

REPRESENTING "OTHERS"

BEYOND THE PINK CURTAIN

SEXUALITY, MASCULINITY AND HOMOPHOBIA:
THE LATVIAN CASE

AIVITA PUTNIŅA

INTRODUCTION

Events following Riga Pride 2005 surprised and shocked Latvian society.¹ Until then Latvian society was thought to have a calm "Nordic" mentality permissive of social diversity. The last big protest actions had happened in the late 1980s during the "singing revolution" that was a peaceful event.² Pride 2005 mobilized hundreds of people: watching, shouting and trying to attack and stop the demonstration. Left and right wing radicals stood shoulder to shoulder having found a common enemy. Latvian media picked up on the theme provoking intensive public debates, and society was divided by the issue of homosexuality. Homophobic arguments were used in Parliament and in the general election campaign in the summer of 2006.³ The next Riga Pride of 2006 was banned and a series of educational events called "Friendship Days" were held instead.⁴ However

¹ The text has been prepared with support of the international project "Homophobia and discrimination of gays and lesbians in enlarged Europe," Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania.

² The First Pride March was staged 23 July 2005. The Church, politicians, high government officials and radical non-governmental organisations protested against the Pride. Riga city council banned the Pride but the Administrative court overruled this decision. Thousands of protesters gathered to prevent the demonstration. Despite police protection the demonstration had to change its route and demonstrators had to be evacuated. Eight demonstrators were detained. Later the debate continued in the media continuing to provoke hatred against sexual minorities.

³ The relatively peaceful ending of the Soviet regime in the Baltic states began in 1989 and was named the "singing revolution" referring both to the peaceful nature of the revolution and the actual role of singing in the process of change. The major event starting the revolution was the action "Baltic Way" commemorating the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact leading to the occupation of the Baltic States. Inhabitants of the Baltic States held their hands creating a single chain passing through the three countries.

⁴ The Latvian First Party used the protection of the family as one of their key slogans. They saw sexual minorities threatening family values. The party worked out suggestions for banning homosexual propaganda in schools and the media during the pre-election period in the summer of 2006, but these propositions were not accepted by the majority in Parliament.

⁵ The LGBT organisation Mozaika organised the "Friendship Days" events around Pride 2006 believing that the information campaign would benefit both the LGBT community

er, representatives of the “no-pride movement” attacked the participants of the educational events throwing human excrement and splashing holy water.⁵ The police did not intervene.

This paper attempts to explain the hostile and violent reaction of Latvian society, from an anthropological perspective, remote from the actual events. There are several levels of analysis. Firstly, we can critically describe the social construction of homophobia linking it with masculinity and sexuality. Patriarchy and heteronormativity, operating at this level, can help to understand the process of social construction of homophobia. Secondly, we can ask the question of how this social construction is taken for granted by looking at how principles of social order become self evident, lived and enacted. At this level we look at categories of thought and their interrelatedness creating an “objective” social world.

Bourdieu (2001) in his last book *Masculine domination* declares his interest in the naturalisation process of socially constructed gender categories. In this rather theoretical work he outlines the principles of symbolic masculine domination locating its sources in the naturalised, institutionalised and embodied principles of social order.⁶ In this context homophobia can be interpreted as a form of symbolic domination

and society at large. The events were organised in collaboration with several local and foreign NGOs and included a series of seminars on discrimination, sexuality, and art as well as communication events. See <<http://www.mozaika.lv/index.php?lng=lv&part=10&us=1001048068>> (29 November 2006).

⁵ The NoPride Association is a non-governmental organisation with the goal “to maintain traditional family values and emphasize their importance in society of Latvia. We think that traditional family, which is a union between a man and a woman, is the basic value of each society, because it ensures the existence of the country and its long term development.” An elaborated English web page of the organisation can be found <<http://www.noprider.lv/en/>> (29 November 2006).

An English description of the events can be found at <<http://ukgaynews.org.uk/Archive/2006july/2201.htm>> (29 November 2006).

⁶ Feminism and masculinity studies have also dealt with the naturalisation of gender roles, however, from a different perspective than Bourdieu does it. Bourdieu’s work stems from the post-structuralist tradition in anthropology dealing with the internalisation of the classification systems in a more broad conceptual and cross-cultural level, while sociologists start from the critique of the naturalisation of masculinity and femininity in Western society (e.g. Kimmel 1994; Kaufman and Brod 1994; Butler 1990). The homophobic reaction of Latvian society is thus embedded in the categories of the world and the position of truth. Looking from the post-structuralist positions (Leach 1976; Douglas [1966] 2002; Turner 1967) homosexuality both blurs and marks the borders between male and female categories and as a border-zone is invested with ambiguity, danger and repulsion, and is tabooed. Therefore the reaction of Latvian society was an impulsive and genuine enactment of their basic categories of thinking, and the use of human excrement (another border zone of the human body) was not that surprising. Due to the ethnographic scope of the article I do not engage in a broader debate on these issues, and refer to Bourdieu to illustrate my theoretical perspective.

that is inscribed in instituted divisions and internalised in bodily perceptions like feelings of shame. According to Bourdieu from the perspective of possible social transformation of the existing symbolic domination, analysis of homosexuality "can lead to a *politics* (or a *utopia*) of *sexuality* aimed at differentiating the sexual relation from the power relation" (Bourdieu 2001, 120), as it permits the deconstruction of sexuality and family, revealing the principles they are built upon.

Another interest I share with Bourdieu's short outline on homosexuality is social change. According to Bourdieu the change in the order of symbolic domination can be brought about in two ways. First, the meaning of categories imposed by symbolic domination can be inverted: thus stigma can be turned into an emblem, an object of pride. Of course, the ultimate problem of such a transformation is that the dominated construct themselves within the categories of the dominant. These categories are constructed to make the dominated invisible and stigmatized. When the dominated articulate them, they simultaneously reaffirm the act of their symbolic domination. Second, the internalised categories (producing gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transsexuals along with other categories) can be changed themselves. The category of LGBT dissolves, for example, when we consider partnerships in terms of mutual love and recognition of equal relationships between the partners. Looking from this perspective, the sex of each partner does not play an important role. Bourdieu sees the strength of the gay and lesbian movement in "visible invisibility," the ability to combine both strategies for change: on the one hand, by using the means of non-discrimination and the rights of "the" homosexuals (making "the" homosexuals a category) and, on the other hand, their rights to be full citizens (blurring the same category).

Moreover, the Latvian case provides yet a further ground for analysis. Despite the similarities of the patriarchal order, other factors like the history and perceptions of sexuality, traditions of public and private divisions, the skills of public discussion as well as the expression of agency in the Soviet period and afterwards are different in the "old" and the "new" Europe.⁷ I argue that the main difference between both "Europes" lies in the relationship of the dominant discourse towards the dominated. State-socialism with its hegemonic tradition of truth established a different relationship between the dominant and dominated discourses. So, not only the categories of division but also their interrelation determined the outcome of how homosexuality was perceived, lived and institutionalized.

⁷ I see agency as the ability to produce and reproduce practice and interaction. I discuss the issue in Putniņa (1999, 23–24).

I propose to outline the Latvian Pride March events through the perspective of symbolic domination. I briefly sketch out the articulation and categorisation of homosexuality in the public space trying to find the cause of what moved Latvian society to violent reaction. I take the sexuality aspect of the public debate as an example, and explore its construction and naturalization in more detail. Both the traditions of the articulation of sexuality and its contents are important considering the ways sexuality is embodied and expressed. The perceptions of family roles naturalised by biologically determined sexual roles (using the chain: biology-sexuality-family based on the same system of classification of male-female difference) have also played a considerable part in debating homosexuality, since family seems to be “a polite language” in which to articulate sexuality.⁸ Finally, hegemonic traditions of truth along with discursive trends on religion, science, medicine and legal issues provide space and form for the homosexuality debate.

For this analysis I draw on my notes regarding a number of public debates staged by the Latvian Association of Anthropologists, the Ministry of Social Integration and “Mozaika,” an organisation for LGBT people and their friends. I have taken two texts from the intensive debate to examine closely: a session of the internet forum of “Diena,” the largest Latvian daily newspaper on 1 August 2005 (including 56 comments) and the parliamentary debate of 15 June 2006 on the amendment of the Employment Law prohibiting discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation.⁹ Additionally I used the results of a survey on Latvian social attitudes towards homosexuals¹⁰ (Makarovs 2006) as well as my own research findings (see Purnina 2006) on youth sex education in Latvia conducted at the end of 2005 and the beginning of 2006.

⁸ A distinction between the different schemes of perception ought to be made. Most of the texts analysed do not use critical approaches to biology, sexuality and family, established in theories of gender and the critique of sex roles. “Gender” is a new category in Latvian language use and has not been appropriated by the general public. “Gender equality” is translated as “sex equality,” and as Caune et al. (2005) demonstrate is also conceptualised as sex equality. I see gender as a system of classification that produces male-female difference along the fields of biology, sexuality, family and others; family being considered a more “polite” and “appropriate” language than that of physiology or sexual behaviour to express the same male-female differences in bodily, sexual and family practices.

⁹ See the full text of the debate in Latvian at <http://www.saeima.lv/steno/2002_8/st_060615/st1506.htm> (29 November 2006).

¹⁰ This representative survey of the Latvian population was carried out in the spring and summer of 2006 (N = 1060).

HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE PUBLIC SPACE

According to the findings of a social attitude survey (Makarovs 2006) the majority of the Latvian population has negative attitudes towards homosexuality and homosexuals. 26% of respondents condemned both homosexuals and their lifestyle, 37% condemned the homosexual lifestyle but did not despise homosexual people, while only 25% condemned neither homosexual people nor their lifestyle. Even though social scientific arguments have become part of a discursive line in the debate on homosexuality, the significance of these figures in itself is subject to interpretation, since homosexuality is a relational category and gradations of attitude can be linked both to the meaning of and the relation with that category the respondent has established in the context of the "correct" Latvian social rhetoric on homosexuality.

The formulation of this "correct" rhetoric arose gradually. A few major cases can be mentioned prior to the summer of 2005 when the homosexuality debate appeared in the Latvian media. The first case was a scandal in 1999, followed by court proceedings alleging paedophilia in 2000.¹¹ This scandal tied homosexuality to paedophilia and provoked enormous public interest. Another case concerned the Latvian right-wing nationalist Aivars Garda who organized an essay competition and published a book "Homosexuality—shame and disaster for humanity."¹² Since the Latvian head of the Catholic Church and several MPs contributed articles to this book, the media paid great attention. Meanwhile the bill on the registration of same-sex partnerships put forward by the Latvian Human Rights Office in 1999 was rejected without much public discussion (see Waitt 2005, 168).

However, homosexuality only became a really hot issue in Latvia in the summer of 2005, when the first Pride March was staged. Since then homosexuality has been increasingly exploited in politics, leading to an amendment of the Constitution's clause on marriage defining it specifi-

¹¹ The scandal started when two persons were arrested in August 1999 for organising a paedophile network. With the involvement of the media the network was alleged to include persons well known in society. When the scandal developed further several high ranking governmental officials and public figures were named and accused of being homosexuals and paedophiles in February 2000. A Parliamentary Commission was organised to investigate the case but it ended with the initiator of the scandal being tried for slander. See the descriptions in Latvian at <<http://www.delfi.lv/archive/article.php?id=9444>>, <<http://www.delfi.lv/archive/article.php?id=1274725>> and <<http://www.delfi.lv/archive/article.php?id=15494644>> (29 November 2006).

¹² Aivars Garda is a politician representing a small Latvian party, the head of the right wing organisation Latvian National Front and a publisher.

See the description of the event in Latvian at <<http://www.delfi.lv/archive/article.php?id=2731214>> (29 November 2006).

cally as a “union between a man and a woman,”¹³ and the rejection of suggestions to include the prohibition of discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation in the Employment Law. However, a bill seeking to prohibit “popularizing homosexuality” in schools and media was thrown out in the summer of 2006. All these events preceded the general election in the autumn of 2006. Given that only 3% of respondents admitted that politicians might influence their views on homosexuality (Makarovs 2006), the extreme public reaction against the Pride March can scarcely be explained by the effects of political agitation alone.

As politicians tend to play on existing social and moral attitudes, at most exacerbate, rather than establishing them, we can assume that latent heteronormativity deeply embedded in Latvian society was activated by the public manifestations of gay and lesbian interest groups. They provoked the explicit formulation of the attitude towards homosexuality which reached further than the previously visible ultra-nationalist propaganda and expert comments on the subject. Gays and lesbians in the process of organising themselves inevitable became a “minority,” while mobilizing the “majority.” This gave rise to the homophobic movement that tried to reassert heteronormative values as if those had been lost under the pressure of homosexuals.

Gordon Waitt (2005), one of the few researchers of homosexuality in Latvia, discusses heteronormative construction of Latvian citizenship finding its expression in political media statements and spaces in Riga. He also concludes that despite the de-criminalisation of homosexuality,¹⁴ the overall political setting discriminates social minorities by using ethnic, sexed and gendered nationalism to sustain the unstable political, economic and social systems characteristic of post-soviet nations.

THE NATURALNESS OF SEXUAL ACTS

The repertoire used in discussing homosexuality does not only accommodate homosexuality within the public discourse but also reveals the experience of people articulating these discourses as well as defining the borders and the rules of “normal” sexuality, citizenship and family.

A public seminar on tolerance against the sexual minorities organised by the Secretariat for Societal Integration 21 April 2006 in Riga

¹³ See the description of the event in Latvian at <<http://www.delfi.lv/archive/article.php?id=13050254>> (29 November 2006).

¹⁴ Homosexuality was decriminalised on 5 February 1992 when the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia passed the law On Changes and Amendments of the Latvian Criminal Code (cf. Lavrikovs 1999).

brought together the representatives of the Church, sexual minorities and experts. One of the debates in this seminar offers an example of the link between heteronormativity and embodied experience. The Catholic Cardinal linked female sexuality to the function of procreation arguing that female sexuality is located inside a woman's body for procreative reasons. An LGBT community representative and a psychologist asked the cardinal whether he knew where the clitoris is located and why God placed the source of female pleasure on the outside of the body. In the same discussion the Cardinal was accidentally addressed as a "heterosexual male" which did not provoke any reaction.

Gay sexuality takes a central part in public discussions of homosexuality. The details of a gay homosexual act are imagined as an inversion of "normal" sexual behaviour. As most of the participants of the analysed Internet debate over homosexuality have, probably, never had any homosexual experience, they construct its image from personal heterosexual experience. When we translate the perceived "perversity" of homosexual practice into the language of "normal" sexual behaviour, we can see the traditional male-female model of sexuality with men dominating and women subjecting. There are several reasons for taking such sexuality for granted, ranging from the traditional roles in the family to the whole cosmology of the world being constructed on male-female difference (Bourdieu 2001).

The homosexual act has become the emblem of the *no-pride movement* in Latvia which stresses the "unnaturalness" of gay sexuality by drawing attention to the "indecent" position of men in the sexual act. The paradox of the movement lies in its rather explicit sexual argumentation, while simultaneously claiming morality. In fact this morality is built upon the sexual act: www.noprize.lv has become a portal where one can find freely available erotic photos and a full footage of a Belarusian TV news reportage containing the explicit homosexual act of a Latvian diplomat filmed with a hidden camera.

Following Foucault and Bourdieu, sexuality and its explicit description in its "inverse" form play a crucial role in the definition of social order. This allowed Jānis Šmits, MP of the Latvian First party and a priest, to describe a sexual act in the Latvian Parliament:¹⁵

I apologise. I will quote the text of that book [Conversation Dictionary, printed at the beginning of the 20th century] what is this thing [homosexuality] and what it does. So:

¹⁵ The Latvian First Party is a right wing party based on Christian values. Creating an alliance with a liberal party, "Latvijas Ceļš" it managed to get 8.58% of the vote in the last Parliamentary elections in the autumn of 2006.

“Pederasty is the satisfaction of the sexual urge, inserting the male sexual organ into the anus of another man.” Therefore this action [is subject] to thorough condemnation. Secondly, it is done by alcoholics and degenerates. This is in our Conversation Dictionary. This means that our Conversation Dictionary is “against” it.¹⁶

Later in the debate Andrejs Naglis, an MP of the same party, asserted twice that the very word combination of “sexual orientation” should be excluded from the law because its use is unacceptable to a Christian.

ARTICULATION OF SEXUALITY

The experience of sexuality in the Soviet period has influenced its public perception nowadays. Looking at the historical particularities of the articulation of sexuality in the Soviet era, Rotkirch (2002) gives an account of the attitude towards sexuality in the autobiographies of three generations of Soviet citizens. She outlines a gradual change of articulation of sexuality through the generation of silenced sexuality (1940–1950s), the change in sexual behaviour making sex life more variable (1960–1970s) and the appearance of sexuality in public speech (1980–1990s). Rotkirch remarks that the formulation of the public discourse on sexuality in Russia got under way in the late 1990s. However, the homosexuality debate reached Latvia without a history of public discussions on sexuality, and became anchored in the silenced sexual practice rather than in a critical discourse on it.

