondents. Zhenya, who used to travel a lot to those cities, shared how he felt completely different there in terms of general well-being and behavior:

> "A: … Even in conversations, in the way I behave, I felt much more comfortable in European cities….
>
> Q: This comfort, as I understand, is about acceptance in certain circles?
>
> A: Well, here's the thing. Based on how you think people will react, your stress level changes. I know for a fact that in Moscow, I'm always on my toes… But in Berlin, where I see LGBTQ stickers or "fuck your sexism" graffiti, I get a sense that I can relax… I can breathe."

On the other hand, when commenting on how queer individuals in Russia are different from other counties, Sonya underlined how everywhere she would probably feel somewhat

uncomfortable. Being in the more "accepting" countries/cities did not mean that she would completely evade possible homophobic/biphobic attitudes:

> "On the one hand, I understand that some countries objectively are better [for queer people], in terms of law and statistically, people are more neutral towards non-heterosexual people. But again, I never experienced direct aggression in Russia… Moreover, it's hard for me to perceive statistical data. I understand that even when technically everything is better, and I go there myself and experience aggression or get into a hostile situation, it would feel very unpleasant. I'm always alerted in Russia, and I wait for something bad to happen, but there I would feel like everything is fine. I mean, it's great when gay marriages are allowed in the country. But for me, this is a question of personal encounters, and I don't think there is a country where everyone is excepting of LGBT people."

Interestingly, when most would classify being "on your toes" and somewhat alerted to the environment as a form of minority stress that negatively affects the general well-being of queer individuals (Dyar et al., 2014), some, like Sonya, see that as a protective measure. This feeling of alertness is something many respondents mentioned; however, the beneficial aspect was less noticeable.

That said, it's important to note that for the tendencies of "rural" cities that appeared in narratives, they remain tendencies and not universal rules. In most stories, cases from hometowns were surrounded by other factors that might be important for LGBTQ people living in a smaller town. Kristina noted how she grew up in an educated bubble, so she was not afraid of homophobic attitudes. Olesya mentioned how among her classmates, no one really cared for her relationship with her girlfriend. Polina was nervous about holding hands with her girlfriend in both Moscow and her hometown. While noting differences between Moscow and other towns helps establish Moscow as a particular site that should not be extrapolated to the whole

of Russia, simply deeming small cities homophobic is not what this chapter attempts to argue. For participants, a lot depended on their social circles and attitudes from peers. In some cases, the conditions of living did not overcome the positivity or neutrality of social circles, like in the previously discussed story of Eva, who struggled with internalized homophobia despite living in the capital.

8. CHAPTER. CONCLUSION: THE AMBIVALENCE OF BISEXUAL SUBJECTIVITY

What comes of this research? As there was no particular research question of hypothesis made, this research reflects the lives and conditions of bisexual individuals living in Moscow. Based on the everyday experiences of interviewees, theoretical arguments are made about bisexual subjectivity and topics used to construct and formulate it in narratives. All the stories configure bisexual individuals as never really present in heterosexual spaces, despite ideas about passing and stereotypes from the queer community. Most troubles, anxieties, and worries bisexual individuals go through can be traced back to the heterosexual matrix as a paradigm that orders the contemporary way of life. Despite that, most interviewees were able to find environments where this order is not supported, where they feel validated and safe. In general, the concept of "safety" seems to be the main axis along which interviewees choose particular behavioral strategies. The complex notion of "safety" included setting specificities, gendered bodies, and normativity. Normativity vs. *neformal'nost'* seems to be a frame of "safety" that in previous research was not well analyzed. With the growth of visual culture, it would be interesting to see the changes in the ideas of passing with regards to non-normative looks and "non-normative" sexualities.

The stories and analysis frame Russia (and Moscow) as not a separate discursive space: even specific local inventions (like the anti-propaganda law) can be connected to broader ideas circulating in Anglophone discourse. The research partially aimed to show that Russian is not a special case and that queer individuals from Russia do not have any specific "non-Western" way to be queer. Inevitably, queer discourse always stays "Western," and therefore, the categories of "West" and "East" become meaningless when applied to locations like one in this research. While many bisexuals did see the difference in living conditions between Russia and "the West," that rarely affected subjectivity construction.

