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Knowledge and Its Impact on Identities of Ukrainian Trans*(gender/sexual) People

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Abstract

Trans*(sex/gender) is an increasingly common phenomenon of the contemporary world. Psychology, Feminist, Queer and Transgender studies have suggested various interpretations of trans* experiences. Departing from certain assumptions that notions of sex and gender are either authentic or performative, these disciplines have established worldwide the tenet that trans* is medically pathological or socially transgressive phenomenon. However, these perspectives have tended to overlook the ways in which the knowledge discourses that they have developed influence on lives of trans* individuals. Postmodernists and critical sociologists propose to research knowledge as a power system. This thesis presents the results of an explorative study that uncovers the impact knowledge has on identities of trans* individuals. Firstly, it details the ways in which social discourse that transmits the knowledge about gender binary and trans* phenomena influence on the formation of trans* identity. Secondly, the research is focused on Ukraine and illustrates 'globalization' of Anglophone trans* discourses beyond the US and Western European borders and its modification in accordance with the local context. Finally, it demonstrates how the theoretical narratives about trans* phenomena construct the manner trans* individuals understand their experiences.

Keywords: Transgender, Transsexual, Identity, Knowledge, Social Discourse, Ukraine.

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Table of Content

Introduction 1

A. Background of the research 1

B. Aim of this work 2

Chapter One: Social discourse and science narratives about trans* phenomena 4

A. An umbrella term 'trans*' 4

B. Understanding of gender/sex categories and interpretation of trans*(gender/sexual) experiences 5

a. Authenticity of sex and gender: pathological trans* 7

b. Performativity of sex and gender: taken out-of-context trans* 8

c. Transgression of sex and gender by subversive trans* 9

Chapter Two: Theoretical narratives and their impact on trans*' individuals' lives 12

A. The impact that theoretical narratives have on lives of trans* people 12

B. Theoretical framework and focus of the research 14

Chapter Three: Epistemological starting points, methodology and methods 18

A. Knowledge and power: epistemological starting points and the research position 18

B. Methodology 19

C. Method of data collection 20

D. Sample 21

E. Fieldwork and ethic 22

F. Methods of data analysis 23

G. Limitations 24

Chapter Four: Contextualization of trans* phenomena in Ukraine 26

A. Translating sex, gender and trans* into Russian and Ukrainian languages or (con)textualising concepts 26

B. The necessity of legal Gender recognition in Ukraine 27

Chapter Five: Knowledge and its impact on identities of Ukrainian trans* people 29

A. Learning about sex and gender: forming a trans* identity 29

a. The process of trans* self-identity formation: the interplay between systems of knowledge 29

i. First stage: experiential knowledge meets popular wisdom 31

ii. Second stage: experiential knowledge meets mediated knowledge/subcultural knowledge 37

b. Trans* identity formation process: two Stages, three Scenarios, and three types of self-identity 41
B. Trans* identity of Ukrainian individuals and Western scientific narratives 42
a. Understanding of Sex, Gender and Trans*: What Outlines Trans* Identity 42
b. Trans* identities in Ukraine and Western science discourses 48
Chapter Six: Conclusion 52
A. Summary of findings 52
B. Concluding remarks 54
C. Further research 55
Bibliography 56
A. Literature 56
B. Internet sources 60
Appendices 62
A. Invitation letter and informed consent to participate in the research 62
b. Confidentiality and Anonymity 62
c. Contact and Informed Consent 62
B. Interview guide 63
a. Warming-up questions and socio-economic information 63
b. Main block 63

Introduction

A. Background of the research

Transgenderism is an increasingly visible phenomenon of the contemporary world. Recent statistics shows a growing usage of the term 'transgender' in English–language, either online, or in published materials, and by a higher degree of awareness among U.S. population about transgender phenomena (Stryker, 2013). Moreover, some media sources, announced, for instance, that 2015 was a "banner year for transgender people", because of the remarkable progress for transgender visibility and rights that has been achieved in the countries of North America (James, 2015).

However, these positive transformations for trans*(gender/sexual)[1] people do not occur with the same progress in other parts of the world. Ukraine, for example, has been reported as having one of the most discriminative gender legal recognition systems in Europe (Transgender Europe, 2015), due to an almost complete invisibility of trans* people in society, and their stigmatization within the queer community (Ivashenko, 2010).

Social exclusion, stigmatization, discrimination and transphobic violence, including certain forms of physical and institutional abuses are considered to be consequences of the 'pathological' interpretation of trans people's experiences that is dominant in the majority of modern societies (Suess, Espineira, Walters, 2014). That interpretation is suggested by medical and psychological scientists, who assume that sex and gender are coherent, stable and 'real'/'natural' concepts (Stryker, 2006), and, thus, understand trans*experiences as expressions of mental illness or 'deviance' that should be treated, because of a violation of the 'immutable' authenticity of sex and gender.

Contrariwise, other scientists explicitly question the 'authenticity' assumptions about the categories of sex and gender. They propose an alternative understanding of these categories as the outcome of social interaction rather than of an immutable 'transcendental law' (Hird, 2002).

[1] In this paper, the word 'trans*' is used to refer to an umbrella term that incorporates 'trans*gender' and 'trans*sexual' experiences, identities, or phenomena (see further explanation in the Chapter One).

Within this approach, trans* experiences are considered to be 'variant' and transgressive as to that they render a discourse about two-gendered/sexed binary order. Such interpretation suggests a broader social recognition of gender and body diversity with the potential to modifying the 'authenticity' social discourse; depathologizing transgender phenomena; and, in turn, decreasing violence towards trans* people's rights (Suess, Espineira & Walters, 2014).

These dominating in society ways of thinking are analyzed by feminist, postmodernist and poststructuralist theoretical works (see, for example, Butler, 1990; 1993; Dunn, 1997; Foucault, 1978; Habermas, 1984; Smith, 1990). They conceptualize them as hegemonic *social discourses* (i.e. systems of knowledge) that impact lives of individuals and become a primal mechanism of social control (Butler, 1990; 1993). In this regard, the importance of uncovering the effect that (systems of) knowledge has/have on identities of individuals is especially emphasized.

Addressing this concern, Gagne and Tewksbury (1999) conduct an empirical study with a focus on trans* people, whose experiences challenge the hegemonic social discourse/system of knowledge about sex and gender. In their research, they uncover the ways in which the U.S. social discourse about sex/gender binary and trans*(gender/sexual) experiences impacts on identities of trans* individuals. Further, Namaste (2000) focuses her examination on the social discourses about trans* people and claim them to be constructed by science narratives or theoretical interpretations of trans* people experiences.

B. Aim of this work

This study draws upon the studies of Gagne and Tewksbury (1999) and Namaste (2000) in attempting to portrait the power of knowledge over individuals, so as to suggest that more attention is needed to be paid on the evaluation of the effect that theories (science narratives) have on lives of trans* people, especially on their self-identities. Taking into account that 'Western' trans* discourses are 'globalizing' beyond the U.S. and European Union borders (Valentine, 2005) and influencing other countries' ways of talking about sex, gender and trans* (Stryker, 2013), this study also examines the relations between Anglophone and Ukrainian discourse about trans*. Therefore, the overarching research question of this study is *how do*

knowledge about sex, gender and trans(gender/sexual) experiences affects the identity of trans* individuals in Ukraine?* It is further divided into the following sub-questions:

1. *What are the ways in which social discourses that constitute (systems of) knowledge about sex, gender and trans* experiences impact on the identity of trans* people in Ukraine?*
2. *How do 'Western' science narratives about trans* phenomena relate with Ukrainian discourse about trans* people?*

The first chapter of this thesis presents an overview of the understanding of trans* phenomena in society and social sciences. The second chapter explains the focus of this research and clarifies its theoretical considerations. The third chapter details the methodological framework of this thesis. In the fourth chapter, the Ukrainian context of trans* phenomena, such as language and gender legal recognition system, is described. The fifth chapter presents the findings of this study, aiming to illustrate the ways in which knowledge affects the identity of trans* individuals in Ukraine. Finally, the sixth chapter summarizes the findings and elaborates suggestions for further research.

Chapter One: Social discourse and science narratives about trans* phenomena

This chapter presents a general overview of the understanding of trans* phenomena in society and (social) sciences. Firstly, it discusses the definition of the term "trans*" and the categories related to it, such as trans*gender and trans*sexual. Secondly, it briefly outlines the history of the development of these terms within different disciplines. Finally, it turns to reviewing specific theoretical perspectives that have attempted to understand and/or interpret trans experiences, as well as to discuss their strengths and limitations.