Latvian research on sex education confirms that sexuality is silenced in families, and formal sex education in schools is inadequate (Krecele 2006; Putniņa 2004, 2006). Public articulation of sexuality, according to the findings of a homosexuality attitude survey (Makarovs 2006), is largely unacceptable: more than half of the respondents (54%) supported the claim that they did not like any public expressions of intimacy (hugging and kissing in public), 66% admitted that they found two women kissing repulsive, while 78% found two men kissing repulsive.

The long tradition of silencing sexuality in the public space has had its impact on perceived “natural” sexual roles. Looking at the experience of sexuality of the young Latvian generation one can see a strict gender division determining both the perceived sex roles and sexual behaviour (Putniņa 2006). Masculine sexuality is constructed as a short-term presentation of sexual potency and the satisfaction of sexual needs. Partner

¹⁶ Parliament Debates on Employment Law amendments, 9th Meeting of the Spring Session of the 8th Parliament of the Republic of Latvia (Latvijas Republikas 8. Saeimas pavasara sesijas devītā sēde), stenography 15 June 2006. <http://www.saeima.lv/steno/2002_8/st_060615/st1506.htm> (29 November 2006).

choice and the sustainability of a relationship are not important. For example, Kārlis, a 16 year old boy from a rural area, described occasional sex as a natural component of youth entertainment. Knowledge on sexuality is gained through these occasional encounters. Sexual behaviour is gendered:

Those [sexual acts] took place in houses, staircases, cars, basements, toilets, parks, everywhere. . . . Men don't give a damn where to f*** her. Women are more picky. But a man doesn't give a damn. Actually a few agree to somewhere else—more often at home. That is linked to alcoholic drinks. That is drunk, and people become indifferent. A drunken lady does not command her c*** [laughs] (Genādijs).

Later gender asymmetry is sustained by financial means and providing for the family. It can be argued that the naturalisation of gender roles is linked to the position of authority in the family. This authority is grounded in gendered properties: for example, one of the informants, Genādijs believes that breadwinning gives a man the right to live a more relaxed sexual life while women are deemed to be devoted to their husbands in exchange for material security.

Feminine sexuality is constructed differently putting the responsibility for the consequences onto women. If boyish sexuality demands a quick subjection of his sex partner then young women are expected to demonstrate a stable moral position and the ability to form long-term relationships.

Interviewer: Is it right for two young people to have sexual relations straight away on their first date?

Vita, 16 year old girl: That is bad. I don't know how to say it—it is rude.

Interviewer: What is rude?

Vita: That boys can later talk badly about that girl.

Interviewer: So, is that bad only for a girl? And a boy can do it?

Vita: It is different for guys. They can boast about it.

Interviewer: And girls cannot boast about it?

Vita: No there is nothing to boast about when you sleep with a stranger.

Kaspars, a 17 year old boy, tells of the consequences of breaching the gendered models of sexuality: he takes his responsibility in his relationship and receives social condemnation for buying condoms or a pregnancy test. Sexuality, therefore, is not linked to the sex per se but to the right model of sexuality. Society does not criticize the masculine model of sexuality when men perform it. Young men having sex without condoms are not condemned and they are freed from the consequences of their sexual acts even if it leads to the pregnancy of their partner. The natural-

ness of this behaviour is supported by theories about instincts and physiology of sexes where the female instincts are imagined to be stronger and directed towards maternity and stability. Naturalness objectifies the gendered experience of sexuality, making other orders unnatural and to some extent unimaginable. Reciting abnormality thus delineates and confirms sexual normality.

SHAME AND SEXUALITY

Shame is an important component of sexuality allowing control of sexual behaviour both publicly and personally. Bourdieu (2001) points to the significance of shame in the construction of sexuality, seeing it as an internalized relation of symbolic domination.

Latvian Internet comments suggest that their authors experience bodily repulsion towards shameful expressions of sexuality. Shame is linked both to the “dishonourable” kind of sexual activity and its public demonstration. Texts often evoke the shared feelings of bodily repulsion towards homosexuality:

It took a rather short period of time to make a revolution in my consciousness. I was completely indifferent [towards homosexuals] until the [Pride] march. Now I have only negative emotions and that is irreversible (rinķi apkārt, 01.08.2005 08:16:43).

The image of homosexuality in Internet comments—just like in the parliamentary debates on the amendments on the Employment Law—is consistently contradictory. On the one hand, homosexuality is associated with shame and such shameful sexual practice as anal and oral sex. On the other hand, despite its shamefulness, homosexuality is considered attractive and seductive especially for those who are not capable of dealing with and controlling their sexual behaviour:

They often attract immature youth to their orientation—this is the main reason society objects to homosexuality. Not all 18 year olds can be viewed as having a mature mind. Let homosexuals fall in love, create relationships and have sex with equal partners but let's not allow them to search for young people (Zīle, 01.08.2005 11:34:09).

The control of sexuality is enacted by means that are paradoxical at first sight. Homophobic speakers—and not homosexual interest group members—publicly read a document called “Gay manifesto”:¹⁷ it was read several times in Parliament, cited by the head of the Catholic Church in

¹⁷ Originating in a satiric text by Michael Swift and first published in *Gay Community News*, 15–21 February 1987, the text came to be used by right wing Christians in the USA.

public meetings, and it was quoted in almost every Internet debate concerning homosexuality. It was cited frequently in order to combat "homosexual ideology" and thereby express the need to have control over sexuality.

Homosexuality allows mobilizing and sharing moral concerns through the common sharing of shame which, according to Foucault ([1978] 1990), allows a moral community to be sustained. Looking at the discursive aspects of voicing the moral community reference to the "principle of democracy"—democracy being a new principle and usually evoked by the supporters of civil society and state officials—is persistent:

Sexual orientation is a choice and if somebody has chosen something abnormal or crazy (for example, eating shit), then I have the right in a democratic society to express my condemnation and repulsion to such activities (haris, 01.08.2005 06:02:58).

The majority argument justifying the discrimination of homosexuals was used in the Parliamentary debate on the amendment of the Employment Law as well, coining new ways of articulating democracy.

THE TRADITION OF THINKING

Finally, the quality of the dialogue on sexuality is influenced by the tradition of the discursive practice. As I mentioned earlier, silencing sexuality and putting it in the realm of practice did not allow the development of a critical discourse on sexuality. Silenced expression of sexuality is preferred over its discussion aloud.

Another difference between "old" Europe and Latvia lies in the position of "truth." The Soviet legacy has contributed to the hegemonic perception of truth. If the relationship between the dominant and dominated discourses allows the articulation of the subjected discourses, then a hegemonic relationship requires the articulation of one hegemonic discourse. A dominant discourse accepts other positions but the hegemonic discourse denies them on the grounds that there is only one "truth." The similarity between the dominant and the hegemonic discourses lies in the need for dominated and subjected discourses.

The relationship of hegemony contributes to the great fixation on words which once spelled out become truth. Sensitivity to voicing social reality is obvious in the efforts to amend laws and the belief that the written word simultaneously becomes a social reality.

The text of the manifesto and its context can be found at <<http://rainbowallianceopenfaith.homestead.com/GayAgendaSwiftText.html>> (11 November 2006).

The hegemonic position one allocates to one's own views forces a perception of other discourses to comply:

For me, too, homosexuals were indifferent until the pride march—let these people do as they wish. After the march (actually shortly before it) I felt that my rights and views as a heterosexual female are violated. . . . I feel that I should participate in the anti-pride movement next summer because there are no other ways I can show that I feel oppressed and discriminated (Ari man, 01.08.2005 08:37:22).

There are several sources of discourses used in speaking of homosexuality. Medical discourse on disease is used to ground the “abnormality” and “normality” of homosexuality alongside normality and abnormality of homophobia. Reference to science, religious texts and legal rights has the same dual use and cannot be taken as sources of an ultimate authority insofar as other interpretations are not given the right to existence.

All these discursive fields can be used in constructing homosexuality as a category. On the one hand, hegemonic discourse needs to make homosexuality visible (since it is the only criterion of classification) to be able to control it. On the other hand, it needs to stay invisible to keep the social moral pure. The controversy is partly resolved by allocating homosexuality different semi-public and public fields:

If the husband beats his wife at home and she accepts it—this is a matter for their family. If he starts beating his wife in Riga city centre—it becomes a social matter and society expresses its opinion by putting that man into jail. Society has spoken on the gay demonstration, and it is accepted that in democracies the minority submits to the will of the majority (Kurmitis, 01.08.2005 09:54:18).

However, the ambiguity of “invisible visibility” cannot be completely resolved within the existing categories of sexuality, but it can be diminished by the elimination of the hegemonic relationship between the discourses and a critical reflection on the established categories.

CONCLUSION

The homophobic reaction of Latvian society is embedded both in the position of truth and the perceptions and practice of male-female difference. I explored only one aspect of this difference looking at the sexual construction and use of the sexed body but this difference is important in many more fields of everyday life. Homosexuality happened to challenge the basic premises of the social order which had been taken for granted and been invisible. Latvians missed the opportunity to debate sexuality in the 1960s. Debates around homosexuality emerged in the

virtual absence of a critical discursive tradition dealing with sexuality and gender. However, the good thing about the categories is that they are learnt and changing.

As Bourdieu (2001) suggested, the strength of the LGBT community stems from its ability to combine visibility and invisibility strategies in promoting their interests. Using the strategies directed at the "visibilisation" of the community, however, will meet resistance while the hegemonic perception of truth dominates. Combining visibility and invisibility strategies has its weakness as well. The gendered perceptions of sexuality create the LGBT community as a category, while giving rise not only to LGBT politics but also to the use of the body and "objective" bodily perceptions of LGBT people.

Reflexivity and verbal articulation of sexuality help to establish the idea that sexuality is primarily an individual entity. The ultimate end of the individualisation effort would lead to the dissolution of homo- and heterosexuality as the crucial aspects of one's sexuality when the stress is put on the quality of relationships, and not on positions of authority.

As gender equality, egalitarian family roles and fatherhood issues are starting to be articulated and campaigned for, Latvian society may after all be on its way towards a more liberal categorization of sexuality through greater awareness of sexuality and a greater flexibility to move between the different discourses.

REFERENCES

- Bourdieu, Pierre. 2001. *Masculine Domination*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York & London: Routledge.
- Caune, E., A. Rāta, L. Grigule, A. Sviklis, and L. Ugaine. 2005. *Situācijas analīze izglītības sistēmā par dzimumu līdztiesības jautājumiem* (Situation Analysis of Gender Equality Questions In The System Of Education). Eiropas Sociālais Fonds (European Social Fund). <<http://www.politika.lv/index.php?id=6131>> (29 November 2006).
- Douglas, Marry. [1966] 2002. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London: Routledge.
- Foucault, Michel. [1978] 1990. *The History of Sexuality. An Introduction*. New York: Vintage Books Edition.
- Kaufman, Michael, and Harry Brod, eds. 1994. *Theorizing Masculinities*. Thou-

sand Oaks: Sage Publications.

- Kimmel, Michael S. 1994. Masculinity as Homophobia. Fear, Shame and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity. In *Theorizing Masculinity*, ed. Hary Brod and Michael Kaufman, 119–41. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Krecele, Agnese. 2006. Vecāku diskursīvās stratēģijas: seksuālās un reprodūktīvās veselības gadījums (Discursive Strategies of Parents: The Case of Sexual and Reproductive Health). Master Theses, University of Latvia, Department of Sociology.
- Lavrikovs, Juris Ludvigs. 1999. Geju un lezbiešu tiesību stāvokļa analīze Latvijā (The Analysis of the Gay and Lesbian Situation in Latvia). Valsts Cilvēktiesību birojs (The Bureau of Human Rights). <www.vcb.lv/zinojumi/geju_un_lezbiešu_ties_1999.doc> (29 November 2006).
- Leach, Edmund. 1976. *Culture and Communication*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Makarovs, Viktors. 2006. Latvijas iedzīvotāju attieksme pret seksuālajām minoritātēm: dimensijas un “temperatūra” (The Attitude of Latvian Inhabitants Towards Sexual Minorities: Dimensions and “Temperature”). Dialogi.lv. <http://www.dialogi.lv/pdfs/sexmin_interpret.pdf> (29 November 2006).
- Putniņa, Aivita. 1999. Maternity Services and Agency. Ph.D. diss., University of Cambridge.
- , ed. 2004. *Reproductive Health of the Population: Study on the Situation in Latvia 1997–2003*. Riga: United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Papardes Zieds.
- . 2006. *Seksuālā izglītība Latvijā* (Sex Education in Latvia). Eiropas partnerība jauniešu seksuālās un reprodūktīvās veselības un tiesību veicināšanai. Riga: LFPSHA Papardes Zieds.
- Rotkirch, Anna. 2002. Sovetskie kul’tury seksual’nosti. (Soviet Cultures of Sexuality). In *V poiskakh seksual’nosti. Sbornik statej*, ed. Elena Zdravomsylova & Anna Temkina, 128–171. St Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin.
- Turner, Victor. 1967. *The Forest of Symbols*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- Waitt, Gordon. 2005. Sexual Citizenship in Latvia: Geographies of the Latvian Closet. *Social and Cultural Geography* 6 (2): 161–181.

ANALOGIES OF PRE-WAR ANTI-SEMITISM AND PRESENT-DAY HOMOPHOBIA IN POLAND

GREGORY E. CZARNECKI

INTRODUCTION

Polish people often pride themselves with a long history of tolerance towards Jews. Poland in fact invited Jews to immigrate to the country in past centuries at times when the rest of Europe persecuted them.¹ By the early twentieth century the situation had changed. Anti-Semitism, which arguably reached its apex in 1930's, had become Poland's defining form of social exclusion (Tokarska-Bakir 2004). In this chapter I propose and illustrate that the mechanism and structure of anti-Semitism, based in the rise of nationalism, are currently being employed through the use of homophobia and heterosexism with the queer community as its target.

The similarities between homophobic and anti-Semitic discourse are organised in three broad categories here. Firstly, I look at the label of homosexuals and Jewish people as mentally or physically ill. Members of the stigmatized group are seen by those who exclude them as suffering from sickness that is either inherent to their nature or as a result of their habits and actions. Sexuality takes on particular salience in this manner as concepts such as sexual "respectability" and propriety gained weight during the rise of nationalism. Therefore, a particular stress is put on the "deviant" sexuality and sexual practices that are attributed to Jews and queers (whether or not they are true).

Secondly, victims of homophobia and anti-Semitism are treated as a threat to the nation. The supposed "illness" and "perverse sexuality" are not viewed as something self-contained or as a matter of concern to only the Jewish or homosexual community. Both communities are accused of deliberately attempting to fatally alter or destroy the nation and its institutions such as the government, family or the Church.

The final category of hate discourse is not necessarily confined to the exchange of words. Rather, the explicit and physical reactions to both communities are explored as a form of actualized discourse. Whether

¹ While the Crusades took place in Europe during the 13th Century, Jews fled to Poland due to its relative tolerance. This led to a situation where by the 16th Century eighty percent of the world's Jews lived in Poland (see Weiner 2006).

violent or not, the treatment of both Jews and queers in the past and as well as today is often explained away or excused by those in the religious and sexual majority. Though the messages from the majority community might often be contradictory (for example, the pressure from the majority to alternately conceal and disclose Jews and queers), together they contribute to an atmosphere of discrimination and hostility.

In this analysis I frame my study on the comparison primarily of pre-World War II anti-Semitism to current homophobia. To carry out my comparison, I analysed selected discussions and comments made by public figures on the topic of homosexuality and the movement for gay rights which occurred in the recent decades, concentrating on the years after 2000. These are then looked at in the light of anti-Semitic discourse which reached its apex in the first half of the 20th Century in Poland and throughout Europe. The material referred to here however is not a comprehensive overview of the public debate on the issue.

This is not to suggest that homophobia did not exist in the early 1900's nor that anti-Semitism has disappeared and been replaced by homophobia in Poland today. Homophobia, as noted below, was present during the rise of nationalism together with anti-Semitism. Similarly, Poland is far from free of anti-Semitism today and Jews living in Poland are still faced with its consequences.² However, the recent rise in queer visibility, contrasted to the low number of Jews in Poland,³ has meant a rise in overt homophobia exposing its very stark and harrowing similarities to past (and present) anti-Semitism.