Some aspects of bisexual subjectivity, particularly those discussed in Chapter 6, seem to be tightly connected to ideas of monosexuality and, with that, monosexism. That aspect clearly distinguishes bisexuality from monosexual queer identities but somewhat brings it closer to pansexuality. Simultaneously, as Chapter 5 shows, some see the distinction between bisexuality and pansexuality as an important point of subjectivity construction, while most "coming-out" experiences strongly resemble narratives familiar to monosexual identities as well. This contradictory position of bisexuality in relation to pansexuality and homosexuality configures it as a space that is neither one nor the other, establishing it not as a bridge but as a separate space with common points of "interest."

Bisexual subjectivity is created through narratives and various settings, experiences, and preferences that are put into it. To understand bisexuality as an identity with strict boundaries and stable dispositions would completely invalidate the variety, the contradictions, and the multifaced nature of it.

APPENDICES

Appendix I: Participants Data

This list contains pseudonyms, ages, gender labels, level of education, and time living in Moscow of all respondents.

Egor, 21, trans*man, unfinished BA education, 3 years;
Eva, 26, cis*woman, finished MA education, from birth;
Kristina, 22, cis*woman, finished BA education, 4 years;
Lena, 27, cis*woman, unfinished BA education, 3 years and 9 months;
Lida, 26, cis*woman, finished MA education, 8 years;
Luba, 20, cis*woman, unfinished BA education, from birth
Marina, 20, cis*woman, unfinished BA education, from birth
Max, 25, cis*woman, finished MA education, 4 years
Mila, 21, cis*woman, unfinished BA education, from birth
Nina, 22, cis*woman, unfinished BA education, 4.5 years
Olesya, 21, cis*woman, unfinished MA education, 4.5 years
Polina, 22, cis*woman, unfinished BA education, from birth
Rita, 31, cis*woman, unfinished BA education, from birth
Sonya, 23, cis*woman, finished BA education, from birth
Tanya, 22, cis*woman, unfinished BA education, 5 years
Taya, 21, cis*woman, finished professional college education, from birth
Vera, 22, cis*woman, unfinished BA education, from birth
Vika, 22, cis*woman, finished high school education, 10 years
Zhenya, 21, non-binary trans masculine person, unfinished BA education, from birth

Appendix II: Interview Questions (English)

1. How do you identify yourself in terms of gender and sexuality? Did you use any other words before? If yes, can you describe your journey through labels?
2. Do you have a partner right now? Does/Did having a partner in any way affect the way you identify yourself?
3. Do you openly talk about your bisexuality? Do you feel safe talking about your bisexuality in Russia?
4. Do you consider yourself to be a part of a bisexual community? Or would you instead identify yourself as a part of a broader queer/LGBTQ+ community?
5. If you had to compare your experience as a bisexual person living in Moscow with experiences of bisexuals from other places, what would you say is different about it?
6. In your view, does gender identity in any way relates to your bisexual experiences, and if yes, how?
7. Do stereotypes and cultural beliefs about the sexual freedom of men and women affect your relationship with bisexuality as an identity? If yes, how?
8. Generally, do you think the experiences of bisexual men, bisexual women, and bisexual, non-binary persons differ? And if yes, how?
9. (Question for non-binary people): Do you think it is easier to identify as non-binary bisexual, then to identify as bisexual men/bisexual women? Do you see any benefits of your non-binary gender identity when it comes to bisexuality?
10. What would you say is the hardest part of being bisexual, in comparison to being straight or homosexual?