A. An umbrella term 'trans'*

The term 'trans' is frequently used in academic and popular circles to refer to someone either transsexual or transgender. Kessler and McKenna (2000) suggest to operationalize it in three ways, based on the meanings of the prefix 'trans', which signifies 'change', 'across', and 'beyond'. In its first sense ('change'), this term is utilized to refer to experiences of so-called 'sex change' that confirms individual's desire or need to live in a preferred gender. This term is associated with 'transsexual' experiences. In its second meaning ('across'), it refers to people's experiences of 'moving across' gender categories. In its last connotation ('beyond'), it states for a person's experiences outside of the male/female boundaries. The two last categories of experiences are known as 'transgender'.

The implications of these terms are highly controversial with several implications and changes across different disciplines and discourses. On the one hand, the term transsexuality (or transsexualism) was coined in the middle of the twentieth century within US medical discourse (Mayerowitz, 2002), and was understood as a psychiatric disease of being 'gender deviant', which could be treated through the transformation of one's body to 'match' person's gender identity. On the other hand, the word transgender was firstly proposed during the seventies by the political activist Virginia Prince to define experiences of people who fell outside of transsexual and transvestite (cross-dresser) categories (Stryker, 2006).

The term became popular and gained its modern meaning in 1992 when Leslie Feinberg's published her political manifesto with the call for solidarity between *all* gender variant and marginalized people (Valentin, 2007). Ever since, "trans*" has become an umbrella term that also incorporated transsexuality, and created an overlap of transgender and transsexual categories, as well as confusion to understand trans*(gender/sexual) people's experiences. For instance, there have been debates on whether hormonal and surgical sex-reassignment modification could be considered as 'trans*gender' experiences rather than 'trans*sexual' ones. It was claimed that such body modifications procedures as, for example, breast removal or breast implant, change only *secondary* sexual characteristics, while, *sex*, which is understood as *primary* sexual characteristics, i.e. female/male chromosomes, uterus/prostate, remains unchangeable. Thus, as it is only the person's *gender* (public representation) what changes, such alliterations were suggested to be re-conceptualized as 'trans**gender*' (Vidal-Ortiz, 2008). These debates not only illustrate the interconnection between transgender and transsexual categories but also highlight the 'stumbling blocks' of understanding trans* experiences: the conceptualization and understanding of *gender* and *sex*, which will be discussed in the next section.

B. Understanding of gender/sex categories and interpretation of trans(gender/sexual) experiences*

Mira Hird (2002) conducted an extensive analysis of different conceptualizations of sex and gender in relation to various approaches to understand transsexualism. She does so by constructing a typology that consists of three kinds of theoretical perspectives, which are undergirded by two fundamental assumptions about sex and gender categories. Within the first philosophical paradigm, sex and gender are considered to be immutable and fixed transcendental categories, while within the second they are understood to be socially constructed and discursively produced notions. These assumptions, in turn, determine an interpretation of transsexualism that can be expanded to the understanding of all trans* experiences, by following these categories: authenticity, performativity and transgression (see the Table 1).

Table 1. Science discourses about trans* phenomena.

Fundamental assumption		**Science Discourse**	**Understanding/Interpretation of trans* experiences**
Authenticity of sex and gender	Sex and gender are 'real', stable, fixed and immutable categories.	Medical: psychiatric, and psychological.	Trans* experiences are abnormal, deviant, pathological.
Performativity of sex and gender	Gender and sex are 'fictive', socially constructed and discursively produced notions that are part of power relations systems.	Feminist and queer studies.	Trans* experiences can throw light into the processes of naturalization and essentialization of sex and gender in contemporary society.
Transgression of sex and gender	The same as above.	Transgender studies.	Trans* people (in some cases, *purposely)* violates and disrupt social naturalization of sexual differences.

As the *Table 1* shows, medical, psychiatric and psychological discourses are departing from the assumption that sex and gender are 'authentic' natural categories immutable for people and society. Individuals who experience these categories differently from social norms are pathological. Within the 'performativity' paradigm, which is articulated in narratives of feminist and queer studies, categories of gender and sex are claimed to be socially constructed notions that form a part of power relation systems. Public trans* experiences are seen as a way to uncover these systems by highlighting naturalization and essentialization of sex and gender notions in modern society. Similarly, transgression' paradigm labels as trans* people those who violate and disrupt the social order of naturalization of sexual and gender differences. The

agency of trans* people is especially emphasized within transgender studies, what differs them from 'performativity' discourses.

These three ontological frameworks on conceptualization of sex and gender have been permanently questioned and challenged. Consequently, the interpretations of trans experiences provided by them have been discussed and criticized. In the following sections, each of these three theoretical paradigms, along with their critiques and limitations are discussed.

*a. Authenticity of sex and gender: pathological trans**

The *authenticity* discourse is hegemonic in most modern Western societies. According to this worldview, there is *"a system for correlating two supposedly natural, stable, and incommensurable biological sexes (male and female) with two normative, fixed and equally incommensurable social categories (man and women), … [where] the materiality of anatomical sex is represented socially by a gender role, and subjectively as gender identity" (Stryker, 2006, p. 8- 9).*

Under this view, gender is understood as a cultural subjective representation of the natural objective sexed body, by which nature is prioritized upon culture. Simultaneously, 'trans*' changes and movements are perceived to be "opposite to the stasis of ['natural', thus objective and prioritized normal sexed and gendered] being" (Garner, 2014, p. 30). Therefore, within this ontological framework, trans* experiences are viewed to go against the transcendental law of nature and society, and, consequently, to be pathological.

Medical narratives underlie the 'authenticity' social discourse about trans*, and reflect on how 'subjective' trans*' experiences oppose the 'objective' natural/social categories of the world, which are fixed and transcendentally 'assigned' to individuals. For example, its foundational interpretation of trans* phenomena as transsexualism defines a transsexual person as: "somebody who permanently changed genitals in order to claim membership in a gender other than the one assigned at birth" (Stryker, 2006, p. 4). Likewise, recent versions of the medical interpretation of trans* experiences as 'gender dysphoria' explain transsexual experiences as "strong desires to be treated as the other gender or to be rid of one's sex

characteristics, or a strong conviction that one has feelings and reactions typical of the other gender" (Lev, 2013, p. 290). In such way, terms and definitions used by medical, psychiatric and psychological specialists to refer to trans* experiences may illustrate the subjective-objective antagonism of sex and gender categories, where trans*' experiences are perceived to be pathological and disordered (Sues et al., 2014).

To summarize, within *authenticity* discourses, gender and sex are understood as fixed natural/cultural categories. Also, trans* experiences such as changing, going beyond, or crossing determined binary borders are seeing as opposite to the transcendental biological and social order, and, therefore, disordered and pathological.

*b. Performativity of sex and gender: taken out-of-context trans**

The performative conceptualization of gender and sex are developed within feminist and queer theories, and basically derived from the works of Judith Butler. In her fundamental text "Gender Trouble" (1990), she conceptualizes gender as performative acts, namely a matter of *'doing'* rather than of '*being*'. She reverses the authenticity understanding of gender as to that it is 'naturally' determined by sex, and claims that, in other way around, gender produces an effect of sex. She illustrates the techniques of performative gender with drag experiences. In her latter work "Bodies that Matter" (1992), she uses transsexual practices as an example of production of sex by gender and interprets them as a hyperbolic performance of sex and gender.

Even though the conceptualization of gender and sex within the *performativity* knowledge discourse suggested by Butler liberates trans* people from the pathological interpretation suggested by the *authenticity* discourse, it has been criticized for creating another kind of problems. Namely, if to think and to speak about gender as "mere performance", it may cause the perception that gender is "somehow not real" (Stryker, 2006, p. 10), what can be problematic for three reasons. Firstly, it creates self-misrecognition among trans* individuals who consider the sense of gender and sex *not* as a subject of free will, but as ontologically inescapable (Stryker, 2006). Secondly, if to focus only on the performative aspects of sex and gender, there a is risk to overlook lived experiences of trans* people, as well as their perspectives, experiences and consequences of denying a binary sex/gender system (Namaste, 2000). Finally,

understanding gender and sex as just performance has led that some trans* activists and scholars, such as, for instance, Leslie Fienberg, to claim for a free choice between gender and sex categories (Feinberg, 1999), what omits to recognize that gender and sex are "not only an authentic choice about cosmetics or hairstyle, skirt or suit", but also "implicated in politically fraught behaviors, economic marginalization and exploitation" (Heyes, 2013, p. 205). In other words, polemicizing gender and sex as an *individual* property falls short of considering that these categories are deeply involved in a wider context of power relations.