NATIONALISM'S ROLE

Nationalism, according to George L. Mosse, "is perhaps the most powerful and effective ideology of modern times" (Mosse 1985, 9). In his ground breaking book *Nationalism and Sexuality*, Mosse studies the in-depth relationship between *nationalism* and *respectability*. His work focuses primarily on sexuality and concludes that the concept of respectability developed during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries remain with us today. This force shaped the most important norms of society including "ideals of manliness . . . and their effect on the place

² A European Parliament resolution on the rise of racism and homophobia of 15 June 2006, which mentions Poland as a country with troubling occurrences of anti-Semitism, points to the current forms of anti-Semitism. See <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/019-8898-165-06-24-902-20060608IPR08828-14-06-2006-2006-false/default_en.htm> (19 June 2006).

³ This phenomenon is often labelled "anti-Semitism without Jews," considering the official number of Jews being somewhere between five and ten thousand (see Cala 2006).

of women; and insiders who accept the norms, as compared to the outsiders, those considered abnormal or diseased" (Mosse 1985, 1). These norms also defined social and civic responsibility. Once responsibility is defined, those who failed to behave in such a way risk blame for often unrelated conflicts and problems. Those who stood apart from the norm were condemned. Homosexuals were at the forefront of this exclusion as they embodied the threat against sexual respectability.

Mosse also considers racism to have played a decisive role in this alliance between nationalism and respectability. Bourgeois respectability was supported by racism that he calls a "heightened nationalism" (Mosse 1985, 133). The links between racism and sexuality are direct and immediate according to Mosse. Racism brought to a climax nationalism's tendencies towards complete domination and leaves little ability to negotiate the boundaries of inclusion in the nation. Zygmunt Bauman similarly writes "racism manifests the conviction that a certain category of human beings cannot be incorporated into the national order, whatever the efforts" (Bauman 1989, 65).

Matti Bunzl, in his book *Symptoms of Modernity*, applies Mosse's analysis of nationalism in his study of anti-Semitism and homophobia in twentieth century Austria. Bunzl shows that Jews and queers became linked through a "normalising process that imagined modern collectives as ethnically homogeneous and inherently masculinist entities" (Bunzl 1999, 13). Both Jews and queers emerged in their modern form during this period of nationalism in the late nineteenth century. Jews were reconstructed using the relatively new concept of race, a concept in which racial differences were "no longer perceived as chance variations but as immutable; fixed in place" (Mosse 1985, 133). At the same time, calling upon Michel Foucault's work, Bunzl maps a similar transformation of the constructed "homosexual" identity as being "predicated on the emergence of sexuality as an irreducible and constitutive aspect of self" (Bunzl 1999, 13). With these two groups newly identified, they were used as social signifiers to "demarcate the symbolic space of the nation" (Bunzl 1999, 14). By defining the "in group" it became clear who was part of the "out group."

Poland, like Austria and Germany, was similarly involved in a nation-building process at turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The historical trajectories of Jews and queers that were influenced by the alliance of bourgeois respectability and nationalism spread across Europe and cut across all classes (Mosse 1985, 2). Therefore, the examples of past anti-Semitism below come not only from Poland but also from various European countries such as Germany.

STIGMATISING JEWS AND QUEERS AS ILL

Both the Jewish and queer communities have been labelled as inherently abnormal in anti-Semitic and homophobic discourse. Sander Gilman harkens back to the Middle Ages of Europe when already Jews were marked as a symbolic “leper” and confined to prevent the transmission of diseases they may carry. Medical surveys in the late 1700’s continued to report that Jews in Eastern Europe were more diseased than others and were responsible for spreading specific diseases as syphilis and conjunctivitis (Gilman 1985, 151). Such sentiments encouraged a sense of paranoia amongst populations that fear epidemics of disease. Furthermore, these sentiments promoted an atmosphere that led to the confinement of Jews in urban ghettos.

The queer community, more specifically gay men, have similarly been the target of blame for disease and epidemic. This analogy of illness is particularly acute when one considers the prevalent association between gay men and the AIDS epidemic. To some degree, the concern of gay men being ill has served to justify ostracizing the community from society under the reasoning that promoting homosexuality would be akin to promoting the spread of disease. In a talk show aired on the main public television station in Poland, March 2006, Joanna Najfold, described as a Catholic activist affiliated with the website www.tolerancja.net, took part in discussion regarding the accusation that a queer organisation had distributed flyers on HIV prevention in high schools. Najfold was quoted as saying “Why should the group most at risk of HIV be teaching others about prevention? That’s like criminals teaching about the criminal code.”⁴ This comment went without critique from the host of the show. Due to such generalised opinions and based upon what many claim to be sound medical science, men who participate in homosexual activities have also been banned from donating blood in Poland, for instance.⁵

Beyond physical diseases attributed to the queer community and Jews, mental illness has also been used to discredit both groups. As the 19th century came to an end, the medical profession of Europe was not averse to using racist and homophobic discourse in their diagnosis of illness. Mosse refers to doctors who claimed that homosexuality was a symptom

⁴ Mikołaj Lizut, “Gdzie postawi granic tolerancji w szkole?” (Where should the boundaries of tolerance be in school?), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 2006, <<http://serwis.gazeta.pl/kraj/1,34308,3242946.html>> (29 March 2006).

⁵ The exclusion of homosexuals from donating blood is not unique to Poland however, as it occurs in various countries across Europe. Efforts to change the policy in Poland have not been successful. See *Homoseksualiści - grupa ryzyka!* (Homosexuals—High risk Group!), <http://www.innastrona.pl/news_pokaz.phtml?nID=1819> (30 October 2003).

of modernization and that mental illness was common amongst homosexuals and parents of homosexuals. In the same vein, Jews were to harbour the specific disease of nervousness. Various other illnesses were linked to each other as Mosse notes that "the outsider must be totally diseased" (Mosse 1985, 136).

It is not rare that in Poland homosexuality itself is perceived as a mental sickness that can and should be cured despite the fact that the World Health Organization removed homosexuality from its list of illnesses in 1992.⁶ Gay pride marches are regularly assaulted by opponents who scream "Get treatment!" However, this sentiment is also found in teachings of the Catholic Church and its hierarchy as well as by certain sectors of the medical and psychiatric community. Katarzyna Bojarska, a Polish sexologist, notes that amongst the psychiatric profession it is not rare to find implicit and explicit homophobia. Even if therapists do not consider homosexuality a disease, "they often assume the superiority of heterosexuality and advocate for queers to change."⁷

This therapeutic voice of homophobia is a basis for various support groups who work to heal homosexuals of their homosexuality. *Odwaga* (Courage) is one such organisation that operates under the Catholic teachings of "love the sinner, hate the sin" and seek to assist queers in becoming heterosexual. Their main goal is to "help those with homosexual tendencies to sustain purity and denounce the homosexual lifestyle."⁸ Similar mission statements can be found with *Pomocy2002* (Assistance2002), and *Pascha*. The League of Polish Families (LPR),⁹ a coalition party in the current Polish government, has been reported to be in touch with *Odwaga*, considering that their mission is similar to the outlooks of LPR members.¹⁰ Front-bench Member of Parliament from LPR and former Member of the European Parliament, Wojciech Wierzejski, has also been said to have suggested establishing "re-education camps" for homosexuals as a way of treating them,¹¹ a harrowing comment considering

⁶ See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homosexuality_and_psychology> (10 July 2006).

⁷ Katarzyna Bojarska, interviewed on 27 April 2006.

⁸ See <<http://www.odwaga.oaza.org.pl/homepage.html>> (13 July 2006).

⁹ The League of Polish Families is a Catholic-Nationalist right-wing party with approximately 8% support. Despite its relatively low support, it is in the ruling coalition and has members in key positions such as the Ministry of Education. See Jan Repa, "Polish Nationalism Resurgent," *BBC News*, 2006, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4754079.stm>> (9 May 2006).

¹⁰ Paweł P. Reszka, "Ja cię, synu, naprawię" (I'll fix you, son), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 2006, <<http://serwis.gazeta.pl/df/1,34467,3407056.html?as=9&ias=10>> (16 June 2006).

¹¹ Aleksandra Krzyżaniak-Gumowska, "O szwedzkim ustawodawstwie i warszawskim konflikcie o Paradę Równości" (On Swedish law and the Warsaw conflict over the Equal-

the implications of employing the notion of “camps” when referring to homosexuals in the context of post-World War II Poland.

In a curious form of logic, the advocacy of Jewish emancipation was said to be a manifestation of their mental illness and the “disease of equality.” It seemed ridiculous to some in the late 1700’s that Jews would aspire towards equality in society (Gilman 1985, 152). The desire for political equality was seen as a sign of insanity in Jews and was also treated as such by the French in the Third Republic (Gilman 1985, 153). Polish nationalists of the late 1930’s were similarly ready to expose supposedly Jewish organisations such as the Esperantists. In their fight against anti-Semitism, members of these organisations espoused “the ‘progressive’, ‘tolerant’, ‘democratic’ and ‘peaceful’ collaboration of all nations” for which they were blamed by nationalists for poisoning the youth (Landua-Czajka 1989, 197). By classifying these terms as insane and coming from the insane, it was less likely that opponents had to argue on the merits of the debate.

Many politicians in modern-day Poland seem to capitalise on similar notions of madness in their dismissal of movements towards equality. This can be heard amongst those who claim that traditional and moral Poland is being held hostage by a homosexual minority that controls European politics. In a sign that even the current government considers claims for “equality” as slightly unreasonable, the Ministry of Education made an attempt to change the title of a Council of Europe (CoE) programme called All Different—All Equal to All Different—All in Solidarity in early 2006. The change was explained by the Minister as an attempt to avoid confusing the programme with the Warsaw Equality Parade organised by the gay community as the term *equality* is used in both the CoE programme and the Parade name.¹² Members of the same party (Law and Justice, *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*—PiS)¹³ that attempted to alter the CoE programme title had banned the Equality Parade in Warsaw. In banning the parade, the message seemed to be that the party was not keen on having what they considered deviants walk the streets. Their reference to the marches as a reason to change the programme name makes it clear that they would not support a notion of “equality” that is advocated by the queer community.

ity Parade), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 2005, <<http://miasta.gazeta.pl/warszawa/1,34889,2740386.html>> (31 May 2005).

¹² See “There is No Room for Equality in Poland,” <<http://alldifferent-allequal.info/node/28>> (10 February 2006).

¹³ PiS is the ruling conservative right-wing party.

THREAT TO THE NATION

One might be able to be convinced that merely being "sick," "mentally ill" or "deviant" does not pose a threat to the nation per se. However, those characterised as such, namely the Jews and homosexuals, were and are not often looked upon as innocent beings plagued with these misfortunes. Instead, Jews and queers are frequently labelled as enemies of the state and active threats to the nation.

The 1930's were rife with the common stereotype of the Jews as a "state within a state," implicitly treasonous to the nation and against Christianity. In reading Marcel Proust, Jonathan Freedman notes how both Jews and "sodomites" were perceived as having the ability of being communities within communities who "comprise a powerful, destabilising force which can counter the dominant culture" (Freedman 2001, 525). One right-wing publication boasted "[we] cannot allow the parasitic Jew to destroy the organism of the state from inside" (Landua-Czajka 1989, 179). Propaganda such as this was common and often made by those who were proud to be antisemites in their zeal to defend Poland from this internal enemy. Adam Ostolski comments that the term "homosexual lobby" is euphemistically used currently in Poland to label what is a common stereotype: all that is wrong can be blamed on a *conspiracy* of the "Jews, Masons, feminists or homosexuals" (Tomasik 2004, 72). Both the "Jewish conspiracy" and the "homosexual lobby" are made up of a "cosmopolitanism," associated with modernism and decadence (Gilman 1985, 153–154).

The concept of an international homosexual lobby is a concept that is readily used in public discourse to discredit movements that attempt to deal with homophobia. A conservative, but by no means radical, weekly magazine *Ozon* recently dedicated an issue with the cover featuring a young heterosexual couple proudly proclaiming "We are homophobes."¹⁴ This is a strikingly similar sentiment to Landua-Czajka's quote from a radical right-wing nationalistic publication above in which they proudly proclaim to be antisemites. *Ozon's* lead article entitled "The Pink International in Action" warns readers that "The gay lobby has reached its goal. European Socialists and Liberals are forcing us by law to accept homosexual partnerships" (Mickalik 2006). Readers are reminded in the article that this small minority is collaborating with international forces to make Poland do exactly what it does not want to do, simultaneously working from within and getting support from outside.

Similarly, queer organisations are blamed for attempting to disrupt and destabilise the government. When LPR party leader Roman Gi-

¹⁴ See <http://www.ozon.pl/a_tygodnikozon_2_14_1100_2006_4_1.html> (14 January 2006).

ertych was appointed Minister of Education in mid-2006, thousands of people, mostly students, took to the streets in protest across all regions of Poland. As a pretext to monitor and control queer organisations and in a strategic attempt to discredit the public protests, Giertych defended himself by claiming that it is the “left wing and homosexual organisations that are behind the attacks!”¹⁵ Fellow LPR member Wierzejski similarly commented that activists from homosexual organisations “carry out unfounded attacks on the Polish government and its Ministers practically everyday.”¹⁶ It is clear that with these proclamations the politicians are harking back to the paranoia of the enemy within, frequently used against Jews.¹⁷

The concept of *nation* in Poland has a specifically communal hue that therefore supports the subordination of one’s individuality and difference to the commonalities of the larger whole. As Tomasz Kitliński writes, “Communism and post-communism are linked through a chauvinism in which not the individual but rather the nation is the subject. The nation must reproduce and therefore heterosexuality and Polonization is required” (Kitliński 2004, 275). Anything that stands out significantly is therefore seen as an internal threat. As described by Mosse, the “abnormality” simply does not fit in the concept of the nation that those from LPR seek to promote—for neither the homosexual nor the Jew.

Yet another concern for those who seek to defend Poland against internal threats is the sanctity of the traditional Polish family. A heavy importance is placed on the family as the cornerstone of Polish society, and as a symbol of the nation. Any behaviour that is seen as anti-family can also be paramount to treason, or a deliberate attempt to destroy the nation. The sanctity of the family is discussed by many Polish academics, chief among them is Magdalena Środa, professor of philosophy and former Plenipotentiary for the Equal Status of Women and Men. Środa herself was deeply criticized and faced dismissal from her post

¹⁵ See “Szukają przeciwników Romana Giertycha” (They’re looking for Roman Giertych’s Opponents), *Rzeczpospolita*, <http://www.rzeczpospolita.pl/gazeta/wydanie_060601/kraj/kraj_a_3.html> (1 June 2006).

¹⁶ Joanna Jałowiec, “Przeciwnik Giertycha to gej. A gej to pedofil” (Opponents of Giertych are Gay. And Gays are Paedophiles), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 2006, <<http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/kraj/1,34308,3347500.html>> (15 May 2006).

¹⁷ It is worth noting that Roman Giertych is not unaware of these links to anti-Semitism. He is the grandson of Jędrzej Giertych who was active during the 1930’s in the Camp of Greater Poland Party (*Obóz Wielkiej Polski*), known for its anti-Semitism and nationalism, advocating economic boycotts against Jews for example. See <http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/J%C4%99drzej_Giertych> (2 July 2006).

when she commented on domestic abuse at an international conference. She stated that although the Catholic Church is not directly responsible for supporting domestic abuse, there is still a partial link between them. The responses to her comments by politicians and the media were stern, claiming her suggestion that the Church was implicated at all in such a matter was absurd. She was not terribly surprised by the reaction, saying, "In Poland, the family and not the individual is seen as the centre of value. That's why we often defend the family as an inherent good at the expense of defending women."¹⁸ In this situation, it mattered less if women really were abused at home and how to tackle this issue. What mattered is that another symbol, the Catholic Church, was attacked and the family structure that is supported by the Church was threatened.

The need to protect family from homosexuals is a defining feature of Polish homophobia. Very few debates on issues concerning the gay community transpire without a mention by opponent of gay rights how these rights would negatively affect the family or children of Poland. This was evident in 1995 in debates during the drafting of the Polish Constitution on Article 32 that prohibits discrimination. The original version of Article 32 paragraph 2 included sexual orientation as one of the grounds upon which one could not be discriminated. This version was effectively blocked by protests from the Catholic Church, right-wing parties and the then-President Lech Wałęsa, who defended his decision by saying that the inclusion of such verbiage "would open up the door for a threat to the family and moral upbringing of children" (Leszkowicz 2004, 104).

The mental illness that was ascribed to Jews and queers outlined above was often associated with what the majority perceived was an exhibited sexual deviance. Sexual practices were not considered a private matter in which one engaged in the privacy of one's own home. Rather they were an issue of crucial public importance as their sexuality also endangered the healthy family life and children of the Polish nation. Jews were said to manifest their mental illness by engaging in marriage and sexual practices that violate basic human sexual taboos, chief among them was incest. Gilman explains that accusing Jews of such deviance "was a result both of the level of late nineteenth century science and of the desire for categories with which to define the explicit nature of the Other" (Gilman 1985, 157).