Appendix III: Interview Questions (Russian)

1. На данный момент как вы себя идентифицируете в плане гендерна и сексуальности? Пользовались ли вы другими лейблами до этого? Можете ли вы описать процесс смены идентичностей?
2. Состоите ли вы сейчас в отношениях? Как вам кажется, повлияло/влияет ли это как-то на ваше ощущение собсдеетвенной бисексуальности?
3. Открыто ли вы заявляете о своей бисексуальности? Чувствуете-ли вы себя в безопасности, говоря о своей бисексуальности в России? Чего ты боишься? Конкретные обесценивания?
4. Считаете ли вы себя частью бисексуального сообщества? Или вам скорее привычнее причислять себя к сообществу квир-персон/ЛГБТ+?
5. Видите ли вы отличия вашего опыта бисексуального человека, проживающего в Москве, от опыта бисексуальных людей в других местах (регионах, городах, странах)? Если да, то в чем?
6. На ваш взгляд, связана ли ваша гендерная идентичность с вашим опытом бисексуальной персоны, и если да, то как?
7. Влияют ли стереотипы и культурные представления о сексуальной свободе мужчин и женщин на ваши отношение с бисексуальностью? Если да, то как?
8. Как вы считаете, есть ли разница между опытом бисексуальных мужчин, бисексуальных женщин и бисексуальных небинарных персон? Если да, в чем именно заключаются отличия?
9. (Вопрос для небинарных персон) Как вам кажется, небинарным персонам легче или сложнее заявлять о себе как о бисексуале по сравнению с бисексуальными мужчинами и женщинами? Видите ли вы какие-либо преимущества вашей небинарной гендерной идентичности, когда речь идет о бисексуальности?
10. Что бы вы назвали самым (тяжелым) сложным в (бисексуальной идентичности) бисексуальности, по сравнению с гетеросексуальной/гомосексуальной идентичностями?

Appendix IV: Consent Form (Russian)

Благодарим за интерес к исследованию Центрального Европейского Университета (Central European University), проведенному Балезиной Марьяной, студенткой магистерской программы Critical Gender Studies. Эта форма подробно описывает цель данного исследования, а также степень Вашего участия и Ваши права как участника.

Цель данного исследования:
описать гендерную динамику бисексуальной субъектности у людей, проживающих в Москве

Результаты исследования позволят:
понять, как проблемы, с которыми сталкиваются бисексуальные персоны в Москве, влияют на их отношения с собственной бисексуальностью
выявить гендерные элементы, которые влияют на восприятие собственной бисексуальности
обозначить гендерно-окрашенные нарративы, встроенные в представление о бисексуальности

Методы, которые будут использоваться для достижения этой цели:
индивидуальные интервью

Вы можете в любое время задавать вопросы или высказывать опасения по поводу характера исследования или методов, которые я использую. Со мной можно связаться в любое время по адресу электронной почты или в телеграме: balezina.maryana@yandex.ru или @balezina_maryana.

Наш разговор будет записан на диктофон, чтобы помочь мне точно передать ваши идеи. Запись услышу только я в рамках выполнения целей данного исследования. Если Вы в какой-то момент почувствуете себя некомфортно, Вы можете попросить меня выключить диктофон.

Вы также имеете право отказаться от участия в исследовании в любое время. В случае, если Вы решите отказаться от участия, вся предоставленная вами информация (включая аудиозаписи) будет уничтожена и исключена из финального документа.

Идеи, высказанные Вами, будут использованы при написании качественного исследовательского отчета, который будет прочитан моим профессором по предмету качественных исследований. Преподавателю будет доступна полностью транскрибированная и переведенная версия интервью, однако Ваше имя и другая идентифицирующая Вас информация будут храниться анонимно.

Подписывая данную форму информированного согласия, я, _____, подтверждаю, что прочитал_а и согласил_ась с условиями данной формы.

_____ _____

(Подпись) (Дата)

Appendix V: Questionnaire Sheet

Прежде чем перейти к интервью, ответьте, пожалуйста, на следующие вопросы:

Ваш возраст?

_____

Как давно Вы проживаете в Москве?

_____

Вы когда-нибудь жили (более 6 месяцев) в других местах? Если да, пожалуйста, укажите место и продолжительность вашего пребывания там

_____

_____

Ваш уровень образования? (подчеркните нужное)

- Среднее (оконченное)
- Среднее профессиональное (оконченное)
- Высшее образование (не оконченное)
- Высшее образование (оконченное)
- Магистратура (не оконченное)
- Магистратура (оконченное)
- Аспирантура
- Другое: _____

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