To recapitulate, the mere *performative* conceptualization of sex and gender is criticized for being misleading, limited, and void of understanding trans* phenomena, as well as for taking it out of context. Alternatively, transgender studies suggest to analyzing gender and sex as 'regimes of normalization' in the light of Michael Foucault's theory of subjectification (Foucault, 1983, 2003). This approach situates trans* phenomena within social power relations and emphasizes its "transgressive potential" (Hird, 2002, p. 578) or a so-called "transgender effect" that illuminates the production of gender normativity (Stryker, 2006, p.13). The next section discusses this *transgressive* ontological framework.

*c. Transgression of sex and gender by subversive trans**

According to Foucault (1983, 2004), gender and sex are forms of social power structures that regulate lives of individuals. People's identities and bodies are produced by power relationships through different structural technologies so individuals are "subjectified" (Foucault, 1983, p.208). Trans* is considered to be "social monstrosity", a form of system inversion which is normalized by these power regimes (Stryker, 2006, p. 13, Stryker, 1994).

Yet, Foucault claims that there is still the possibility of power structures reconstruction. The confrontation between dominant and deviant groups makes visible mechanisms of 'subjectification' and the phenomenon of 'domination'. That may create instability, which could lead to the transformation of power relations systems either "from inside the history of struggles or from the standpoint of the power relationships" (Foucault, 1983, p. 226). Trans* persons' experiences of 'subjectification' through the 'history of struggles' is "the unique situation of embodiment human consciousness" (Stryker, 2006, p. 12-13). The analysis of these

experiences can display the extent to which the gendered selves and the sexed bodies are affected by power structures. Therefore, it has a potential to uncover the production of gender and sex normativity. Among trans* scholars and activists, it is profoundly believed that in such way transgender phenomena may have a 'transgender effect' that opens up the possibility of reconstruction gender binary structure (Stryker, 2006, 2013).

Nevertheless, Foucault underlines that 'domination' is a fundamental law that organizes human society, in which power structures are highly resistant to change (Foucault, 2004). Empirically, it can be illustrated by Dean Spade's (2006) analysis of the relationships between gender normativity and technologies of gendered corporeal modification. It demonstrates how *both* trans* people and 'transgender services providers' such as medical and governmental institutions regulate transgender access to body-alliteration procedures; reify the gender binary system; and continue to produce discourses that understand transgender experiences as deviant behavior, disease or disability (Spade, 2006).

The limitations of the transgressive potential of trans* practices to reconstruct two-genders/sexes system are discussed by several sociologists (for instance, Hausman, 1995, Hird. 2002). The main constraint is the tendency among trans* people to challenge the immutable determination of gender by sex and the attribution of personal characteristics to these categories, in the way of *just* combining, re-combining, reversing or imitating *already existing* gendered practices (Hird, 2002). But, as Butler (1993) mentions, "the parodic imitation is always implicated in the power that it opposes" (p.125). Thus, the extent to which trans* practices are subversive is restricted by power relations to which they are involved.

Therefore, transgression interpretation of trans* experiences is based on the Foucauldian conceptualization of sex and gender as social power structures that normalize *all* individuals. That is why it supposes that trans* practices may reveal technologies of normalization in such way that trans* phenomena may subvert and reconstruct gender binary system. However, there are still theoretical and empirical arguments that remain suspicious about the potential of trans* phenomena to render sex and gender binary absolutes.

To sum up, trans* is a broad, highly controversial and difficult-to-define term. There have been three main theoretical paradigms: authenticity, performativity and transgression, which suggest various interpretations of the relations between gender, sex and trans* experiences. All of them have certain pitfalls, weaknesses and limitations. The two first theories (authenticity and performativity) have been hardly criticized by transgender scholars and activists for their tendency to pathologize trans* people and to take out-of-context their experiences (Stryker, 2006, Stryker, 2013, Spade, 2006, Namaste, 2000). In turn, the focus of transgender studies on mainly just transgressive potential of trans* practices is problematized also. The very positive impact of the transgender theory that challenges the psycho-medical interpretation of trans* experiences as pathological and question immutability of sex and gender is not refused. Nevertheless, it is argued that not all forms of trans* experiences are subversive (Hird, 2002). Additionally to the limitations that have been discussed above, all those theoretical perspectives are criticized for their lack of concern for the people under their study and for an absence of evaluation as to how these theoretical narratives impact trans* individuals' lives (Namaste, 2000). This impact is discussed in the next chapter and the knowledge gap is addressed by this study.

Chapter Two: Theoretical narratives and their impact on trans*' individuals' lives

This chapter problematizes the impact which theoretical narratives have on lives of trans* individuals, which is addressed by this thesis. It starts with the overview of the scholarship that concerns this impact. Further, drawing upon recent findings and tendencies, it explains the theoretical framework of this thesis and its focus on the identity of trans* people in Ukraine.

A. The impact that theoretical narratives have on lives of trans people*

As several studies have shown theoretical narratives discussed in Chapter One are utilized by people 'on the ground', and, subsequently, influence policing of gender, sex, and trans* by individuals, communities, and institutions (Vidal-Ortiz, 2008, Namaste, 2000). An example of such influence may be the theory of Janice Raymond (1979), which, during the 1970s and 1980s, made US radical feminists believe that trans* people were just simply unsatisfied with their gender roles (Elliot, 2010). In this sense, she claims that transsexualism is a 'social pathology' invented and maintained by oppressive patriarchal systems. According to her, trans* people internalize gender stereotypes and, through undergoing a sexual-reassignment surgery, reify the normative system of sex and gender. Therefore, she, together with many of her followers, blame transsexual people for having a wrong understanding about their assigned genders, namely to be 'gender conservatives' (Elliot, 2010). This interpretation of trans* experiences has led to marginalization, stigmatization and exclusion of trans* people within queer community (Stryker, 2006), which continues to influence lives of trans* people up to now.

Raymond's theory (1979) is studied as a case by Vivian Namaste (2000), who was the first critical scholar to draw a special attention to the impact that theoretical narratives as the one described above have on lives of trans* people. In her book "Invisible Lives" (2000), she presents an extensive overview of the recent social theories on trans* phenomenon and demonstrates how theorists ignore day-to-day experiences of trans* people, what, she argues, results in the creation of narratives, documents and policies that render trans* persons invisible in (Canadian) society. By blending poststructuralism and sociological research methods, she

empirically uncovers and illustrates the tendency of producing, in academic circles, theoretical narratives to construct social discourses about trans* people that, in turn, have an enormous influence on the way in which social service and healthcare institutions treat trans* persons. Namaste (2000) concludes her work with a call for new forms of responsible social research accountable for the people under social study.

Moreover, other studies show that the impact of social discourse about sex and gender on lives of trans people does not end with the determination of social policies and regulations. It also influences the way in which trans* persons understand sex/gender binary system and, also, how they identify themselves with respect to it. This tendency has been briefly discussed by social activist Sandy Stone (2006). She analyzes transsexuals' autobiographies that were written during the second part of the twentieth century in the US and argues that individuals identify themselves as transsexual internalizing medical narratives about 'being born in wrong body', which they encountered *first* in the process of looking for social recognition of their sex/gender deviance.

The impact that social discourses have on trans* people's lives not only *externally* by determining institutional regulation of sex, gender and trans*, but also *internally* defining trans* self-identity has been discussed and empirically examined by American scholars Gagne and Tewksbury (1999). Similarly to Namaste (2000), they combine poststructuralist's assumptions that discourses have power over individuals' lives (Butler, 1990, 1993, Foucault, 1978, 2004), along with sociological researchers to conduct the study on the ways in which social discourse impact on self-identity of trans* people. The findings of their research exemplify how the US hegemonic discourses about sex and gender influence on the process of social interaction through which trans* identity is formed and transformed (Gagne and Tewksbury, 1999).

In this thesis, I suggest to bringing further Namaste's (2000) study on the relationship between theoretical narratives and social discourse about trans* and the power that science discourses have over trans* people's lives. While Namaste (2000) uncovers the influence of theoretical narratives on institutional regulations of sex, gender, and trans*, I focus on the impact that these scientific discourses have on self-identities of trans* individuals. To do so, I replicate Gagne and Tewksbury's (1999) research on the impact that *social* discourse has on

the formation of trans* identity and further accomplish it with an analysis of the relationship between the identity-formation process and theoretical narratives (science discourses) discussed in Chapter One. In other words, this study proposes to examine the ways in which social discourses influence on the process of self-identity formation of trans* people and how theoretical narratives are related to this process. The next section explains in details the focus and the theoretical framework of this thesis.