Blaming Jews for the demise of the family however was not as straightforward since Jewish family life was often greatly admired by even an-

¹⁸ See "Pechowaroda" (Unlucky Środa), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, <<http://szukaj.gazeta.pl/archiwum/0,51943.html>>, (10 December 2004).

tisemites. Mosse suggests that the racism of early nineteenth century Europe blamed Jews for keeping their own family in tact “yet [their culture] was directed against the family life of others” (Mosse 1985, 142). The Jews for example were said to have an uncontrollable sexual drive that prompted them to prey on gentile women and were said to “convey women to houses of ill repute” (Landua-Czajka 1989, 183).

Furthermore Jews were believed to serve as a bad example for children and the rest of society. Landua-Czajka quotes a newspaper from 1930’s Poland that laments “A young woman, showing parts of her naked body in the street, hair cut short, rouged face, dancing the Charleston.” The paper claims this debased woman was “a victim of Jewish influences” (Landua-Czajka 1989, 183). Jewish influences on culture were not the only threat to Polish children. Polish myths such as Jews kidnapping Polish children in order to get their blood needed for religious ceremonies served to demonize Jews. The power and danger of such a stereotype was most vividly enacted in a pogrom in the city of Kielce. In early July 1946, a rumour (later confirmed to be false) had started amongst citizens of Kielce that Jews had kidnapped a young Christian boy to attempt a ritual slaying. Word spread rapidly and by 4 July 1946 over forty Jews were killed in the pogrom (Szaynok 2006).

Antisemites believed that the behaviours of Jews could be explained by the fact that Jews followed their own moral code based on the Torah. This ethic was said to be based on a superiority over non-Jews and in fact encouraged them to “harm and injure the ‘goy’ [non-Jew] by any means they see fit” (Landua-Czajka 1989, 177). Their attempts to destroy Christian civilisation included promotion of pornography, divorce, abortion and they were even accused of inventing birth control to destroy the Aryan race (Ostolski 2005b, 7). Homosexuals currently fill this role but rather than following an ethic of the Torah, they are said to support what Pope John Paul II coined a “civilisation of death” that permeates their actions and those of the immoral West.¹⁹

Much like how incest was intentionally used to demonize Jews for partaking in one of the most taboo of sexual acts, (coupled with their proclivity towards preying on Polish children for religious purposes), paedophilia is used to demonize the gay community. Accusations of paedophilia are used most commonly with gay males who are seen as particularly dangerous for children. With no scientific evidence of a connection between paedophilia and homosexuality, those who officially make

¹⁹ See “Zatrzymajmy dewiację” (Stop Deviance), *Nasz Dziennik*, <<http://www.naszdziennik.pl/index.php?typ=my&dat=20060104&id=my11.txt>> (4 January 2006).

this connection are capitalising on an irrational yet strongly held fear amongst the general population.

A recent court case brought against politicians from the ruling PiS party Przemysław Alexandrowicz and Jacek Tomczak accused the politicians of utilising hate speech by likening homosexuals to, amongst other things, paedophiles. During the court case involving the PiS politicians, fellow members of the party such as Norbert Napieraj concluded that "many homosexual activists are also involved in promoting other sexualities such as paedophilia."²⁰ These accusations are rarely disregarded by the mainstream. The ramifications of such prevalent speech in political discourse was evidenced recently when LPR Parliamentarian Wierzejski requested that the national public prosecutor instruct regional prosecutors to investigate links between homosexual organisations and paedophilia and other criminal activities nation-wide. Prosecutors are meant to establish how these organisation are funded and if they have any links to paedophilic activities regardless of the fact that no such incident has been reported.²¹

Another method to counter the Jewish threat from within and keep children safe in 1930's Poland was the exclusion of Jews from various professions including the teaching profession (Ostolski 2005a, 16-17; Landua-Czajka 1989, 174). Although discrimination based on sexual orientation at the workplace is now explicitly banned by European Union law and implemented in domestic labour code, Representative Andrzej Fedorowicz from LPR proposed an amendment to Parliament in 2003 to ban those who openly admit to their homosexuality from becoming teachers.²² Although it did not make it to vote, the proposed amendment underscores the fact that these sentiments are still common amongst party members.

REACTIONS TO JEWISH AND QUEER ACTIVITY

It is impossible to claim that there was or is a unified and coherent position towards Jews or queers in Poland. Even amongst right-wing politi-

²⁰ Michał Kopiński, "Działacz PiS: Homoseksualiści promują pedofilię" (PiS Members: Homosexuals promote paedophilia), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 2006, <<http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/1,53600,3401129.html>> (7 June 2006).

²¹ See "Wierzejski kazał prokuratorom szukać pedofilów" (Wierzejski Orders Prosecutors to Find Paedophiles), <http://www.homoseksualizm.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=115&Itemid=42> (4 December 2006).

²² See "Karta moralności" (Morality Law), Polish Teacher's Union, <http://www.znp.edu.pl/new_arch/artukul.php?id=81&rok=2003&PHPSESSID=91d5d39c574ca553204568386e8e9780> (21 August 2003).

cal discourse there are often various and contradictory stances that espouse anti-Semitism and homophobia. These divergent opinions ensure that both the queer and Jewish communities will find it hard to “behave properly” without encouraging criticism and discrimination from the general Polish population.²³

For Jews of pre-War Poland, the conspiracy theories mentioned above were meant to bring attention to all the undercover Jews out there that people “could not see” but should fear. According to the theory, Jews were an “omnipresent foe (an internal as well as an external one), an enemy with almost unlimited possibilities of action” (Landua-Czajka 1989, 173). The danger included their invisibility. In *Poznaj Żyda (Talmud i dusza żydowska)* (Recognise the Jew—The Talmud and the Jewish Spirit) published in 1936, the anonymous author instructs readers about Jews in order to fight them more effectively. Books such as these were widely distributed and remain available to this day. The presence of this literature coupled with the lists of those who people suspected were Jews (also available now on-line) gave a clear sign that if you were hiding, there was a good chance you would be discovered sooner or later.

At the same time there was a movement among the Polish intelligentsia during the inter-war era that advocated for Jewish assimilation. This “progressive attitude” towards Jews assumed it ideal if a person’s being Jewish became irrelevant. To mention whether one was Jewish would become offensive in certain social circles (Irwin-Zarecka 1989, 285). This “kinder” approach towards Jews was also present in Church doctrine. Although rabid antisemites could be found amongst the hierarchy, the official stance included respect for the person, no matter their immoral or unhealthy behaviour. This most often translated into a call for the conversion of Jews, if not forced emigration (Ostolski 2005a, 4). Certainly, the distinction between right-wing rhetoric that sought to expose the hidden Jew as opposed to the “progressive outlook” is clear. However both discourses served to encourage many Jews to be “Jewish at home, Polish in the street.”

Queers in Poland, like in most places, have long learned their lesson that it is best to keep one’s sexuality a secret. Though the signals from society are clear that homosexuals who are overt about their identity are for the most part not welcome in the public sphere, there still are contradictory messages that serve to ensure that keeping undercover is often not sufficient to living in a safe space.

²³ The concept of stigmatisation described by the seminal works of Ervin Goffman are used here. Most specifically his theory that the stigmatised individual must act as if his burden is not significant so that those of the majority can pretend as if there was no issue of discrimination, leading to a “phantom acceptance” (see Goffman 1963, 121).

Apart from the glaring number of homosexuals who chose to stay in the closet rather than reveal their identity, the reaction from society when doing the opposite simply reaffirms the message that they are not accepted (Graff 2006). This is most vividly documented both in the public and media reaction to social awareness campaigns and equality parades organised by queer organisations. In 2003, the Campaign Against Homophobia launched a photo exhibit and billboard campaign that featured 30 pairs of lesbians and gay men holding hands entitled Let Them See Us. The title itself harks back to the reality that queers were not willing to be invisible any more. The dominant reaction from the media, as essayist and Gender Studies lecturer Agnieszka Graff summarizes it, was: "How dare they *impose* themselves on us, how dare they make themselves so *conspicuous*" (Graff 2006, 11).

Taking to the streets is another form of public display that was an issue for Jews in years past and is currently a legal challenge for queers in Poland. Ostolski mentions how even the mere sight of a Jew in a Warsaw park was enough to offend the public in one case of 1939 (Ostolski 2005b, 16). Presently, parades of equality are often seen as unnecessarily provocative by even those who do not consider themselves to be particularly homophobic and claim not to "mind" homosexuals as long as they are invisible to them. In recent years however, marches that have been organised by queer organisations in Warsaw, Krakow and Poznań have been met with violence and often banned by government officials. Reasons for banning such events almost always include, to some extent, protecting public morality and respecting Christian values (Gruszczynska 2004, 144).

When violence befalls either Jews or queers who chose to be visible in the face of such attitudes, a common response to both groups often involves blaming the victim. Jews were accused of bringing anti-Semitism on themselves. Landau-Czajka quotes a nationalist newspaper from 1931 in which the essayist writes that anti-Jewish movement is an outcome of "the Jewish nation itself, in its clear refusal to be assimilated" (Landau-Czajka 1989, 179). Other nationalists of the time disagreed that employing force was a solution to the Jewish question, yet disturbing public order "did indicate a basically sound defensive reaction by the Polish nation" (Landau-Czajka 1989, 188). At the same time, the Catholic Church was known to abstain from taking a strong stance against anti-Jewish violence. According to Ostolski, when requested to denounce the pogroms and killings of Jews after the Second World War in Poland, many bishops refused, using the excuse that the Church denounces all forms of violence therefore has no need to specially denounce the violence against Jews (Ostolski 2005b, 16).

Although the violence that has met the queer community during equality parades and marches in recent years has in no way reached the levels of the pogroms that the Jewish community suffered, opponents of the marches have become more physically aggressive in their protests using eggs, bottles, rocks and other objects to hurl at participants.²⁴ Ania Gruszczyska describes the events in which the mayor of Krakow, in his begrudging approval of the 2004 March for Tolerance, also gave tacit approval to the violent reaction since the homosexuals were after all “forcing acceptance from society” (Gruszczyska 2004, 145). Bishop Tadeusz Pieronek of Krakow also defended the citizens of his city by saying that the general society also has its rights and “if you irritate someone you shouldn’t be surprised that the fault lies on both sides” (Ostolski 2005a, 5).

As it was for Jews, it is often not enough that Polish queers simply stay out of the public eye and out of the streets. The Communist Party took advantage of the leverage *outing* has by carrying out the “Hiacynth” operation in the mid-1980’s.²⁵ Under various ruses, the Party officials entered schools, universities, and places of work to find homosexuals. The victims were forced to admit in writing to their “deviance” under the threat that otherwise their orientation would be exposed to their family and co-workers (Tomasik 2006).

A throw back to this Communist-era strategy was a suggestion in 2003 by members of the centre-right party Civil Platform (Platforma Obywatelska—PO) that candidates for European Parliament disclose their sexual orientation. This, they explained, would ward off any later attempts at blackmail. Being aware of the social circumstances and what the public’s reaction would be to such a declaration of one’s homosexual orientation by a candidate makes it clear that they had other intentions, capitalising on the stigmatization that exists in Poland (Leszkowicz 2004, 102).

Discrimination of Jews in the past and of queers today can be readily documented and observed. However, the prevalence of denial and the commonly held position that there is or was no problem (or that not only are Jews and gays equal, but sometimes *more* equal and have *more* rights) contribute to the difficulties in counteracting the discriminations. Even with glaring examples such as different legal status for Jews in the 1930’s, the media at that time explained that Jews should have a separate legal system to adapt to their mentality. They argued that laws for Jews

²⁴ Adam Easton, “Clashes Erupt at Poland Gay March,” *BBC News*, 2006, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4956604.stm>> (28 April 2006).

²⁵ *Outing* refers to the public disclosure of an individual’s sexuality.

should be "neither better nor worse, but different" (Landua-Czajka 1989, 179). And, according to the majority of articles in the right-wing Polish press during 2004, Poland is not and never was anti-Semitic (Kowalski and Tulli 2003, 490).

The "separate but equal" status of queers in Poland offers a very similar comparison, with many people explaining that this situation does in fact reflect equality. Debates around same-sex partnership are filled with examples of opponents claiming that there is no real discrimination involved.²⁶ In her first international visit, the newly appointed Foreign Minister was quick to state that in Poland homosexuals are not restricted in any way, and that the legal system is "open" to them, just like any minority.²⁷ Her statement was made despite evidence of the failure to provide full legal protection to queer people.²⁸

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can observe that the anti-Semitism of years past has not yet been eradicated completely from Poland. However, its mechanisms have been used to stigmatise and discriminate against queers as queer visibility becomes more prevalent in Poland. The rise in nationalism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries served to construct the modern identities of both Jews and queers. The process involved an inherent exclusion of both social groups as they embodied the characteristics that were eschewed by those who delineated the boundaries of the nation.

The chapter offered a partial summary of the similarities between the two forms of oppression. The forms that these two discriminations take have been divided into three parts here. First we could observe the framing of both Jews and queers as ill. The implications of this categorisation means among other things, calls for physical exclusion from society, attempts at conversion or therapy and a refusal to work towards social equality for Jews and queers.

The threat to the nation that Jews and queers pose was then examined. A clear and direct connection can be seen between the theories

²⁶ See "Dziesięć mitów prawnych gejów i lesbijek" (Ten Legal Myths of Gays and Lesbians), *Rzeczpospolita*, <<http://arch.rzeczpospolita.pl/szukaj/archiwum.pl>> (31 December 2004).

²⁷ See "Poland to Maintain Current Foreign Policy," <<http://polandpress.eu/>> (17 May 2006).

²⁸ The Campaign Against Homophobia maintains a website which refers to the various legal issues queer people face in Poland today, such as problems related to the lack of any form of registered same-sex partnership. See <<http://www.mojeprawa.info>>.

of a “Jewish conspiracy” and a “homosexual lobby,” both of which are thought of as intentionally aimed at destroy the nation, state and family. The vital role that family plays in the Polish nation-building process means that the categorisation of Jews and queers as a destructive force and particularly harmful for children is an extremely powerful tool. This results in prohibition of Jews and queers from certain professions, overt hate speech by public officials, limits in legal protections and even violent attacks such as pogroms.

An additional hurdle that Jews and queers had to overcome and still face is the reactions to their presence and visibility in society. On one hand they are expected to remain hidden while on the other efforts are taken to disclose them. When they become victims of attacks, a common reaction is to blame them for antagonising. Despite the evidence of inequality, a further challenge is the denial of discrimination by the majority.

The historical continuum of nationalism’s tendency to exclude that which is not desired has used Jews in the past as its primary recipients for discrimination. Presently queers are serving as tangible targets for similar purposes in Poland. This then is the basis for a set of common lived experiences for Jewish and queer people in Poland.