B. Theoretical framework and focus of the research

The theoretical framework is mostly replicated from Gagne and Tewksbury's (1999) study and combine social interactionism and poststructuralism. Firstly, it is built on the definition of identity as "a scheme outlining the relationship of self, body, and society, which, is based upon internalized acquired information" (Gagne and Tewkesbury, 1999, p. 62). According to social interactionists, this schema is formed, maintained and transformed in the process of social interaction (Cooley 1964; Mead 1934), through which individuals acquire and internalize information. Secondly, departing from the poststructuralists' claim that discourses have a power over society (Butler, 1990, 1993, Foucault, 1978, 2004) and, therefore, affect individuals' lives, (Bordo, 1989, Butler, 1993), this thesis draws upon the assumption of Gagne and Tewksbury (1999) that trans* people's identities are also subjects of powerful social forces, specifically to social discourse.

In detail, Gagne and Tewksbury (1999) suggest to examining the impact of *social discourses* on trans* individuals lives through analyzing the ways in which different *sources of information* influence on trans* individuals' identities. They distinguish following sources of information: individual experience, the media, and popular wisdom, applying classification developed by William A. Gamson (1992) to empirically understand the impact of various sources of knowledge on political consciousness. They accomplish this classification with a subcultural knowledge system, identified by Patricia Hill Collins (1990). Defining these sources of information as 'systems of knowledge', Gagne and Tewksbury (1999) argue that, being integral to the maintenance of the hegemonic gender discourse, they have power over trans* people's identities.

According to them, ‘experiential system of knowledge’ implies person’s perception and understanding of own body and self. Firstly, it is based upon the tacit acceptance of sex (genitals and secondary sexual characteristics) and comfortable for a person appearance, behavior and general ‘being’. In the process of interaction with others, it is modified to form a gender identity that outlines an understanding of relations between body, self and sex/gender binary social system. The formation of identity is the result of a process by which individuals internalize into experiential knowledge the information acquired from other knowledge systems. The ‘popular wisdom system of knowledge’, which is generally communicated to a child by significant others, namely, parents, siblings, peers, educators, and other adults, consists of social expectations and stereotypes about ‘appropriate’ relations between gender and sex. The ‘mediated knowledge’, which is transmitted to individuals via the media, and ‘the subcultural knowledge’, which is communicated by trans* and queer communities, mostly constitutes a medical and scientific understanding of trans* experiences.

Taking into account Namaste’s (2000) findings of the tendency of social discourse to be constructed by theoretical narratives, I suggest to further examine the content of messages that systems of knowledge transmit to trans* individuals in order to find how these messages relate with science discourses. As it has been discussed in Chapter One, there is not one but three theoretical perspectives, which produce different interpretations and science discourses about trans* experience. In this study, I apply the Hird’s (2002) typology of main theoretical paradigms on trans* phenomena to classify theoretical narratives as authenticity, performativity and transgression science discourses.

Furthermore, social discourses are constituted by a language that not only transmits information (Ragland-Sullivan and Bracher 1991), but also limits the understanding and shapes the way individuals experience the world, themselves, and their bodies (Ardener 1975; Evans 1980; Collins 1990; Morgen and Bookman 1988). Considering the recent trend of the ‘globalization’ of Western trans* discourses beyond US and European borders (Valentine, 2005), I choose to focus this study on Ukraine, which represents a non-English and non-Western discourse in order to examine the role of language in the relationship between social discourse and theoretical narratives.

Globalizing, Western trans* discourses are not simply 'exported', but modified in accordance to pre-existing 'national' specifics, which are not only languages, but also administrative structures of regulation sexual differences and reproductive capacities (Stryker, 2013). Such modification depending on the local pre-conditions has been highlighted by several empirical works with the focus on the diversity of Latin American and Eastern discourses about trans* category (see, for instance, Ochoa, 2014, Shakhsari, 2012, Stryker, 2013). Nevertheless, specifics of Eastern European discourses have been hardly addressed. Those pioneer studies that speak about modern understanding of Western notions of sex and gender, which have been entirely silenced in Slavic Speaking public discourses during the Soviet Union regime (see, for example, Coleman & Sandfort, 2014, Hankivsky & Salnykova, 2013), nevertheless barely address the trans* people and their experiences.

Ukraine, as the focus of my research, was selected because of the complexity of its discourse on sex and gender. On the one hand, this country is geographically situated at the crossroads between Eastern and Western Europe, making Ukraine one of the first countries among post-Soviet Union states, after the fall of 'iron curtain', where Western discourse about sex, gender and trans* started to circulate. This can be illustrated by the fact that, following the Western European example, Ukraine was the first former-Soviet republic to repeal criminal responsibility for homosexual intercourse (Martcenuyk, 2013). On the other hand, in neither Russian nor in Ukrainian (the spoken languages in this country, yet only Ukrainian is recognized as official), there is a clear distinction between sex and gender categories (Aristarkhova, 2000). Also, as current studies show, the notions of sex and gender continue to be silenced in public discourse, resulting in the ignorance of citizens about these categories and regulations thereof (Martcenuyk, 2013). Furthermore, even though there are around 80 individuals seeking for sexual reassignment surgeries every year, trans* phenomena in Ukraine is completely invisible within the hegemonic discourse about gender and sex and hardly recognized by queer communities (Ivashenko, 2010). Simultaneously, its legal recognition as trans* continues to remain similar as it was during Soviet Union regime, and being one of the most discriminative in Europe (Transgender Europe, 2015). Thus, the analysis of trans* people within complex Ukrainian social discourse about sex and gender provides an opportunity to illuminate the ways in which the Western discourse about trans* is globalized, as well as to

examine the role of language in the relationship between social discourse and theoretical narratives, which are mostly developed in the West.

In summary, this thesis replicates the Gagne and Tewksbury's (1999) theoretical framework, combining poststructuralism and symbolical interactionism, and departs from the central assumption that trans* identity is formed and transformed in the process of social interaction, which is influenced by social discourse. The classification of mediated, popular wisdom and subcultural systems of knowledge as constitutive elements of social discourse is employed, while experiential system of knowledge is interpreted as the informational schema that underlies the identity of individuals. Further, these systems of knowledge are examined in the relationship with theoretical narratives about trans* phenomena which have been discussed in Chapter One and are classified according to the typology suggested by Hird (2002) as authenticity, performativity and transgression science discourses. As such, Ukraine is the focus of the study, because it helps to address the internalization of the Western discourse about trans* and examine the role of language in the relationship between non-Western social discourse and Western theoretical narratives. Therefore, this study proposes to examine: 1) the ways in which social discourse about trans* constituted by different knowledge systems affects the formation process of the experiential system of knowledge of Ukrainian individuals that underlies their trans* identities; and 2) how Western authenticity, performativity, and transgression scientific discourses are related to Ukrainian discourse about trans* people.

Chapter Three: Epistemological starting points, methodology and methods

This chapter starts with the discussion of the explanation of my researcher position. Then, it specifies the methodological approach and the data collection method. Furthermore, it illuminates the sampling procedure, fieldwork process and research ethics involved thereof. Finally, the methods of data analysis are explained and the limitations of this study are addressed.

A. Knowledge and power: epistemological starting points and the research position

This thesis departs from the poststructuralist assumption that knowledge has a power (see discussion in Chapter One and Chapter Two). As this study is an example of a knowledge production, it is extremely important to explain its epistemological basis. The following section answers the questions about which kind of knowledge is aimed to be produced with this research.

As it was discussed in Chapter One, any of the existing theoretical discourses has been able to develop the kind of knowledge that provides an all-inclusive understanding of trans* phenomena. To solve such kinds of epistemological 'problems', Donna Harraway (1988) suggests the concept of 'situated knowledge'. According to her, it is not possible to generate a universal explanation of a phenomenon. The complex understanding of the world can be achieved only if scientists would stop to claim for an 'absolute truth'. Instead, they may contribute to discovery of reality by producing partial, located, and critical knowledge.

Inspired by Harraway's epistemological approach, the main purpose of this research is to contribute to the understanding of trans* phenomena by carrying out a *critical analysis of certain* tendencies or ways in which knowledge discourse impact on trans* individuals' lives within the *particular local* context of Ukraine, rather than attempting to develop a new explanation of the trans* phenomena with a further claim for generalization of the research results.

Further, to bring the concept of 'situated knowledge' into practice, Haraway (1988, 1997) proposes to situate a subject and an object of research, because they constitute generative nodes of knowledge. She explains that this can be achieved through reflective positioning a researcher in relation to the object of study. Following this suggestion, hereafter, I discuss my position as a subject of knowledge production of this study with regard to its object, i.e., trans* individuals.