REFERENCES

- Bauman, Zygmunt, 1989. *Modernity and the Holocaust*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Bunzl, Matti. 1999. *Symptoms of Modernity. Jews and Queers in Late-Twentieth Century Vienna*. Berkely, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.
- Cała, Alina. 2006. Anti-Semitism Without Jews and Without Antisemites. <<http://www.ceu.hu/jewishstudies/yb03/06cala.pdf>> (6 July 2006).
- Freedman, Jonathan. 2001. Coming out of the Jewish Closet with Marcel Proust. *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies* 7 (4): 521–551.
- Gilman, Sander L. 1985. *Difference and Pathology. Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness*. Ithica and London: Cornell University Press.
- Goffman, Erving. 1963. *Stigma. Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Graff, Agnieszka. 2006. We are (not all) homophobes—a report from Poland. *Feminist Studies* 32 (2): 434–449.
- Gruszczyńska, Anna. 2004. Wściekłość i Wrzask (Anger and Clamor). In *Homofobia Po Polsku* (Homophobia in Polish), ed. Zbyszek Sypniewski and Błażej

- Warocki, 139–151. Warsaw: Sic! Publishers.
- Irwin-Zarecka, Iwona. 1989. Problematising the "Jewish Problem." *Polin Studies in Polish Jewry* 4 (1989): 281–296.
- Kitliński, Tomasz. 2004. Rozważania o Kwestii Gejowskiej. Prostopadłe, Bez Sartre'a i Po Polsku (Figuring out the Gay Issue. Guiless, Without Sartre and in Polish). In *Homofobia Po Polsku* (Homophobia in Polish), ed. Zbyszek Sypniewski and Błażej Warocki, 271–300. Warsaw: Sic! Publishers.
- Kowalski, Sergiusz, and Magdalena Tulli. 2003. *Zamiast Procesu* (Instead of Court Proceedings). Warsaw: WAB.
- Landua-Czajka, Anna. 1989. The Ubiquitous Enemy. The Jew in the Political Thought of Radical Right-Wing Nationalists of Poland, 1926–39. *Polin Studies in Polish Jewry* 4 (1989): 169–204.
- Leszkowicz, Paweł. 2004. Przelamując Hetero-Matrix. Wojna Seksualna w Polsce I Kryzys Praw Człowieka (Breaking the Hetero-Matrix. The Sexual War in Poland and the Crisis of Human Rights). In *Homofobia Po Polsku* (Homophobia in Polish), ed. Zbyszek Sypniewski and Błażej Warocki, 85–112. Warsaw: Sic! Publishers.
- Michalik, Eliza. 2006. Różowa międzynarodówka w akcji (The Pink International in Action). *Ozon*. <http://www.ozon.pl/a_tygodnikozon_2_14_1100_2006_4_1.html> (14 January 2006).
- Mosse, George L. 1985. *Nationalism and Sexuality. Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Ostolski, Adam. 2005a. Żydzi, geje i wojna cywilizacji (Jews, Gays and the Civilisation War). (*op. cit.*) 23(2): 16–17.
- . 2005b. Spiskowcy I Gorszyciele. Judaizowanie gejów w polskim dyskursie prawniczym (Conspirators and Inferiors. Jewing Gays in Right-wing Polish Discourse). Unpublished.
- Szaynok, Bożena. 2006. Kielce Pogrom. <<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/Kielce.html>> (4 July 2006).
- Tokarska-Bakir, Joanna. 2004. Ganz Andere? Żyd jako czarownica i czarownica jako żyd w polskich i obcych źródłach etnograficznych czyli jak czytać protokoły przesłucha (Ganz Andere? Jew Meaning Witch, Witch Meaning Jew in Polish and Foreign Ethnographic Sources. How to Read Court Proceedings). Unpublished.
- Tomasik, Krzysztof. 2004. Co Wolno Psychologom? (What are Psychologist allowed?). In *Homofobia Po Polsku* (Homophobia in Polish), ed. Zbyszek Sypniewski and Błażej Warocki, 67–74. Warsaw: Sic! Publishers.

BEYOND THE PINK CURTAIN

——. 2006. Co zrobić z “różowymi kartotekami”? (What should be done with the Pink Cards?) <http://www.innastrona.pl/bq_hiacynt.phtml> (16 June 2006).

Weiner, Rebecca. 2006. The Virtual Jewish History Tour—Poland. <<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/vjw/Poland.html>> (2 July 2006).

LESBIANS, GAYS AND BISEXUALS IN CROATIA:
HOW THE STIGMA SHAPES LIVES

IVANA JUGOVIĆ, ALEKSANDRA PIKIĆ, NATAŠA BOKAN

INTRODUCTION

Research projects on stigma and homosexuality in Croatia have dealt with the attitudes of the majority towards homosexuals. Scholars have not investigated the effects of stigma, faced by homosexuals and bisexuals, from the insider's perspective. Our research, adopting that perspective and focusing on the dynamics and mechanisms of stigma and related processes, is based on the experiences of homosexuals and bisexuals. It offers an inside view of the stigmatised position and stigma management of the LGB population in Croatia. It is the first *victimisation research* on lesbians, gays and bisexuals in Croatia.

Croatian lesbians, gays and bisexuals have faced and experienced many transformations of their social status in the last four years. From 2002 homosexuality has gained media attention and has become visible through the LGB organizations' advocacy for LGB human rights, LGB public manifestations such as Zagreb Pride and Queer Zagreb, and public, political and media discussions about the nature and origins of homosexuality and the extent of rights homosexuals should be ascribed to. Two opposing sides were established through these debates. The right-wing conservatives were defending heterosexual "family values" and attacking homosexuals as the major threat to traditional family values. On the other hand, the left-wing social democrats and liberals were defending LGB human rights. However, these debates were most often reduced to the basic issue of defending or attacking the "normality" of homosexuals, and failed to address the diversity of sexual and gender minorities, their specific human rights, and their need of protection as vulnerable and discriminated minorities.

The changes in visibility of the LGB community were accompanied with legal recognition of sexual minorities' human rights and protection against discrimination. Since 2003 ten laws have been adopted which include anti-discrimination clauses on sexual orientation.¹ These laws do

¹ Electronic Media Act (NN 122/03) <<http://www.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeno/2003/1729.htm>>, Gender Equality Act (NN 116/03) <<http://www.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeno/2003/1584.htm>>.

not recognize any specific sexual identity or particular need of the LGB population, rather they only point at characteristics (race, ethnicity, religion etc.) of socially vulnerable groups among which sexual orientation is mentioned as well. Croatian law does not recognize discrimination on the basis of gender, gender identity and gender expression in its legislature. Nevertheless, the legal protections of women's and men's rights are regulated by using the term sex.

In 2003 same-sex relationships were formally recognised in the Same-Sex Partnership Act. It grants only 2 out of 27 rights enjoyed by married heterosexual partners: the right to inheritance of half of the joint assets accrued by the couple and the duty of care for the partner. The law does not afford same-sex unions with the benefits of the national social, pension or health care system. Therefore the value of this law is symbolic rather than practical.

Bearing in mind the fact that public discussions have not shown any awareness of the vulnerability sexual minorities face and the need for their legal protection, we should trace the reasons for the adoption of this legislation somewhere else. Bagić and Kesić (2006) suggested that there are two important reasons for this: the political will of the Croatian government to harmonize its laws with European Union legislation, and the efforts of LGBT activists. Their continuous lobbying and advocacy were also supported by Croatian feminist and peace organizations.²

However, most of this legislation still functions at the declarative level. According to the Annual Report on the Status of Human Rights of Sexual and Gender Minorities in Croatia 2005 (Juras and Grđan 2006) the Same-Sex Partnership Act has been applied only once since its introduction in 2003:³ in 2005 a gay couple, who wanted to move to Canada,

Labour Act (NN 137/04) <<http://www.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeno/2004/2415.htm>>, Law on Croatian Radio Television (NN 25/03) <<http://www.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeno/2003/0362.htm>>, Law on Government Officials (NN 92/05) <<http://www.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeno/2005/1831.htm>>, Law on Scholarship and Higher Education (NN 123/03) <<http://www.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeno/2003/1742.htm>>, Media Act (NN 59/04) <<http://www.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeno/2004/1324.htm>>, Penal Act Modifications and Supplements (NN 111/03, NN 105/04, NN 71/06) <<http://www.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeno/2006/1706.htm>>, <<http://www.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeno/2004/2026.htm>>, <<http://www.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeno/2003/1496.htm>>, Same-Sex Partnership Act (NN 116/03) <<http://www.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeno/2003/1584.htm>> and Schoolbook Standard (NN 63/03) <<http://www.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeno/2003/0749.htm>> (12 September 2006).

² Since 2002 Lesbian Group Kontra (Zagreb), Lesbian Organization LORI (Rijeka) and Iskorak—Organisation Centre for the Rights of Sexual and Gender Minorities (Zagreb) have been advocating and lobbying for LGBT human rights together with Woman's Room (Zagreb), Croatian Women's Network (national network of women's organizations) and Peace Studies Institute (Zagreb).

³ The report was compiled by the Team for Legal Changes of Iskorak and Kontra, which is the common body of Iskorak and Lesbian group Kontra.

registered in order to regulate their property rights and immigration papers. Also in 2005, the first ever judgement was passed by a Croatian court in respect of a homosexual victim: the accused, who had threatened a homosexual person, was convicted and given a suspended sentence of one year imprisonment. Team for Legal Changes also reported that regional police officers seriously violated human rights of sexual minorities. Police officers refused to protect victims from violence, failed to recognize the homophobic character of violence and rejected cooperation with LGBT activists. Additionally, according to the Team, victims were afraid of stigmatization which prevented them from reporting homophobic violence. Furthermore, as the Report suggests, lesbians, gays and bisexuals are not aware of their rights, or of ways to exercise these rights. Therefore most cases have not been reported to the police (Juras and Grđan 2006).

There are several reasons for the poor functioning of the anti-discrimination legislation, including the opportunistic stance of the Croatian government with a view to join the European Union rather than a policy to advance human rights of sexual minorities; the lack of knowledge and awareness of existing anti-discrimination legislation; the absence of realistic social representation of LGB people in the media and in public discourse. However, the most salient reason is probably the fear and mistrust of lesbians, gays and bisexuals towards police, the court system and society as a whole as they fear that they could be repeatedly violated and stigmatized.

Public opinion surveys show that there is a strong division in views about homosexuality. For example, according to a public opinion poll conducted by the Puls Agency in 2002,⁴ 47% of respondents would make friends with homosexual persons, while 50% would not. 41% of them believed that the rights of homosexual persons are endangered. About 39% of respondents would also grant the right of same-sex marriage (Palašek, Bagić, and Čepić 2002). Similarly, according to the findings of the Henda Agency in 2005 66% of persons, who are in charge of making business decisions in 202 Croatian companies, replied "no," when asked whether they would hire a homosexual person who is out (Henda Agency 2005). Based on these findings it is rather questionable to which extent the existing laws can protect sexual minorities. Obviously there is a clear discrepancy between the theory of legislation and the practice of the everyday life experiences of lesbians, gays and bisexuals in Croatia. On the one hand, their rights are formally recognized and protected,

⁴ A representative sample of 600 persons was surveyed.

on the other, there is an evident public unease about homosexuality and there are strong homophobic attitudes towards homosexuals. With this discrepancy in mind, we wanted to explore the “true meaning” of LGB everyday life experiences and focus on the ways lesbians, gays and bisexuals handle their sexual minority identities within the heteronormative Croatian society.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF STIGMA

Since theories of stigma discuss the experiences of undervalued social minority groups and social interaction patterns used by their members, we decided to take these theories as a frame of reference for our study on LGB people’s everyday life experiences. The following sections will provide a short overview of influential social psychological and sociological models of stigma, ranging from Erving Goffman’s classic discussions on stigma (1963) to contemporary models of stigma proposed by Link and Phelan (2001) and Major and O’Brien (2005).

Goffman (1963, 13) defined stigma as “an attribute that is really discrediting,” but he also emphasized that stigma is inherent in interactions between the stigmatized and the stigmatizing persons. The shift of focus from the attributes of the stigmatized persons to the context in which these interactions takes place is also evident in Major and O’Brien’s (2005, 395) proposal that stigma “does not reside in the person but in a social context,” and that “it is relationship- and context-specific.” Link and Phelan (2001, 367) redefined and extended this concept by pointing out that stigma includes processes like labelling, negative stereotyping, exclusion, and discrimination. Accordingly power relations and disparity are essential for the comprehension of the nature and reproduction of stigma, stigmatized individuals and communities.

It can be seen that the definition of stigma has become broader through time. Instead of pointing to the devaluated characteristics of persons or a social group, stigma is now referred to as a process that encompasses the value system and its mechanisms of control, together with the dynamics between the stigmatized and those who stigmatize. In this way stigma and stigmatization became synonyms.

The key question, which is of interest here, is how stigmatized persons live their everyday lives and which mechanisms they employ to cope with their stigma. Stigmatized people are aware of their stigmatized status in society. Crocker and her colleagues (Crocker 1999; Crocker, Major, and Steele 1998) argue that members of stigmatized groups develop collective representations, i.e. shared beliefs that include their understanding

of the reasons why their group occupies the specific position in the social hierarchy, awareness that the others stereotype and do not respect their group, and recognition that they could become victims of discrimination. Discrimination is also addressed in the work of Major and O'Brien (2005, 396) who suggest that the mechanisms of stigmatization include discrimination and negative treatment, emphasizing its negative effects on the social status, psychological well-being and physical health of the stigmatized people.

Given all the negative consequences of stigmatization, the question is how stigmatized people manage to live with their stigma. This greatly depends upon the type of stigmatized attribute that the individual carries; some are visible and evident, while some are not easily identifiable. People whose stigma is not evident on the spot can conceal the information about their stigma and try to pass "as normal" (cf. Goffman 1963). Goffman referred to people whose stigma is obvious or known as "discredited persons," while naming those whose stigma is not known or evident "discreditable persons." Visibility is an element of the information control which influences the choice of behaviour strategy stigmatized persons can employ. Less visible stigmas enable stigmatized persons to "pass as normal" or to create enough space for negotiation about revealing their stigmatized identity. Greater visibility, on the other hand, carries a threat of being rejected and hurt, while at the same time it offers the stigmatized person better chances to be fully accepted as a human being.

Besides visibility, Goffman discussed other strategies of information control, including different ways in which persons can reveal or hide their stigmatized identity: a person can voluntarily disclose her/his stigmatized status "thereby radically transforming his situation from that of an individual with information to manage to that of an individual with uneasy social situations to manage, from that of a discreditable person to that of a discredited one" (Goffman 1963, 123). During numerous social contacts, stigmatized persons have to decide how to manage information about their stigmatized attribute: to tell or not to tell, to lie or not to lie, and "to whom, how and where" (Goffman 1963, 57).

Although stigmatized people have to face various difficulties in life that others do not, it would be incorrect to portray them as passive and helpless: they can confront stigmatization constructively by actively redefining the meaning of their experiences as members of a stigmatized community (Oyserman and Swim 2001). In this way they can achieve positive outcomes, rather than just avoiding the negative ones. According to Oyserman and Swim (2001) the best way to study stigma is to take

an insider's perspective and to examine the experiences of stigmatized people from their point of view. In this context the insider's perspective can help researchers to better understand the ways stigmatized people construct their identity and the strategies they use to cope with stigma.

These concepts of stigma and methods of stigma management were applied to a range of stigmatized groups. In this paper we would like to examine to what extent these concepts can be applied to sexual minorities, to what extent lesbians, gays and bisexual persons in Croatia are stigmatized and how they manage stigma in their everyday lives. In order to examine the nature and consequences of stigmatization of homosexual and bisexual people and their stigma management we gathered information about their self-perception of visibility as homosexuals or bisexuals, the strategies of managing information about their sexual orientation, and about violence that LGB people face because of their sexual orientation.

THE RESEARCH

The survey of the LGB population was conducted in three Croatian cities: Zagreb, Rijeka and Osijek at the end of 2005. We managed to reach the participants using the chain referral method which is used for researching sensitive issues and "hard to reach" populations (Penrod et al. 2003). The procedure is based upon defining the size and features of the desired sample, the selection of location where the research will be conducted, and the choice of the *locators*. These are members of the studied population who can trace other participants through serial referral, in order to expand the research area outside one's own social network. Respondents, after being asked for informed consent, completed the anonymous questionnaire individually.

A total of 202 participants took part in the research, 101 of these were men (50%) and 98 were women (48.5%). The sample also included one (female-to-male) transsexual person and two gender-unidentified persons. 55.1% of female respondents identified themselves as lesbians, and 43.9% as bisexual. 81.2% of male respondents identified themselves as gay, and 16.8% as bisexual. Average age of respondents was 30 (median: 28), ranging from 15 to 60 years of age. 92.6% of respondents were from Zagreb or other larger cities (mostly Rijeka and Osijek), while only 7.4% came from small towns or villages. 56.4% of respondents had completed secondary school, 39.1% had gained a 2-year HND (higher national diploma) or a university degree, while 4.5% had only completed elementary education. Due to the specific methodology of collecting data, people who are not

out as homosexuals or bisexuals and whose social networks are closed and isolated were less likely to be included in the sample. Some of the LGB people contacted refused to participate in the research because they were afraid of disclosing their personal life. For these reasons the results can only be generalized with caution to the LGB population of the regions where the research was carried out.

Instruments that were used for the purpose of this article included the following: *Self-perceived visibility*,⁵ measured with the Likert type question "How likely do you think it is that people who do not know you recognize your sexual orientation?";⁶ *Disclosure of sexual orientation scale* (Pikić and Jugović 2006) consisting of five questions which attempt to measure respondents' awareness of the knowledge their family members (mother, father, siblings), friends, co-workers or peers have of their sexual orientation;⁷ *Concealment of sexual orientation scale* (Pikić and Jugović 2006), a Likert type scale consisting of statements assessing the prevalence of correction of appearance and behaviour in accordance with heteronormativity, concealment of sexual orientation, avoiding topics related to one's own homo- or bisexuality, or homo- and bisexuality in general, and topics relating to the Croatian LGBT community and movement in order to avoid potential unease, discrimination or violence in the social interactions;⁸ *Incidents of violence scale* (Pikić and Jugović 2006) containing 19 items measuring the frequency of violent incidents that persons could have experienced due to their sexual orientation;⁹ these incidents of violence were divided into four categories: economic, psychological, physical and sexual violence. Participants were also asked whether they had heard of any LGBT person, whom they did not know personally, but about whom they knew that they had experienced physical violence in Croatia due to their sexual orientation.¹⁰

⁵ Self-perceived visibility is one's own perception of the probability that one's sexual orientation could be recognized by other people.

⁶ Participants' answers ranged on the scale from 1 (not likely at all) to 5 = (very likely).

⁷ Responses, related to the parents' knowledge of their child's sexual orientation, range on a scale from 1 (I am sure (s)he does not know) to 4 (I am sure (s)he does know). Responses, related to other categories of people, range on a scale from 1 (I am sure that no one knows) to 6 (I am sure all of them know). All questions offer the answer "not applicable" as well.

⁸ The scale range from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Cronbach alpha coefficient for the whole scale is $\alpha = .90$.

⁹ The scale range from 0 (never) to 1 (once), 2 (twice) and 3 (three times or more).

¹⁰ Available answers were: 1 = "No," 2 = "Yes, I heard about one case" and 3 = "Yes, I heard about several cases."

COMING OUT AND STIGMA MANAGEMENT

Corrigan and Mathews argue that “the mark that signals the stigma of homosexuality is not readily transparent” (2003, 237). On the other hand, if a person does not have the appearance that society expects from his/her gender, it is more likely for them to be perceived as homo- or bisexual. Our findings show that the majority of LGB people surveyed (52.7%) believe that it is very unlikely or even impossible for their sexual orientation to be recognized, 26.9% cannot estimate, while 20.4% were of the opinion that their sexual orientation is likely or even very likely to be recognized.

If our respondents have realistic perceptions of their visibility as homosexuals or bisexuals in public, and given that a majority of them consider themselves unrecognisable as such, we can presume that they are not by default—in Goffman’s terms—discredited persons. They can choose how to manage information about their sexual orientation: they can decide whether to engage in or avoid discussions about their emotional or sexual life, to what extent they would like to participate in activities of the LGB community, or show affection toward their same-sex partners in public. According to our results lesbians, gays and bisexual persons are open about their sexual orientation to various extents depending on the different categories of people they interact with. For example, personal friends are much more likely to be aware of the relevant sexual orientation than any colleagues at school or at work (see table 1).

TABLE 1

			%						r
			1	2	3	4	5	6	
		2.005	19.8	15.0	13.2	9.6	5.4	37.1	.168*
		1.264	1.5	4.5					
Co-work-ers/Peers				17.2			5.1		

NOTE: DO YOUR SIBLINGS/FRIENDS/CO-WORKERS/PEERS KNOW ABOUT YOUR SEXUAL ORIENTATION? (1 = I AM SURE THAT NO ONE KNOWS, 5 = I AM SURE THAT ALL OF THEM KNOW) AND CORRELATION OF THAT QUESTIONS WITH VISIBILITY OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION (R). PEARSON’S COEFFICIENT OF CORRELATION (R) IS MARKED WITH * WHEN SIGNIFICANT AT $P < 0.05$ AND WITH ** WHEN SIGNIFICANT AT $P < 0.01$.

These results are not surprising since people choose their friends, but cannot choose peers and co-workers at the workplace. In addition, they might not have come out at the workplace, because they fear that disclo-

sure could contribute to discrimination at work or even losing a job.

Mothers were more familiar with the sexual orientation of the respondents than the fathers (see table 2). This could be explained by mothers' greater involvement in interaction with children compared to fathers', and mothers being more often available to children (Lamb et al. 1988, quoted in Maccoby 1999) which is in line with traditional gender roles of women as child bearers and men as breadwinners. Additionally, fathers are persistent in expecting feminine behaviour from their daughters and masculine behaviour from their sons, while mothers tend to treat their male and female children equally (Jacklin, DiPietro, and Maccoby 1984). Besides that, women seem to have less homophobic attitudes than men (Parmač 2005; Herek 1987). Given all that, children are more open to their mothers, as they expect more understanding and support from them.

TABLE 2

	Mean		1	2	3	4	r
	2.78	1.146	17.7%	25.4%	17.7%	39.2%	.133
	2.26	1.143	33.7%	27.6%	17.2%	21.5%	.080

NOTE: DO YOUR PARENTS KNOW ABOUT YOUR SEXUAL ORIENTATION? (1 = I AM SURE S/HE DOES NOT KNOW, 4 = I AM SURE S/HE KNOWS) AND CORRELATION OF THAT QUESTIONS WITH VISIBILITY OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION (R).

A part of the homosexual and bisexual population builds closer relationships with their friends than with their immediate family members. Friends can provide support in everyday life situations and especially in those which are difficult for LGB people. Lesbians, gays and bisexuals who experienced violence, more often sought help from their friends, rather than from their family (Pikić and Jugović 2006). Additionally, in our sample, there were only 6% of those whose friends were unfamiliar with their sexual orientation as opposed to 43.2% and 61.3% of mothers and fathers respectively who were not familiar with their child's sexual orientation.

Despite the fact that a majority of respondents believed that their sexual orientation could not be recognized, it could be traced from their behaviour. In order to prevent such disclosure and to avoid uneasiness, discrimination or violence, lesbians, gays and bisexuals have employed diverse strategies of concealment. The strategy most frequently used was avoidance of talking about one's own emotional or sexual life. 37.2% of respondents have used this often or always (see table 3). Some other strategies such as keeping quiet about attitudes, thoughts and feelings

about homosexuality/bisexuality in general or about the LGBT community in Croatia have been used by less than 15% percent of respondents. Since homosexuality is no longer a *taboo* in Croatia, public support for LGB rights can give confidence to LGB people to express their attitudes more freely, despite the fact that the public discussion about homosexuality is conducted in *pro* and *contra* terms.

TABLE 3

			%					r
			1	2	3	4	5	
I try to make my appearance conform with what society would expect from my gender.	2.30		37.3	22.9	20.9	10.0	9.0	
I behave in the way it is expected from my gender.	2.34		32.3	27.4	20.4	13.4	6.5	
I keep my sexual orientation secret.	2.96	1.180	11.9	25.4	28.4	23.9	10.4	
I avoid speaking about my emotional or sexual life.	2.94		16.1	24.1	22.6	23.6	13.6	
I distort the picture of my love life (e.g. I present my boyfriend/girlfriend as a friend).	2.00	1.312	54.0	16.8	11.4	10.9	6.9	
I keep quiet about my attitudes, thoughts and feelings about homosexuality/bisexuality in general.	2.11	1.147	38.6	29.7	16.8	11.4	3.5	

REPRESENTING "OTHERS"

I keep quiet about my attitudes, thoughts and feelings about LGBT movement, community and persons in Croatia.	2.06	1.151	42.1	26.2	18.8	8.9	4.0	
---	------	-------	------	------	------	-----	-----	--

NOTE: STRATEGIES USED TO AVOID UNEASE, DISCRIMINATION AND/OR VIOLENCE (1 = NEVER, 5 = ALWAYS) TOGETHER WITH THEIR CORRELATION WITH VISIBILITY OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION (R). PEARSON'S COEFFICIENT OF CORRELATION (R) IS MARKED WITH * WHEN SIGNIFICANT AT P < 0.05 AND WITH ** WHEN SIGNIFICANT AT P < 0.01.

Lesbians, gays and bisexuals do not have many social settings in Croatia where they can socialise. Outside Zagreb, Rijeka and Osijek there is no LGB infrastructure. In Zagreb there are two organizations and several informal groups offering discussions, sport activities and choir singing. LGB people can also socialise at places like libraries, night clubs and saunas and in events such as the Zagreb Pride, the Queer Zagreb Festival and occasional exhibitions.

Regular or temporary social settings, created by the LGBT initiatives and organizations, provide lesbians, gays and bisexuals in Zagreb with more opportunity to connect with other LGB people compared to other regions in Croatia. There are only a few activities in Rijeka and Osijek, such as Zagreb's Queer Festival occasional exhibition tours to Osijek and Rijeka. In Rijeka there is also a lesbian organization with its reach-out activities to the lesbian community. In all other parts of Croatia everyday life of LGB people is limited to virtual communication through web forums, chat rooms on web-portals and web-sites, and socialising within small, informal groups.

Our findings indicated that only 0.5% of the respondents have refrained from visiting LGBT places (gay clubs, LGBT organizations and groups) in Croatia in order to avoid unease, discrimination or violence. For the same reasons, 20.9% avoided public LGBT manifestations in Croatia (e.g. Queer Zagreb or Zagreb Pride), while 43.8% did not kiss or hold hands with their same-sex partner in public (see table 4).

TABLE 4

	LGBT places	LGBT manifestations	Kissing/holding hands in public
Yes.	71.8%	33.3%	24.4%

BEYOND THE PINK CURTAIN

No, I do not, in order to avoid unease, discrimination and/or violence.	0.5%	20.9%	43.8%
No, I do not, but for some other reason.	27.7%	45.8%	31.8%

NOTE: DO YOU VISIT LGBT PLACES/ATTEND PUBLIC GLBT MANIFESTATIONS/ HOLD HANDS AND KISS IN PUBLIC?

It is clear that LGB people feel more secure inside the clubs and organizations than in public places or at manifestations where there is a greater possibility of stigmatization. Furthermore, people who live outside Zagreb do not have much opportunity to visit these places or participate in manifestations. This is why 27.7% of respondents do not visit LGBT places, while 45.8% do not attend LGBT manifestations for other reasons than fear of unease, discrimination or violence.

Why do lesbians, gays and bisexual persons engage in some behaviour that could reveal their sexual orientation, while at the same time they avoid others? According to Major and O'Brien's (2005) stigma is relationship- and context-specific, therefore LGB people make different decisions regarding disclosure of their sexual orientation according to the type of social setting or the specific person they are interacting with. They probably regard that sharing information about their sexual orientation with their friends is more important than sharing it with their co-workers. Lesbians, gays and bisexuals can also hypothesise that discussing homosexuality in general would not reveal their sexual orientation as, for instance, talking about one's own sexual or emotional life would. They can additionally consider kissing with the same-sex partner in the streets as more risky than going out to a gay club. All of these points out that LGB people choose how to manage a given situation according to their appraisals of the situations or persons.

In order to understand how the concealment and disclosure depend on the perceived visibility of stigma, we examined the correlations between perceived visibility of stigma and measures of concealment and disclosure of one's sexual orientation. We hypothesized that, paraphrasing Goffman, people who think that their sexual orientation is less visible can control the information about their sexual orientation to a greater extent than those who believe that their sexual orientation is more vis-

ible. Our findings supported this hypothesis; lesser visibility tended to be correlated with more use of concealment strategies (see table 3). People with a lower degree of visibility tended to be less open to brothers or sisters, friends and co-workers (see table 1). On the other hand, there was no correlation between self-perceived visibility and openness to parents (see table 2). The fact, that parents do not recognize their child's homosexuality could be partly attributed to the point that until recently homosexuality was a taboo, so it was less likely for them to be informed about it or to be in touch with an openly homosexual or bisexual person. Where they did recognize or assume that their child might be homosexual or bisexual, they had problems accepting that fact. Unlike friends, brothers and sisters who were more likely to talk about homosexuality, parents tried to avoid discussing it or asking their child about it. Generational gap and economic dependence of children could be additional reasons why children do not reveal their sexual orientation to their parents.

It seems that homosexual and bisexual people with a lesser self-perceived visibility can "pass" as heterosexuals in more social settings compared with people who assume that their sexual orientation is more recognisable. While Goffman claims that people whose stigma is visible do not have a possibility of choosing whether to conceal the information about it or not, it is still debatable whether visibility can be chosen. Do LGB persons have control over the visibility of their sexual orientation in public? We argued before that they are not passive in the process of choosing the strategies of concealment and disclosure; on the contrary, they actively choose to what extent they will be visible. Choosing to be visible becomes one's strategy of information control, in this case, of disclosure.

HOMOPHOBIC VIOLENCE

Garnets, Herek, and Levy (1990) argue that the gay community is victimised by every single attack on a homosexual or bisexual person. Such violence creates a climate of fear because of which lesbians, gays and bisexual persons feel the urge to hide their sexual orientation. According to our findings 93% of respondents knew about at least one or more people, not known to them, who had experienced physical violence in Croatia due to their homo- or bisexuality. Given that the awareness of the existence of violence against lesbians, gays and bisexuals is common for almost all the respondents, it is not surprising that a considerable part of them hides their sexual orientation or avoids showing affection in public.

Since some models of stigma suggest that negative treatment and discrimination can be experienced due to one's stigmatized status (Major and O'Brien 2005; Link and Phelan 2001; Crocker, Major, and Steele 1998), we examined whether and to which extent lesbians, gays and bisexuals in Croatia experience violence because of their sexual orientation. According to our categorisation of violence, we divided the sample into three subgroups: the persons who did not experience violence, persons who experienced verbal violence, and persons who experienced assaults and limitations of freedom.¹¹ In the period between 2002 and 2005 one third of respondents had experienced assaults and limitations of freedom, 18.3% had experienced verbal violence, while 48.7% of respondents had not experienced any ill treatment because of their sexual orientation.¹²

A man began to follow me at the gay cruising area. He continued following me even after I left that place, and then he approached me and started to insult me. I felt terrible, scared and ashamed. A bus came and I got on, while he stayed there (Male respondent aged 39).

After the Gay Pride I did not participate in, a young man stopped me in the street and asked me if I had participated in the Gay parade. I said I hadn't, but he said that I looked as if I had. I told him that that was his problem, and after that he hit me in the head with his fist. I fell and lost consciousness for a moment. A friend helped me to get up and we left. I felt bad, and humiliated. I kept looking behind myself on the street for days, fearing a repeat attack or meeting that person again (Male respondent aged 29).

Following experiences of sexual orientation related violence, LGB persons may start associating their homosexual or bisexual identity with feelings of fear and lack of safety (Garnets, Herek, and Levy 1990). Homophobic violence leaves traces not only in the feelings and beliefs but also in the behaviour of the victims. According to our results, those who have already experienced violence employ different concealment strategies: respondents who had experienced verbal violence hid their sexual orientation to the least extent, and they rarely avoided talking about their emotional life compared with persons who had not experienced violence, and who had experienced severe physical violence (see table 5).

Accordingly, three groups of respondents can be distinguished. The first group includes those who have experienced verbal violence as well

¹¹ Verbal violence includes all verbal incidents: threats, insults, blackmail and unwanted sexual suggestions. Assaults and limitations of freedom include various physical and sexual assaults, stalking, destruction of property, being thrown out of one's home, being deprived of physical safety and control of movement.

¹² For a more detailed overview of findings about different forms of violence experienced by LGB persons see Pikić and Jugović (2006).

REPRESENTING "OTHERS"

as being characterised by not hiding their sexual orientation and openly expressing their views on homosexuality and the LGBT movement. In this case it appears that these characteristics may have contributed to their having experienced verbal violence and vice versa. Those who are cautious and have not experienced violence belong to a second group. They most probably avoid violence by the simple act of hiding their sexual orientation. The third group includes those who hide their sexual orientation, and have experienced severe physical violence. We cannot know to what extent they had been open about homosexuality before they have experienced violence. However it is likely that they hide their sexual orientation because they have experienced violence and/or fear to experience it again.

TABLE 5

	Never experienced violence (N = 96)		Experienced verbal violence (N = 36)		Experienced assaults and/or limitations of freedom (N		p
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
I try to make my appearance conform to what society would expect from my gender.	2.49	1.390	1.94	1.145	2.28	1.244	> .05
I behave in the way it is expected from my gender.	2.48	1.328	2.17	1.056	2.25	1.199	> .05
I keep my sexual orientation secret.	3.22a	1.178	2.36b	1.073	2.86a	1.130	< .01
I avoid speaking of my emotional or sexual life.	3.24a	1.301	2.33b	1.095	2.88a	1.279	< .01
I distort the picture on my love life (e.g. I present my boyfriend/girlfriend as a friend).	2.23a	1.395	1.50b	1.000		1.247	< .01
I keep quiet about my attitudes, thoughts and feelings about homosexuality/bisexuality in general.	2.34a	1.247	1.75b	1.025		1.008	< .05

BEYOND THE PINK CURTAIN

I keep quiet about my attitudes, thoughts and feelings about LGBT movement, community and persons in Croatia.	2.32a	1.244	1.64b	0.867		1.082	< .01
---	-------	-------	-------	-------	--	-------	-------

NOTE: DIFFERENT SEXUAL ORIENTATION CONCEALMENT STRATEGIES IN THREE GROUPS WITH DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION VIOLENCE BETWEEN 2002 AND 2005. THE KRUSKAL-WALLIS H TEST WAS EMPLOYED FOR TESTING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCES AMONG GROUPS WITH DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE DUE TO THE UNEQUAL SIZE OF THE THREE GROUPS. IN ORDER TO EXAMINE WHICH GROUPS ARE DIFFERENT IN RELATION TO ANOTHER, WE USED THE MANN-WHITNEY'S U TEST. THERE IS STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE AT $P < 0.05$ BETWEEN MEANS LABELLED WITH "A" AND "B" WHILE MEANS LABELLED WITH "AB" DO NOT DIFFER FROM THOSE LABELLED WITH "A" AND "B."