I am a non-trans* person that researches trans* people. The issue of the non-queer researchers taking part in queer studies has been mostly discussed in terms of their 'right' to be in the field as 'outsiders' and their capacity to bring *any* valuable input (Allen, 2010). However, according to Haraway, situated knowledge can be produced through the so-called 'feminist embodiment', namely that "it is not about fixed location in a reified body, female [trans* in the case of this research] or otherwise, but about nodes in fields, inflections in orientations, and responsibility for difference in material-semiotic fields of meaning" (Haraway, 1988, p.588). The 'feminist embodiment', she explains further, is a researcher positioning, but not an identity. My researcher position is of a sociologist that conducts a study focused on trans* people, with the aim to produce the knowledge that has a potential to depathologize trans* individuals. That, I believe, may increase trans* people's social inclusion, which can be achieved if applied a critical thinking to understand their experiences.

B. Methodology

The aim of this study is to examine the ways in which social discourses impact on trans* people in Ukraine, by exploring their unique experiences of some of them. The explorative nature of a study of a little-known phenomenon (Gagne, 1999), where the object of study is a non-numerous population, what is the case when to speak about trans* people in Ukraine (Ivashenko, 2010), commands the use of qualitative approach, which, according to Bryman, (2004) is the most appropriate methodology to get a complex understanding of human experiences. Importantly, it provides an opportunity to uncover power relations during the process of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2014), what is the main objective of this research.

Simultaneously, the implementation of qualitative methodology requires several precautions. At the stage of data collection, it is not possible to completely grasp the perspectives of those who are studied, mainly, because researcher's prior understanding of the phenomenon of study influence research process, especially during fieldwork investigation (Bryman, 2006). Thus, in the field, it is significant that the researcher to be self-reflexive and critical of the ontological framework that is used for making sense of participants' experiences (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). At the stage of data analysis, the interpretation should be based only on the examination of experiences that simplify the understanding of the particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, the researcher should contextualize experiences and analyze them together with their background (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). With respect to critical points listed above and following the guidance of Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011), the two next sections specify, firstly, a method of data collection and, then, data analysis method of this thesis.

C. Method of data collection

This research replicates the study of Gagne and Tewksbury (1999) (see Chapter Two), who to uncover the ways in which knowledge systems impact trans* people's selves, completed 65 semi-structured interviews with masculine-to-feminine American individuals. With reference to Gagne and Tewksbury's (1999) study and considering that interview is a useful way to learn about individual's experiences (Gubrium and James, 2002), it is decided to choose this method as the main data source for this research. They organized the interviews in a semi-structured way, in order to keep a balance between gathering information about specific topics, which are in the focus of this research, and still not restricting respondents' answers by researcher's ontological framework (see discussion in the section Methodology above). As a result, this approach towards interviewing allows participants to present their experiences in a more flexible manner and, at the same time, it encourages them to bring up those issues that could be overlooked by the researcher (Bryman, 2004).

The interview guide (see Appendix B) was devised based on the initial literature review. It was informed by theories discussed in Chapter One and Chapter Two and, basically, replicated the study of Gagne and Tewksbury (1999). However, it was modified to incorporate

the peculiarities of the Ukrainian context. For example, several questions were added to tackle unanticipated themes such as the understanding of the word 'gender', which until recently had not been adopted in Russian and Ukrainian languages (Hankivsky & Salnykova, 2013). Moreover, the interviews were organized in a way that, after collecting background information on age, education, occupational history, and family, respondents were encouraged to tell their life stories as they pertained to their trans*gendered/sexed experiences.

Respondents were guided through several areas of inquiry, including their earliest and later trans* experiences, with particular emphasis on interactional aspects of them; perception and understanding of gender, sex and trans*; perception of sexual reassignment procedures (SRS) and experiences with the medical community; identifying and labeling emotions, feelings, behaviors, and identities.

D. Sample

The explorative nature of this study, which aims to reach an in-depth understanding of the trans* people's experiences, rather than a generalization of research results (see section Epistemology above), so that it calls for purposive sampling (Merriam, 2009). Following this approach for sampling, the researcher should select the most informative cases that can enrich understanding of the phenomena, which is in focus of the study (Patton, 2002). In the case of this research, maximal heterogeneity sampling strategy was applied, because it helps to discover common patterns of the phenomena that externally seems to be highly diverse (Patton, 2002).

'Trans*' is an umbrella term that encompasses a variety of gender identities (see Chapter One). Therefore, with a purpose to extend understanding of trans* people's experiences, the sample of this research includes respondents with different trans* experiences. Firstly, it examines experiences of not only masculine-to-feminine individuals as in Gagne and Tewksbury's (1999) study, but also of feminine-to-masculine persons. Secondly, it targets to recruit transsexual as well as transgender individuals (as defined in Chapter Two). Finally, it was attempted to ensure at least some geographical diversity among the respondents, as the access to the Internet, transsexual medical facilities, transgender support groups, and,

consequently, information about trans* people varies among residence of urban and rural regions of Ukraine (Ivashenko, 2010).

The participants were contacted through the non-governmental organization 'Insight', the *only* supportive group of trans* people in Ukraine. They were categorized and selected based on their self-identification and information about SRS-experience/plans, which they provided during a previous research conducted in Ukraine (Ivashenko, 2010). However, there were some latent characteristics of the sample that I could not have considered prior to undertaking the fieldwork, due to the lack of information about changes on their self-identity and their place of residence. This led to recruiting some participants who previously self-identified as 'transsexuals', and, afterwards, during the interview for the current research, they defined themselves as 'transgenders'.

Participants resided in large urban areas, small towns, suburbs, and rural areas (the Kyiv, Lviv, Kherson, and Dnepropetrovsk regions). Their age ranged from 24 to 34 years. Their occupations range from hairdresser, IT-professional, gardener, electrician, and to a salesperson. They were employed officially and unofficially (without providing to employee work record card), a common practice in Ukraine. Education attainment of the respondents ranged from high school to a completed PhD.

E. Fieldwork and ethic

The interviews concerned sensitive matters such as personal experiences of trans* people who are marginalized and stigmatized in Ukraine. Subsequently, it was expected that entering to a field as well as achieving information regarding specific questions related to delicate issues such as trans* self-identity formation could be met with obstacles. Furthermore, this study requires that special attention should be paid to ethical aspects of the research process. The section below describes the steps taken to make interviews less distressing for respondents. Also, it details the measures to ensure that, in the process of research, the rights of participants were respected, and ethical principles of conducting social research were followed.

Firstly, the interview guide was formulated taking into consideration "Suggested Rules for Non-Transsexuals Writing about Transsexuals, Transsexuality, Transsexualism, or Trans ____" provided by trans* activist Jacob Hale (2009). In particular, the appropriate gender-sensitive language was used to articulating questions during fieldwork. Secondly, all respondents gave their full informed consent to participate in the research. That means that they were informed about their rights for confidentiality and anonymity, as well as about the purpose and the procedures of the research (Mauthner, Birch, & Miller, 2012). Considering specifics of post-Soviet Union negative attitudes towards singing any kind of documents, they were not asked to give a written consent to participate in the study. However, at the stage of recruitment as well as before every interview, participants were provided with a letter (see Appendix A) that specified the study details, and assured participants' confidentiality and anonymity (Berg, 2001). Further, they were asked whether they agreed to take part in the study. Each respondent who ended up in the final sample verbally expressed their consent to voluntarily participate in the research project. Finally, the authorship of the quotes used to support my argumentation in the analytical part is not disclosed, because the small number of participants would compromise respondents' confidentiality and anonymity.

The fieldwork took place from March 2016 to April 2016. Even though there was a considerably larger number of potential respondents, who demonstrated an initial interest in participating in the research project, many participants dropped out at the recruitment stage. In the end, eleven interviews were completed with different categories including transsexual and transgender people. Such reduction of a sample size was quite expectable, because, as Robinson (2014) points out, recruiting participants for individual interviews is a complicated process and often lead to such results. Interviews ranged from 1 hour 45 minutes to 4 hours in length, averaging about 2 hours, all of which are fully transcribed. They were conducted in Russian or Ukrainian, depending on the mother tongue of my respondents.

F. Methods of data analysis

The method of data analysis was replicated from the Gagne and Tewksbury's (1999) research, as an example of a study that focuses on the impact of knowledge systems on trans* individual's self-identity formation process, instead of interpreting their experiences (see

Chapter Two). An analytic-inductive process is used in organizing and interpreting the descriptions and stories of the participants' experiences. It includes four flows of activity: data reduction, which includes the process of identifying emergent themes in the data; data display; the process of organizing and clustering the information used for deriving conclusions; and conclusion drawing and verification, the process of deciding what experiences mean (Miles and Huberman, 1984).

Furthermore, the data analysis method described above is taken further in two directions. Firstly, following the guidance of Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2011), the analysis of trans* individuals' experiences is complemented with its contextualization within Ukrainian reality. In particular, trans* experiences are analyzed together with their background, namely the Ukrainian social discourse and institutional regulation of gender and sex, which is discussed in details in Chapter Four. Secondly, the analysis of relationship between the Ukrainian trans* people's experiences and Western science narratives is conducted.

G. Limitations

Generalization. Aiming for producing a 'situated knowledge' and being a study of a small number of participants, this research has no ambition to generalize its results. Instead, as Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) state, it is more important to illuminate the heterogeneity and the context of knowledge than to claim for its generalization. As it was discussed above (in the section Sampling), there were some steps to make results of this study valid for speaking about trends within Ukrainian trans* people.

Objectivity. Even though this research does aim for objectivity in the positivistic understanding as a production of universal and generalized knowledge, it still targets for accurate description of examined phenomena. For the qualitative study presented here, it implies the following scientific procedures: making the process of research clear to the reader; and describing existing patterns in a coherent way (Schofield, 2000). Furthermore, the study's results become credible if the findings are constantly checked, questioned and theoretically interpreted through fieldwork and analytical stages of the research process (Kvale &

Brinkmann, 2009). The methodological and analytical parts present attempts to accomplish these tasks.

Bias. Studying the topic related to gender issues appears personally sensitive. Also, I am aware of possible affections of my personal point of view on the interpretation of the received information. However, I followed the dictum of Becker: 'Our problem [i.e. social scientists'] is to make sure that, whatever point of view we take, our research meets the standards of good scientific work, that our unavoidable sympathies do not render our results invalid' (1967, p. 246). Thus, I have tried to illustrate my arguments with concreate quotations and support them with the theoretical framework, underlined in Chapter Two. Simultaneously, I am well conscious that interpretations of my findings can be completely different if to approach them from other epistemological, methodological and theoretical perspective. However, I believe that the results of this research could contribute to the formulation of a more general understanding of Ukrainian trans* people experiences.

Translation and Westernization. As interviews were conducted in Russian and Ukrainian languages, while research findings are presented in English, a significant effort was put to preserve the original meaning of the quotation used in the analytical part. However, some key terms such as 'sex', 'gender' and 'trans*' considerably differ among languages, discourses and respondents' understanding. These differences were not attempted to be translated, but rather became a material for analysis that is detailed in Chapters Four and Five.

Also, as it was discussed in Chapter Two, the research on trans* experiences in the post-Soviet Union Eastern European countries is limited. Therefore, the findings of this research were analyzed mostly departing from Western epistemological, methodological and theoretical approaches. I acknowledge that this shortcoming of particularized local theory limits the discussions in this thesis. Nevertheless, I hope that accurate description of the Ukrainian context of trans* experiences may partially fulfill this knowledge gap. The following chapter presents the Ukrainian context, particularly, language specifics and administrative regulations discussed in Chapter Two as the most relevant in the analysis of trans* people's experiences.

Chapter Four: Contextualization of trans* phenomena in Ukraine

A. Translating sex, gender and trans into Russian and Ukrainian languages or (con)textualising concepts*

In the Slavic languages, one single word ('*stat*' in Ukrainian and '*pol*' in Russian) covers the meaning of both 'sex' and 'gender' and used to name both concepts. Also, the Russian and Ukrainian word 'sex' principally refers to sexual activity, but not to genital construction as it does in the English language. The term 'gender' was introduced in Ukraine in the nineties by feminist and LGBT activists and populistically was defined as 'social sex' ('social stat/pol').

Nina Lykke (2010) emphasizes that it is not possible to simply translate the Anglophone distinction between sex and gender into many other languages. Feminist researchers in different countries apply various strategies to solve this linguistic and theoretical problem of separating biological and sociocultural meanings of sex/gender categories. Russian and Ukrainian feminists chose to directly adopt the English word 'gender'. Generally, that has resulted in a negative connotation of 'suspicious Western term' and its exclusive association with radical women movement (Aristarkhova, 2000).

Consequently, in Ukraine, the notions of gender and sex, as well as trans*sex/gender, are 'alien' concepts that are used only by feminists scholars and the LGBT community. For the general audience, they are mainly misrecognized and misunderstood. Therefore, Ukrainian trans* individuals, in the process of recognition of their bodies and selves, barely have the vocabulary to define and name their feelings, attitudes and practices.

Moreover, grammatically both Ukrainian and Russian languages are greatly gendered (Bahovic, 2012). Additionally to gendered pronouns, every noun has 'rid'/'rod', the grammatical equivalent of gender, that determine the conjugation of related verb and adjective. In other words, it is almost impossible to formulate gender-neutral sentences in Russian or Ukrainian. Thus, the formation of trans* individuals' identity occurs in conditions of extremely controversial and confusing language and terminological discourses. Constructing the schema

that outlines their gender identity, they either need to borrow Western discourse terminology or to operate by highly gendered Russian and Ukrainian languages.

B. The necessity of legal Gender recognition in Ukraine

Documents are crucial in Ukraine due to its legal and political background as a former-Soviet country, thanks to which totalitarian habits have yet remained (Press for Change, 2015). It means, for instance, that an individual without a valid passport (that consist of a recognizable photo and name) cannot get a job and/or educational access, neither use medical and bank services, nor rent or buy accommodation, nor have state security, and so forth. In other words, without documents, a person is almost completely excluded from Ukrainian society.

Each Ukrainian passport indicates person's "sex". Moreover, it states not only the name and surname that are often gendered, but an obligatory patronymic, which in Russian and Ukrainian languages is *never* unisex. All registry offices in Ukraine may authorize the change of 'sex' and a set of names/patronymic/surnames of trans* people *only* after reassignment surgery is completed (Ukrainian Ministry of Health, order No.60, last review 2016). Also, the current Ukrainian legal gender recognition procedure is governed by the *Ministerstvo Ohoroni Zdorovia* (Ministry of Health), and regulated according to the state order that consists a number of mandatory procedures, which can be summarized as follows:

1. Obligatory in-patient psychiatric evaluation from 30 to 45 days in the individual's region of residence and numerous medical tests to confirm or reject a diagnosis of 'transsexualism';
2. A requirement that the person seeking legal gender recognition not be married, nor have biological children under 18 and be over the age of 25 years;
3. Coerced sterilization;
4. Evaluation by the State Evaluation Commission to confirm the diagnosis of 'transsexualism' and authorize the change in legal documents [the Commission is a single authority that gives such permissions, it meets only twice a year, and only in Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, there is not appeal against its decision];

5. Observation by a sexologist for a period of one year to the determine degree of ‘social adaptation’.

Compliance with these requirements not only violates trans* people basic human rights (The Human Rights Watch, 2015). This is because, among other things, “forced sterilization constitutes an act of violence, a form of social control, and a violation of the right to be free from torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment” (Méndez, 2013). Also, it is long-lasting (it takes from one to four years to undergo the whole procedure), humiliating and costly (The Human Rights Watch, 2015). All of that significantly obstructs work, private and family lives of those trans* people who dare to undergo these medical and legal procedures (Ivashenko, 2011).

Chapter Five: Knowledge and its impact on identities of Ukrainian trans* people

This chapter presents my findings and interpretations of the material. It is divided into two parts. In the first part, I describe the ways in which social discourse about trans*, which is constituted by different knowledge systems, affects the formation process of the experiential system of knowledge of Ukrainian individuals that underlies their trans* identities. In the second part, I detail my findings of the informational schemas that underlies trans* identities of my respondents and discuss them in relation to Western authenticity, performative and transgression science discourses.

A. Learning about sex and gender: forming a trans identity*

In this section, I specify the process by which my respondents interacting with others have acquired the knowledge about sex, gender and trans* phenomena. I demonstrate how this information was transmitted by knowledge systems, namely, popular wisdom, the media and subcultural, which, in accordance with the theoretical framework of this study (see Chapter Two), I interpret them as constituting a social discourse. Further, I illustrate how this knowledge has been internalized by my respondents, resulting in the formation of their understanding of sex/gender binary in relation to their experiences as trans* person. This understanding I read as experiential systems of knowledge, the schemas that outlines their identity as trans* persons. In such way, I intend to illustrate the ways in which social discourse impact on identity of trans* people in Ukraine.

a. The process of trans self-identity formation: the interplay between systems of knowledge*

The narratives of my informants revealed that all of them have gone through similar process of learning about binary system of sex and gender, and the encountering notion of trans*. In short, individuals report to be initially ignorant about categories of sex and gender and to enjoy performing freely their bodies and selves. Then, in the process of interaction with others, the series of events (specified and discussed below) not only brought to their attention

these categories, but also signified gender as the key identification for successful social interaction.