Our data reflects violence experienced in the last four years prior to the research, while the answers on concealment strategies are related to the time when the survey was conducted. Thus we cannot draw conclusions about dynamic relations between violence and the application of concealment strategies. In order to clarify the processes affecting victims' behaviour, and especially their decisions about hiding their sexual orientation longitudinal studies and/or in-depth interview studies need to be conducted with people who have experienced homophobic violence.

CONCLUSION

In this paper we applied different theoretical concepts of stigma juxtaposing them with our empirical findings of the experiences of lesbians, gays and bisexual persons in Croatia. Discussing our findings we have shown that Goffman's concept of information control can be applied to the LGB community in Croatia even some forty years after the model of stigma management was formulated. It can also be seen that members of the LGB community are aware that they could become victims of discrimination or violence, as Crocker, Major, and Steele (1998) suggested when discussing the collective representations of the stigmatized communities. In line with Crocker and her colleagues (1998), our results show that a significant number of respondents avoided talking about their private life or did not kiss or hold hands with their same-sex partners in public because of concerns that they could experience unease, discrimination or violence due to an open manifestation of their sexual orientation. This caution is evidently reasonable when one is a member

of a stigmatized community. According to Major and O'Brien (2005), discrimination and negative treatment are mechanisms of stigmatization and our findings support their thesis given that a significant part of our respondents had experienced violence just because somebody had assumed them to be bisexual or homosexual.

Having in mind that over 50% of our respondents experienced some type of violence we can conclude that damaging consequences of the stigmatization of sexual minorities are present in Croatian society, where the strength of heteronormativity indicates conservative social tendencies. As long as it remains that way, everyday life experiences of LGB people will be confined within the circle of stigmatization, strategies of sexual orientation disclosure or concealment and their consequences. Our research findings indicate that lesbians, gays and bisexuals do not feel free or secure in their family environment as they hide their emotional life from their parents. A majority of them conceals sexual orientation in the workplace because of fear of discrimination. Contrary to heterosexuals who can talk openly about their romantic relationships in daily conversations, homosexuals and bisexuals do not have the "luxury" of sharing information about their loved ones. LGB people need to think twice about public manifestations of their relationships since the streets are not safe for them. On the other hand heterosexuals take these manifestations, such as holding hands in the streets, for granted. Lesbians, gays and bisexuals avoid showing signs of emotional bonds, affection and care toward their partners in public places for fear somebody could harm them. In spite of all these problems, lesbians, gays and bisexuals in Croatia face their challenges and grasp their opportunities to build communities and create spaces where they can feel safe and free.

REFERENCES

- Bagić, Aida, and Vesna Kesić. 2006. Studija slučaja društvene zatvorenosti: dinamika marginalizacije seksualnih i rodni manjina tijekom 2005. godine. (The study of social reticence: the dynamics of marginalization of sexual and gender minorities in 2005). In *Indeks otvorenosti društva - Hrvatska 2006*, ed. Simona Goldstein, 87-107. Zagreb: iDEMO. <<http://www.idemo.hr/miniweb/dokumenti/Index2006.pdf>> (16 November 2006).
- Corrigan, Patrick, and Alicia Matthews. 2003. Stigma and Disclosure: Implications for Coming out of the Closet. *Journal of mental health* 12 (3): 235-248.
- Crocker, Jennifer. 1999. Social Stigma and Self-esteem: Situational Construction of Self-worth. *Journal of experimental social psychology* 35 (1): 89-107.

- Crocker, Jennifer, Brenda Major, and Claude Steele. 1998. Social stigma. In *Handbook of Social Psychology*, ed. Daniel T. Gilbert, Susan T. Fiske and Lindzey Gardner, 504–553. Boston: MA: McGraw-Hill.
- Garnets, Linda, Gregory M. Herek, and Barrie Levy. 1990. Violence and victimization of lesbians and gay men: mental health consequences. *Journal of interpersonal violence* 5 (3): 366–383.
- Goffman, Erving. 1963. *Stigma. Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Hendal Agency. 2005. Nema posla za homoseksualce (No Work for Homosexuals). <<http://www.google.com/search?q=cache:DBJNMCc-Z40J:www.iskon.hr/novac/page/2005/01/30/0056006.html+%22Nema+posla+za+homoseksualce%22&hl=hr&gl=hr&ct=clnk&cd=7>> (16 November 2006).
- Herek, Gregory M. 1987. Heterosexuals' attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. Correlates and gender differences. *Journal of Sex Research* 25 (4): 451–477.
- Jacklin, Carol Nagy, Janet Ann DiPietro, and Eleanor E. Maccoby. 1984. Sex-typing behaviour and sex-typing pressure in child/parent interactions. *Archives of Sexual Behaviour* 13 (5): 413–425.
- Juras, Sanja, and Kristijan Grđan. 2006. *2005 Annual Report on the Status of Human Rights of Sexual and Gender Minorities in Croatia*. <<http://www.ilga-europe.org/content/download/4143/25627/file/Izvjestaj%202005%20eng.doc>> (5 December 2006).
- Lamb, Michael E., Joseph H. Pleck, Eric L. Charnov, and James A. Levine. 1988. A Biosocial Perspective on Paternal Behaviour and Involvement. In *Parenting across lifespan. Biosocial dimensions*, ed. Jane B. Lanchaster, Jeanne Altmann, Alice S. Rossi and Lonnie R. Sherrod, 111–142. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Link, Bruce G., and Jo C. Phelan. 2001. Conceptualizing stigma. *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 (1): 363–385.
- Maccoby, Eleanor E. 1999. *The Two Sexes. Growing Up Apart, Coming Together*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press
- Major, Brenda, and Laurie T. O'Brien. 2005. The Social Psychology of Stigma. *Annual review of psychology* 56 (1): 393–421.
- Oyserman, Daphna, and Janet K. Swim. 2001. Stigma. An insider's view. *Journal of Social Issues* 57 (1): 1–14.
- Palašek, Mura, Dragan Bagić, and Ana Čepić. 2002. *Ljudska prava i stavovi o homoseksualnim osobama* (Human Rights and Public Opinions on Homosexuals). Zagreb: Agencija Puls za CARANA Corporation.
- Parmač, M. 2005. *Stavovi studenata prema osobama homoseksualne orijentacije*. Zagreb: Filozofski fakultet, Odsjek za psihologiju.

REPRESENTING "OTHERS"

- Penrod, Janice, Deborah Bray Preston, Richard E. Cain, and Michael T. Starks. 2003. A Discussion of Chain Referral as a Method of Sampling Hard-to-reach Populations. *Journal of transcultural nursing* 14 (2): 100-107.
- Pikić, Aleksandra, and Ivana Jugović. 2006. Violence Against Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals in Croatia. Research Report. Zagreb: Lesbian group Kontra.

BEYOND THE PINK CURTAIN

**HATE CRIMES AGAINST LESBIAN,
GAY AND BISEXUAL PEOPLE IN BELARUS**

VIACHASLAV BORTNIK

INTRODUCTION

The primary goal of this article is to draw attention to cases of hate crime, violence and harassment experienced by lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people in Belarus, where no original publications with any scientific value on this topic are available yet. Issues related to Belarusian LGB people tend to be dealt with in reviews on LGB issues in general (Bortnik 2003; Solberg 2004; Takács 2006). It is not the purpose of this paper to provide a scientific background to the extent, patterns, causes and consequences of hate crimes motivated by homophobia. The information presented in the article was collected from reports of the Belarussian Lambda League for Sexual Equality (Lambda Belarus) as well as from the results of two focus group interviews conducted with LGB people in two cities.¹ The aim of the focus group interviews was to highlight the main features of the problem and to work out recommendations to improve the situation by generating discussions about homophobic hate crime with its victims.

OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION OF LGB PEOPLE IN BELARUS

Although homosexuality has not been a criminal offence in Belarus since 1994, homophobia is widespread and instances of harassment occur in all spheres of society (US Department of State 2006). Homophobic attitudes and prejudices are very strong. According to the results of a small scale (N = 287) survey conducted by Lambda Belarus in April 2002, 47% of Belarussian respondents think that gays should be imprisoned

¹ Belarussian Lambda League for Sexual Equality (Lambda Belarus) was established in 1998. Similarly to other LGB groups in Belarus, the authorities have never registered it.

Two focus group interviews took place: one in Gomel (5 July 2006) which was attended by 11 LGB people aged 17 to 42; one in Minsk (8 July 2006) with 9 LGB people aged 18 to 46. The cities were chosen on the basis of the following criteria: population size and the presence of LGB groups or activists within the city. In relation to Gomel (population size: 500,000), LGB people feel a lack of support and a greater sense of isolation and invisibility because the Belarussian gay scene is concentrated in Minsk.

(Solberg 2004, 46). A negative statement about homosexuals by President Lukashenka in September 2004 also demonstrated that homophobic attitudes exist at the highest levels of government (US Department of State 2005).²

According to *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Byelorussii*, 6 April 2005, Belarussian MP Viktor Kuchynski proposed to re-criminalize homosexuality. "My position as a deputy is: all these 'queers' and others are to be punished to the maximum," said Kuchynski at the parliamentary session during the discussion concerning the presidential decree "On some measures of the prevention of human trafficking" on 4 April 2005. According to Kuchynski, the Criminal Code is to be amended, and the penalty for homosexuality ought to be re-introduced. However, this proposal was not supported by the parliament. Interior Minister of Belarus, Uladzimir Navumau gave this comment to the Russian News Agency Interfax: "Mutual consent is usually present [in homosexuals relations], and we would not like to encroach upon this sphere too deeply."³

According to Lambda Belarus reports, in April 1999 Russian Orthodox Church officials have publicly called for the execution of gays. In May 2003 in Minsk the European Humanities University banned the screening of the documentary film *Outlawed* on discrimination of gays and lesbians in different parts of the world,⁴ which had been planned as part of the Amnesty Film *Festival*, organised by Amnesty International Belarus at the university. According to the university staff, the ban was made under pressure from the Russian Orthodox Church.

The government-controlled media try to smear the political opposition by associating it with homosexuality. The media broadcast footage of a fake demonstration by a small group of "sexual minorities" at the opposition congress of 2 October 2004 along with comments of bystanders that "gays are evil." Program announcers added commentary to the effect that homosexuality goes hand-in-hand with Western paths to development (US Department of State 2006).

² On 28 September 2004, at the Consultation meeting with the Belarussian Security Council Lukashenka said: "We have to show our society in the near future, what they [EU and USA] are doing here, how they are trying to turn our girls into prostitutes, how they are feeding our citizens with illicit drugs, how they are spreading homosexual perversion here, which methods they are employing."

³ Olga Ulevich, "Deputy Kuchynski proposed to imprison homosexuals," *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Byelorussii*, 6 April 2005.

⁴ *Outlawed* that was produced by Amnesty International Dutch Section in 1998 tells the stories of lesbians and gay men in five countries (India, Nicaragua, South Africa, Romania and the USA) and is an excellent tool for raising awareness about discrimination and LGBT activism across cultures.

Three foreign diplomats were expelled from the country on the pretext of their sexual orientation in the period between October 2004 and August 2006. According to the reports of the International Lesbian and Gay Association, the first case was the expulsion of the Second Secretary of the German Embassy on the false pretext of drug use in October 2004, while his Ukrainian boyfriend was arrested.⁵ The story was commented on at length on government-controlled national TV with a lot of homophobic rhetoric. According to Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, 25 January 2005, the Belarusian Foreign Ministry on 21 January expelled the Czech diplomat Pavel Krivohlavy, accusing him of depraving minors and inciting them to "antisocial behaviour."⁶ "To put it plainly, Czech diplomat Pavel Krivohlavy made juvenile boys drunk in order to subsequently try to drag them into bed," Belarussian TV alleged.⁷ The network's main news program Panarama on 21 January 2005 broadcast secretly recorded footage showing Krivohlavy purportedly drinking alcohol and kissing young men in what appeared to be a café or a restaurant. "You'll certainly agree that our neighbours' understanding of democracy is peculiar: intoxication of youths, debauchery, and pornography. Do they have the moral right—they who are spreading the worst, vile predilections in our country—to teach us how to live?" Belarussian TV commented in Panarama. In July 2006 Minsk police accused Reimo Smits, a former Latvian diplomat in Belarus, of distributing pornography. Scenes of a homosexual act involving the diplomat were also broadcast on TV.⁸

Most Belarussian LGB organizations have never been registered by the state and operate illegally.⁹ In April 1999 the Ministry of Justice blocked efforts by the Lambda Belarus, the country's first and only lesbian and gay rights organization at that time, to gain official registration as an NGO. The Ministry cited technical reasons, although Lambda Belarus

⁵ International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA). 2005. <http://www.ilga.org/news_results.asp?LanguageID=1&FileCategory=9&FileID=491> (24 June 2006).

⁶ Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty (RFE/RL). 2005. <<http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/01/83701c0a-3289-404c-8677-10e1c72070ad.html>> (24 June 2006).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), 2006, <<http://www.rferl.org/newsline/2006/08/3-cee/cee-010806.asp>> (24 June 2006).

⁹ There are only two exceptions. Lesbian group YANA was officially registered as a young women's NGO. Although their members are lesbians and they work specifically for lesbians, they have to hide their activities from the officials. The group is mostly involved in organizing educational and social events for lesbians in Minsk and Brest. Gay group VSTRECHA was registered as a nationwide youth HIV-prevention NGO. Their target audience consists of men having sex with men (MSM). They constantly experience resistance from the side of the state while trying to address needs within the organization's mission.

members claimed the authorities were seeking to deny registration of a gay and lesbian organization (US Department of State 2001). Members of LGB groups have been targeted as hate crime victims many times. For instance, on 13 November 2001, Edward Tarletski, the leader of Lambda Belarus was physically assaulted in Molodechno, which resulted in brain concussion diagnosed in the hospital where he was rushed to and in which he spent seven days. The police refused to take action in connection with the assault for the reason that it was “impossible to find the perpetrators” (Solberg 2004, 47).

Belarussian LGB groups also do not receive civil society support. In July 2001 the Organising Committee of the 1st Belarussian Youth Congress voted against the participation of Lambda Belarus delegates. In March 2002 several Belarussian media outlets published a press release of Youth Front, one of the biggest youth groups in the country, which contained homophobic statements and humiliating notes about gays. Pavel Severinets, the leader of the Youth Front, called homosexuality a “sin and perversion deserving death.” According to Severinets, the existence of homosexuals is “the result of decay and sinfulness in the world.”¹⁰

In March 2002, the State Press Committee annulled the registration of the only Belarussian publication for sexual minorities, *Forum Lambda* (Human Rights Watch 2002). The vague wording of the recent amendments of the Criminal Code adopted on 15 December 2005 (Law N 71-Z) provides wide discretionary powers to the authorities allowing them to label activities of LGB groups as illegal attempts to discredit or harm the Belarussian state.¹¹ Criminal persecution has been introduced for the coordination of activities by an association or a foundation, which has been suspended or liquidated (Article 193-1). Bearing in mind that none of Belarussian LGB groups have any legal status anyone who organizes such activities may face a fine and six months imprisonment, and in vaguely defined “serious cases” they can be subjected to a “restriction of freedom” for up to two years. A new regulation makes “education or other forms of preparation” for mass demonstrations, or financing such actions illegal, and punishable by imprisonment for up to six months, or a “restriction of freedom” for up to three years (Article 293-1). Training or preparation of people for participation in group activities which “grossly violate public order,” as well as the financing or material support of such activity, can also lead to a jail term of up to two years (Article 342).

¹⁰ GAY.BY. 31 July 2001, <<http://www.apagay.com/press/release/2001/2001012e.php>> (24 July 2006).

¹¹ Zakon Respubliki Belarus ad 15 snezhnya 2005 N 71-Z, Zvyazda, 22 December 2005.

Article 369-1 on "discrediting the Republic of Belarus" punishes those who provide "false information" to a foreign government or organization, which is interpreted to misrepresent the political, economic, social, military or international situation of Belarus, its government agencies or the legal situation of its citizens. Such actions are punishable by six months in jail, or a "restriction of freedom" for up to two years. Starting from 1999 all LGBT events have been banned by the government and attacked by the police. According to the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military of the University of California, Santa Barbara, Belarus is among those countries that ban gays from serving in the military. Amnesty International Belarus has documented at least seven cases of gay men from Gomel who did not serve in the army because of their sexual orientation. No cases of harassment of gays in the army have been reported, but this may be the result of gay individuals hiding their sexuality. The currently effective legislation provides no protection to victims in cases of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity (Bortnik 2003).