Likewise, they discovered that the way in which they perform themselves to others mismatches with social expectations about gender performance of sex. This mismatch made them feel socially excluded and to desire to 'find the way to fit into society'. Therefore, my respondents recalled having a strong desire to be recognized and accepted by other social actors. Struggling to satisfy this desire, they were looking for the explanation of their experiences. As a result, through the media and/or via interaction with the LGBT community they encountered the information about 'trans* phenomena', which provided them with a socially accepted explanation of the incongruity between the personal experiences of performing sex and gender and the social binary expectations about the relationship between these categories. Also, this explanation suggested an identity as a 'trans* person' that would allow them to be recognized by society. In such way, the need of being recognized and accepted by other social actors was satisfied, so that the knowledge about trans* people was internalized by my informants, what resulted on them proclaiming their trans* self-identity.

The process recalled by my respondents coincides with findings of Gagne and Tewksbury (1999), whose research I try replicate in this study. Just like them, I interpret this trans* identity formation process as the social interaction process of the interplay between different systems of knowledge. During this process, firstly, *the experiential knowledge*, which consists of the tacit perception of the own body and the understanding of self, is performed in society and meets *the popular wisdom*. Then, it transmits the knowledge about the relationship between sex and gender with male/female categories which determine masculine/feminine gender identity and performance. Secondly, individuals whose personal experiences of sex and gender do not fit into this binary system encounter mediated knowledge (the media and/or queer subculture) that educates them about trans* phenomena. The internalization of this knowledge leads to acceptance of identity as trans person.

Additionally to the Gagne and Tewksbury's (1999) conceptualization of the trans* identity formation process as the interplay between knowledge systems, among my respondents, I identified that this process is staged and consist two phases. Firstly, experiential

knowledge meets popular wisdom, so that individuals learn about the sex/gender binary system, and, afterwards, realize its significance for successful social interaction; and, secondly, experiential knowledge meets mediated/subcultural knowledge, what results in learning about the notion of trans*, internalization of this knowledge and the final proclamation as a trans* person. In the following analysis, I discuss in details the process of trans* identity formation experienced by Ukrainian individuals that has been shortly described and conceptualizes above. In the next two sections, my findings are structured applying identified two stages.

i. First stage: experiential knowledge meets popular wisdom

Describing early childhood, Ukrainian trans* individuals recall experiences of being completely unaware about the existence of sex and gender categories as well as about the distinction between these concepts. They performed themselves in a way, which they perceived to be 'authentic' and enjoyed freely "being who they are", without any influence of knowledge about sex/gender binary on their behavior, appearance and understanding of self. To illustrate, one of my respondent stated:

"*I was just a happy child, I played with toys, what I wanted, and dressed as I wanted. I didn't relate myself to any category, neither gender nor sex. I didn't know that these words exist, what they mean and there is a difference between them".*

In other words, during their early-life period, individuals experienced freedom of self-expression, since the schema that outlined their identity had not constituted any knowledge about social expectations of gender performance of sex. Thus, in principle, their identity was not impacted by social discourse.

However, this early period shortly ended in the process of interaction with others; right after an event or series of events brought their direct attention about their self- performance 'mismatch' with social expectations, as to how they should perform gender according to their sex assigned at birth. For many, these events, which marked the conflict between preferred and 'appropriate' performance of gender, resulted in a social isolation and alienation, and, consequently, in self-identifying themselves as being "different", "weird" or "deviant". At this

stage, they learned and signified the knowledge about sex/gender binary system. Subsequently, their experiential knowledge that outline their self-identity modified in accordance with popular system of knowledge that transmitted hegemonic social discourse about sex and gender as binary system.

The popular wisdom system of knowledge was communicated to individuals by social agents, such as parents, educators and peers. In the process of social interaction with them, my respondents started to learn that there are two gender categories like "boys and girls", which significantly differ in a way they enact themselves in society. This pattern of learning about gender categories is typical for my informants as well as for the trans* individuals interviewed by Gagne and Tewksbury (1999).

However, while their respondents claimed to 'learn gender order' between three and five years old, in my sample, respondent recalled learning about gender binary through *various* life-stages – from early childhood to late adolescence. From the stories told by my respondents, I identified three scenarios of learning about gender/sex-binary order by Ukrainian trans* people depending on the age in which they learned about gender categories. These are: 1) in early infancy (three to five years old), because it was enforced by parents (or, for one of my respondents, educators in an orphanage); 2) in later childhood (five to twelve years old), learned through first interaction with others outside family, for example, peers or teachers at school; 3) during adolescence (twelve years old and older), communicated by teenager peers in relation to sexual relationships and heterosexual norms.

For those who experienced the first scenario, there was a conflict between my respondents and their parents regarding appearance or behavior that took place in early childhood and attracted their attention to existence of gender categories such as "boys and girls". My respondents reported to prefer clothing, haircuts and toys that mismatched from those socially associated with their assigned sex. Thus, their parents introduced to them the binary-categories system. For example, one male-to-female transsexual informant said:

"*I wanted to wear a dress, have a long hair and put a bow on it. And I couldn't understand why my mom was against it. When I started to cry, she told me that there are boys*

and girls. I am a boy, so I could not wear it. It was still not clear to me, but what could I do… I was 4 years old, I just accepted the rule and tried to behave like a boy… But inside I knew that it was just a pretension, I was not a boy! I was a girl. But how to convince my mom about it, I didn't know how".

As the quote illustrates, this respondent was enforced by her mother to perform gender in the socially prescribed way. The knowledge about gender binary system learned from her mother was not questioned by her, but rather internalized as an absolute truth. However, being unable to perform gender in accordance with her assigned by birth sex, she challenged the 'prescription' of male gender identity.

The rest of my respondents that learned the gender binary order during early childhood experienced a similar scenario to the one quoted above, with just slight differences among the roots of the conflict, and between them and their parents. For all of them, it was impossible to resist to the power of hegemonic social discourse. Thus, they completely internalized the popular system of knowledge about gender binary acquired from their parents and attempted to conform to social expectations about the gendered appearance and behavior. However, struggling to perform gender in socially prescribed way, because this manner did not match with their experiential knowledge about themselves, they questioned and challenged the correctness of their socially assigned gender identity. This situation is similar to findings of Gagne and Tewksbury (1999) with respect to their male-to-female respondents who were given direct commands to stop feminine conducts and to involve in more masculine pursues. Alike for my informants, that resulted on them repressing or hiding feminine aspects of the self, by limiting interactions with others or by engaging in masculine undertakings.

The second scenario (from five to twelve years old) is typical for those respondents that learned about the gender binary system in the late childhood. These individuals recollect memories about early childhood, in which their parents did not signified and explain differences between girls and boys. However, between five and twelve years old, the importance of gender binary categorization for successful social interaction was stressed to them in the process of self-comparison and communication with their peers, who had already internalized gender binary categorization. Similarly to the first scenario, the mismatch between my informants'

self-performance and social expectations about sex/gender binary was related to appearance and behavior. A male-to-female respondent, who was excluded from games with her peers because of the incongruity between her masculine appearance and feminine behavior, explained:

I was a boy outside, but behaved like a girl, so they [other children], who were already educated about the difference between girls and boys, couldn't understand who I was and preferred not to play with me… I wanted to play with dolls together with other girls, but they were bulling me, saying that I am a boy and they don't want to share their toys with me. For me, it was really difficult to understand what the problem was and who I was indeed, because I have never thought about it before. For my parents, I was just their bellowed child. But at that moment, I realized that I didn't want to be a boy and play in cars. So, I just stayed alone and thought I was a weirdo.

In this sense, for this respondent and for those who experienced the scenario alike, the mismatch between their self-performance and social expectations about gendered appearance and behavior became visible during late childhood in the process of interaction with peers. However, despite the latter in comparison with the first scenario life-stage during which the social discourse about gender was encountered and signified, and different social agents who transmitted the knowledge about gender binary, it was fully internalized by individuals who followed the second scenario. As in the first scenario, individuals who followed the second scenario still found difficult to perform gender in the way that was expected from them, so that they struggled to accept the gender identity that had been socially assigned to them.

This scenario is similar to that presented by Gagne and Tewksbury, in which trans* individual's understandings of their own placement in the binary system was brought by their interaction with others. As the authors mention "those children who, before starting school, had been allowed to play with girls and engage in feminine activities recalled being shocked to discover that they were not socially "one of the girls" when they went to school" (1999, p. 69). Yet, it is important to be clear that such experiences were suffered by those trans* Ukrainians whose parents had not explained differences between girls and boys.