IMPACT OF HATE CRIME

Hate crimes against LGB people represent the most insidious manifestation of intolerance and discrimination,¹² based on sexual orientation or gender identity. They are liable to inflict considerably greater emotional and psychological distress upon their victims than non-bias offences. According to the American Psychological Association, victims of hate crimes may experience higher levels of anxiety, anger, intense fear, and isolation and feelings of vulnerability and depression (APA 1998). For many victims, this emotional degradation leaves deeper scars than physical injury.¹³ The fear and anxiety generated by hate crimes extend beyond individuals, however, and affect the family and wider community to

¹² A working definition of hate crime is given by OSCE/ODIHR. It takes national differences into account, such as differences in legislation, resources, approach, and needs. A hate crime can be defined as any criminal offence, including offences against persons or property, where the victim, premises, or target of the offence are selected because of their real or perceived connection, attachment, affiliation, support, or membership of a group, which may be based upon a characteristic common to its members, such as real or perceived race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, or other similar factors (OSCE/ODIHR 2005, 12). The term homophobia is used to describe fear of, discrimination against or hostility towards lesbians, gay men or bisexual people.

¹³ A report issued by the American Psychological Association likened the symptoms exhibited by victims of hate crimes to those exhibited by individuals suffering post-traumatic stress disorder. Like other victims of post-traumatic stress, victims of hate crimes may

which the individual is perceived to belong. Members of the same group feel victimized, while members of other commonly targeted groups are also reminded of their vulnerability to similar attacks. The behaviour and actions of victims and communities may also be impacted. Victims of hate crimes, and the groups to which they belong, may avoid particular shops or streets and adjust their daily routines, clothing, and appearance for fear of being targeted.

Perpetrators of hate crimes may be motivated by range of biases, including those based on sexual orientation or gender identity (OSCE/ODIHR 2005, 25). According to the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, a clear association exists between the presence of hate motivation and the extent of injury inflicted against a person. Hate crimes, as compared to offences and incidents with no hate motivation, are also more likely to involve multiple offenders, serial attacks, heightened risk of social disorder, and greater expenditure of resources to resolve the consequences of the act (CCJS 2001).

Belarussian law enforcement agencies do not collect data on the number and type of hate crimes motivated by homophobia. In its response to the OSCE/ODIHR's *Notes Verbales* the Belarussian government provided raw statistics only pertaining to hate crimes and violent manifestations of anti-Semitism (OSCE/ODIHR 2005, 27).¹⁴ The lack of information on hate crimes against LGB people makes it impossible to assess how widespread the phenomenon is nationally. The only sources of information on this issue are NGO and media reports. From January 2001 through June 2003 activists of the human rights advocacy program of Lambda Belarus documented at least 33 cases of hate crimes based on sexual orientation or gender identity. They mostly received information through interviewing victims and their families, witnesses to hate crimes and local human rights activists. They also monitored newspapers, websites and other media outlets. In the following I will provide examples of hate crimes featured in an unpublished report of Lambda Belarus issued in July 2003.¹⁵

Between 2001 and 2003 hate crimes resulting in the murder of gay men were reported six times by Lambda Belarus:

heal more quickly when appropriate support and resources are made available soon after incident occurs.

¹⁴ Decision No. 4 of the Maastricht Ministerial Council encouraged all OSCE participating States "to collect and keep records on reliable information and statistics on hate crimes" and tasked the ODIHR to serve as a collection point for information and statistics collected by participating States and to report regularly on the information received.

¹⁵ Text of the report was included in the book *Let Our Voices Be Heard: Christian lesbians in Europe telling their stories* (Solberg 2004).

REPRESENTING "OTHERS"

On 18 April 2001, the dead body of pensioner Alexander Stephanovich, a well-known Minsk gay was found in the backyard of the apartment block where he lived. His body had knife stab wounds all over.

On 4 July 2001, Ivan Sushinsky, former director of Minsk's Oscar gay club died in the city's 5th Clinical Hospital after a violent assault by homophobic thugs. Mr. Sushinsky was rushed into hospital in a critical condition. He had a head injury, there were knife-shape burns on his body, and his hands and legs were tied with adhesive tape. The police department of Minsk's Sovetski district started an investigation into the case, but the perpetrators have never been found.

On 15 February 2002, the dead body of Victor Kovyl, 34, was found in his parents' apartment in Zhlobin. He was openly gay both at work and in public. The police refused to give the details of the murder to Kovyl's partner, Alexander, and one of the officers said to him: "It serves you right, faggots!"

On 17 November 2002, the mutilated body of Mikhail M., 50, was found in his flat in Minsk. According to the police, this was the fifth murder of this kind committed in the capital during the last two years.

Rape of gay men was documented by the report two times:¹⁶

In the night of 16 May 2001, Andrei Babkin, an activist of Lambda was badly beaten and raped by the entrance of his apartment and subsequently was taken to hospital with severe injuries. Later, on 3 August 2001, unidentified person(s) broke into and vandalised his apartment where fliers, posters and booklets of the Gay Pride Festival had been kept.

On 10 June 2002, three unidentified men heavily beat and raped a local resident Dmitri L., 18, in Komunar. The victim was taken to the intensive care ward of Gomel Regional hospital where he spent 2 weeks.

Aggravated assault took place in 13 cases:

On 12 April 2002, verbal assault and beating of the two gay and one bisexual man took place outside a gay club "Babylon" in Minsk. According to witnesses a group of skin-heads (around 12 young men) who attacked three visitors of the club ran away before the police arrived.

¹⁶ The Criminal Code in force at the moment in Belarus was passed in 1999. The only homosexual acts that remain crimes are those that violate the consent of the sexual partner. The crimes of homosexuality are covered in Chapter 20 (Section VII) that is dedicated to "crimes against sexual inviolability or sexual freedom." Article 167 covers "forced actions of a sexual character." It states that "*Muzhelozhstvo* [specific Russian definition of "male sexual intercourse with male," literary "man lying with man"], *lesbianism or other actions of a sexual character committed by use of force or threat thereof against the victim, or by exploiting the victim's vulnerability, are punished by deprivation of freedom from three to seven years*" (The National Legal Internet Portal of the Republic of Belarus—Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus, <<http://www.pravo.by/webnpa/text.asp?RN=HK9900275>> (23 June 2006)). The age of legally relevant consent for participation in sexual acts is equal for homosexuals and heterosexuals—16 years old.

Despite an apparent rise in reported homophobic attacks, in most cases police officers refused to take a complaint of a potential hate crime or failed to properly identify and investigate hate crimes. Additionally, a number of hate crime cases also involved police brutality against LGB people:

On 2 July 2001, in Minsk the police detained and badly beat Andrei Scherbakov, one of the founders of Lambda Belarus.

On 29 March 2003, the security guard of the Buda-Bar nightclub in Minsk heavily beat Yuliya Yukhnovetz, volunteer for Minsk Pride Festival, only because she kissed a girl in the club hallway. She was taken to hospital where she was diagnosed with a "closed injury of the cranium."

The Lambda Belarus report featured cases of simple assault (1 case), threats (2), burglary (1), destruction of property (1), civil rights violations (5), and dissemination of hate material (2), as well.

On 29 August 2002, before the "Gay Pride 2002" festival Edward Tarletski, leader of Lambda Belarus was called to the City Department of Minsk Police where he was told that if he organizes a gay parade on the streets of the city "the police will not take any responsibility for possible disorders." The police also threatened Tarletski with criminal prosecution if a demonstration like that of 2001 reoccurred.

On 10 May 2003, an unknown hacker broke into the Belarusian LGBT web site APAGAY. He deleted all the topics of the site's forum and introduced a new one calling for the murder of gays. In addition while downloading the home page of APAGAY the notification "FAGGOTS MUST DIE" and "STOP FAGGOTS IN BELARUS" appeared on the screen. The break-in was followed by telephone calls to the members of the site's team with threats of physical violence.

A special concern arose from cases of Internet censorship:

In December 2002, the administration of the Belarusian State University in Minsk banned access to all gay internet resources in the computer labs.

On 20 March 2003, the administrators of Soyuz Online, the biggest Internet café in Minsk popular among gays blocked the Belarusian gay and lesbian web site APAGAY.

The report emphasized that victims of hate crimes have likewise included those, not necessarily LGB people themselves, who are taking action against human rights violations and discrimination motivated by homophobia. In this context homophobic violence becomes a human rights issue engaging the state's responsibility under international standards relating to torture and ill-treatment. The failure of Belarussian authorities to protect LGB people against hate crimes, violence and harassment can be seen in a range of different areas. These include inadequate pre-

ventive measures, police indifference to abuses, bias against non-heterosexual forms of sexuality in the court system, failure to define abuses as criminal offences, and legal loopholes hampering criminal prosecution.

PERSONAL ACCOUNTS ON HATE CRIMES

Most aspects of hate crimes against LGB people have also been reflected in the focus group interviews. The experience that living as an LGB person in Belarus is difficult and often painful is reported by most of the focus group interview participants.

It scars the victim more deeply. It is much more difficult, I think, as a victim to say I was put in the hospital because I'm lesbian ... you are beaten or hurt because of who you are. It is a direct and deliberate and focused crime, and it is a violation of, really, a person's essence ... you can't change who you [are] ... And it's much more difficult to deal with ... Because what a hate crime says to victim is, "You're not fit to live in this society with me. I don't believe that you have the same rights as I do ... you are second to me. I am superior to you" (Lesbian, 39, Minsk).

The majority of respondents hide their sexual orientation from strangers to avoid unfavourable treatment, but they are relatively open about it in the local LGB scene. 75% of respondents reported that they had been violently attacked and/or harassed because of their sexual orientation, and 45% of them referred to experiencing three or more cases of violence and/or harassment. The most common form of harassment was homophobic verbal bullying.

I came out when I was 13 and I was always being called a "faggot" at school. Even teachers gossiped about me (Gay man, 18, Minsk).

My fellow student bullies me verbally in the college dormitory and in other public places whenever he meets me. Usually he does it in the company of his friends. He calls me dirty names often used to denigrate homosexuals (Bisexual man, 19, Gomel).

Other less frequently occurring forms of violence and harassment reported by our respondents included threats, hate mail, and blackmail.

I often receive humiliating letters via e-mail and on the forum of the site I run in Gomel (Gay man, 22, Gomel).

A group of teenagers in my neighbourhood threatened to beat me up and damage my car. They usually bully me verbally on the street (Gay man, 32, Minsk).

My girlfriend and I got an anonymous call from someone who said that we would be killed. I didn't go to the police because I was afraid of a scandal. People might find out, and I might lose my job (Lesbian, 39, Gomel).

More than half (55%) of the focus group participants reported experiences of physical attacks against them.

Several young men were walking down the street, and one of them said that I'm a "fag-got." Right away, another one hit me very hard on the head (Bisexual man, 28, Gomel).

We were attacked by a group of young men while returning from the gay club. They did not like it that we were walking hand-in-hand (Gay man, 20, Minsk).

Violent attacks and harassment were committed by various categories of perpetrators: an acquaintance (8 cases), a family member (6), an unknown person (6), a neighbour (5), a fellow student (3), or a co-worker (2 cases). Respondents referred to domestic violence as a serious problem: individuals coming out to their families as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, particularly young people, were often rejected and in some cases subjected to violence within their families.

I was falsely accused of committing domestic violence against my mother in an unfair investigation by corrupt prosecutors. My status as a lesbian was used against me. I spent 6 weeks in a pre-detention institution (SIZO) and was given a 12-month suspended prison sentence by the court. Although I'm a lawyer I was unable to protect myself in the national justice system (Lesbian, 31, Minsk).

I was a victim of a homophobic attack during which I was badly beaten. When I got home my mother said that this would always happen to me because of my "lifestyle" (Bisexual woman, 23, Gomel).

It was also pointed out by our respondents that LGB people often avoid reporting crimes against them, in particular cases of hate crime and domestic violence, because of a reluctance to reveal their sexual orientation and fear of homophobic treatment by police officers. Therefore, it is not surprising that only less than one-third of all respondents, who experienced violence, said that they reported the incident to the police, and even among them there were two people who did not tell the police that sexual orientation was the cause of the violence. Fear of revealing one's sexual orientation to family members, friends, employers and others can prevent LGB people from not only contacting the police but also from seeking protection from human rights groups. Participants agreed that the police very often refused to act in cases of brutality committed against LGB people and failed to conduct investigations into homophobic hate crimes.

We were the last visitors in the bar with my friend. The owner of the bar together with his son decided to beat us up. They locked the door and we couldn't escape. They

REPRESENTING "OTHERS"

badly beat my friend ... and I kicked the door in. The police showed up, but they behaved as though I was the guilty one. We were taken to the police station together with our attackers. The police let the attackers go, without even finding out who they were. The attitude toward us was very humiliating. It was as if we were the criminals, not the victims (Gay man, 26, Gomel).

The police told me nothing could be done, to forget it. 'Move on', they said. Two simple words, but I cannot put it out of my mind (Bisexual man, 42, Minsk).

We were drinking beer with friends in the city park when a guy walked by and decided that I was gay. He came up and punched me so hard that he knocked out a tooth. Others were shocked, but they didn't react, because they just thought that the attacker had drunk too much. I did not report the incident to the police, because it is my experience that the police in particular have a nasty and humiliating attitude towards gays (Gay man, 25, Minsk).

LGB victims of domestic violence hesitate to contact law enforcement for fear of being arrested, or because they worry about how their partner would be treated in police custody because of their LGB status. Respondents also mentioned that the police sometimes conduct unprovoked actions in bars and cruising areas frequented by homosexuals. It was emphasized that exposure is a precursor of the occurrence of harassment based on sexual orientation, especially on a direct and personal level. If nobody knows or suspects that one is an LGB person, one is less likely to suffer discrimination or harassment because of one's sexual orientation. Respondents believed that the Belarussian government shares responsibility for acts of violence and harassment against LGB people: on the one hand, hate crimes are instigated by officials at the highest level, and the government's tolerance of homophobic violence rises to the level of complicity or acquiescence, on the other.

CONCLUSION

Findings presented in this article leave no doubt that hate crimes, violence and harassment are particularly important issues for LGB people in Belarus. Homophobia and prejudice in society force LGB people to conceal their identity in everyday life to avoid unfavourable treatment.

75% of our respondents experienced some form of violence and/or harassment because of their sexual orientation. A striking aspect of hate crime against LGB people is the extent to which such crime goes unreported. LGB people often do not report crimes against them because they fear a dismissive, hostile or abusive response from the police. Under-reporting, coupled with the police response to those reports which

are made, indicate that people who commit crimes against LGB people tend to get away with them.

Most LGB victims of violence find access to legal redress and reparation difficult, if not impossible. Impunity and indifference habitually surround many acts of violence against LGB people. One of the key factors in breaching this climate of impunity is to ensure that police officers are adequately trained to respond appropriately to crimes against LGB people so that victims are encouraged to come forward, confident in the knowledge that the justice system will work for and not against them.

Only practical government action on equality and diversity can help to reduce the damaging effects of homophobic hate crime on Belarussian LGB citizens: the government should secure greater legal protection against homophobic abuses by adopting constitutional and other provisions prohibiting all forms of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Special measures should be implemented to ensure that people who have been victims of hate crimes based on sexual identity have access to means of gaining redress and the right to an effective remedy, including rehabilitation and compensation.

REFERENCES

- American Psychological Association (APA). 1998. American Psychological Association Home Page—Hate Crimes Today: An Age-Old Foe in Modern Dress. <<http://www.apa.org/releases/hate.html>> (16 June 2006).
- Bortnik, Viachaslau. 2003. *Belarusian Legislation About Homosexuals*. Minsk: Belarussian Law Institute.
- Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS). 2001. *Hate Crime in Canada: An Overview of Issues and Data Sources*. Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.
- Human Rights Watch. 2002. *World Report: Belarus*. New York: Human Rights Watch.
- OSCE/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). 2005. *Combating Hate Crimes in the OSCE Region: An Overview of Statistics, Legislation, and National Initiatives*. Warsaw: OSCE/ODIHR.
- Solberg, Randi O. 2004. *Let Our Voices Be Heard: Christian lesbians in Europe telling their stories*. Hamburg: Mein Buch.
- Takács, Judit. 2006. *Social exclusion of young lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Europe*. Brussels: ILGA-Europe.
- US Department of State. 2001. US Department of State Home Page—2000 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Belarus. <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2000/eur/682.htm>> (22 June 2006).

REPRESENTING "OTHERS"

- . 2005. US Department of State Home Page—2004 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Belarus. <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41671.htm>> (22 June 2006).
- . 2006. US Department of State Home Page—2005 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Belarus. <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61638.htm>> (22 June 2006).

BEYOND THE PINK CURTAIN