In the case of following the third scenario (as from twelve years old), individuals signified gender binary during adolescence. They reported that they grew surrounded by people, both parents and peer friends, that allowed them to freely express themselves in everything related to appearance or behavior, even if that could be transgressive in terms of the hegemonic social discourse about gender binary. They recall that despite awareness about gender binary during childhood, they did not relate this categorization with themselves. For example, one of the respondents explained that:

"Of course, I knew that there were girls and boys. But I didn't care. I did what I wanted and all my friends and family were fine with that. I didn't waste my time thinking on 'Am I a girl or a boy?' I just enjoyed myself and was really happy child".

However, a noticeable mismatch between their homosexual preferences that appeared in adolescence and the heteronormativity of peers resulted in the recognition of sex/gender as important categorization necessary for successful social interaction. One of my female-to-male respondents explained this in the following way:

"I was wearing pants and doing karate and nobody said me anything. I was fine with being like [emphasized] a guy. When you are child such things are not important! The time when it becomes importance was the 'mating period'. For example, I started to understand the importance of either being [emphasized] boy or girl only when I started to be sexually attracted to my friend-girl [in Russian the world friend is distinctively gendered (see section Contextualization)]. I knew that it was wrong, because we were the same sex, girls, and she wanted to date with a guy as all other girls. Here to be like [emphasized] a boy was not enough. That was the moment when I realized that I want to be [emphasized] a guy."

As the quote above illustrates, in the third scenario, female-to-male trans* individuals, whose significant others, such as friends and family, did not enforce him to perform gender in accordance with socially prescribed binary order during childhood, realized gender/sex categorization during puberty. During this life-stage, the mismatch between their sexual preferences with heterosexual norms made them recognize the importance of this categorization, as well as to internalize the knowledge about sex/gender binary, what led to a

strong will to have a gender identity opposite to the one determined by society. Such situation sharply contrast with findings of Gagne and Tewksbury (1999). This is because, all their respondent experienced the collision of popular wisdom with their base of experiential knowledge about sex/gender *in childhood*, while, individuals in Ukraine who experienced the third scenario of learning about sex/gender binary report enjoying gender freedom till adolescence.

The differences between the above three scenarios of learning about sex/gender categorization and its signification for successful social interaction are 1) the life-stages on which my respondents experienced the mismatch with social expectations about gender performance of themselves, and 2) the social actors which transmitted the popular wisdom system of knowledge. However, despite these variances, these scenarios uniformly resulted into the complete internalization of gender categorization by all my respondents. Moreover, all of them reported experiencing struggles to accept socially prescribed gender identity. In these struggles to conform to social norms in public gender performance, they also recall resistance to them in privatized settings. For example, one of the interviewees said:

I was trying to be a normal guy. I was wearing male clothes, I did sports and everything… But it was not working very well. I still felt that I could not do that. I didn't belong there. So, I was wearing my mom's clothes while nobody saw me and enjoyed being myself. Hiding my real-self was making me feel so alone and so different from others…I didn't know how to understand this double-life, how to name it. I didn't know who I am.

Describing their difficulties with conforming to social norms in public, while feeling relief in private, was a narrative common to all my respondents so as to 'hide their real-self'. This mismatch between public and private gender performance caused that all of them struggled with self-identifying accomplished with negative self-perception as "monsters", "weirdos" and "deviants". A similar scenario was experienced by respondents of Gagne and Tewksbury. One preoperative transsexual who had been living full-time as a woman for several years mentioned that cross-dressing made her feel whole, as to that she felt as 'the person she supposed to be'. Yet, she experienced the frustration of having to hide it and 'fear of the punishment that would come from it (1999, p. 71).

These struggles are reported to be resolved, when my respondents acquired the information that provided them with an explanation of their experiences and suggested a socially recognized and accepted identity as trans*. This knowledge, communicated through either the media or via the queer community, was internalized by individuals and became part of experiential systems of knowledge which outlined their identities as trans* persons. The transition to the second stage of the process that proceeded to trans* identity, in which experiential system of knowledge was modified in accordance with knowledge transmitted by mediated and subcultural knowledge systems, is detailed below.

ii. Second stage: experiential knowledge meets mediated knowledge/subcultural knowledge

For my respondents, the age in which experiential self-understanding met popular wisdom seemed to determine the moment in which they acquired knowledge about trans* phenomena. Therefore, as well as on the stage of learning sex/gender binary order, there were three respective scenarios of learning about trans*. Those who learned about gender binary in early infancy reported that they encountered information about trans* phenomena in childhood (from five to twelve years old) through mass media sources such as newsletters, popular magazines or TV-programs. Individuals whose signification of gender/sex categories took place during childhood, were introduced to information about trans* phenomena by LGBT community members from fourteen to twenty years old. The rest of my sample, persons who recognized their 'difference' while being teenagers also familiarized with trans* concepts via contacts with the Ukrainian LGB subculture. Additionally, they recall to be critical about the information acquired and to accomplish it with knowledge received reviewing Internet sources in English language.

In the first scenario, my respondents encountered the messages of the media that defined people who do not fit into sex/gender binary as transsexuals and called their experiences as transsexual-*ism* what is a *mental disease*, "mistake of nature", that has a treatment, which is sexual reassignment surgery (SRS). My respondents, who were children while receiving this knowledge, recall being extremely happy to discover that, even though the struggles they

experience are caused by disease, there is a name and treatment for that. The relief that they felt after finding out this information, made them immediately internalize it and to identify themselves as transsexuals. That was also the reason for them to start planning to undergo a SRS as soon as it would be possible. For example, one of my respondents said:

In one magazine, I bumped into the article about such category of people as transsexuals. These people trapped in wrong body, because their gender doesn't coincide with sex. Once I read it, I understood that it was about me. It was briefly explained that it is a disease that could be treated by a sexual reassignment surgery. In that moment, I thought "Wow! My problem not only has a name, but also a solution!" Since then, to do SRS became my life-goal.

As this respondent, all individuals who obtained knowledge about trans* phenomena in such a way through the Media, also identified themselves as transsexuals, and understood their experiences as consequence of a disease; and so, they reported to feel a strong need to undergo a SRS in order to resolve their struggles.

Those individuals who followed *the second scenario* and who learned about trans* phenomena during their adolescence acquired this knowledge from members of LGB communities, which they joined thinking that they were homosexual. This subcultural system of knowledge transmitted messages, in some aspects, similar to those which were communicated by mediated system of knowledge and described just above. They were also told that their experiences of mismatch with social expectations about gender was a "disease". However, this "disease" was defined not as 'mental', but as 'psychological', and called "transsexual-*ity*" instead of "transsexual-*ism'*. Still, the only treatment suggested was sexual reassignment surgery. For instance, one of respondents who learn about trans* phenomena in this way, explained:

Thinking that I was a butch lesbian, I got involved in the LGB community. But never either I or other members of our group felt that this identity fits me. Ones, one of my friends told me that she knew somebody with similar situation, who is also not really a lesbian, but more like a guy. This person called himself transsexual. We met with him, shared our experiences and feelings which were just the same! I felt the happiest person in the world, because I was not

alone, there were other transsexuals! Further, he explained me that willing to be a man is nothing wrong and mad as some people may say. But, it is quite unusual psychological deviation, which can be corrected if to undergo SRS.

Other informants that learned about trans* also from the Ukrainian LGB community during their puberty told me similar stories about feeling relief after encountering people with the same experiences and as result identifying themselves as transsexuals and intending to undergo SRS.

In the third scenario, those of my informants who learned about the sex/gender binary order during puberty acquired knowledge about trans* during adulthood. Firstly, they were introduced to the information about trans* phenomena by other members of queer communities, to which they belonged identifying themselves either as extremely masculine lesbians or as exceptionally feminine gays. The knowledge they acquired was from individuals who identified themselves as transsexuals, and that understood their experiences either as a disease or as a social deviation that should be either cured or corrected by undergoing a SRS. However, those individuals who were already adults in the moment of acquiring this knowledge recall to be critical about such an interpretation about their experiences. They conducted a further research on the internet looking for alternative explanations, and, in this way, they encountered the concept of "transgender" introduced by Leslie Fienberg. Thereon, one of them explained:

Even thought I was an active member of the Ukrainian LGB community, I felt as an outsider there. I was different, my queerness was not my homosexual preferences. I was not a butch lesbian… I was more like a man. In our group, there was a person who had the same feelings. When we got to talk, she explained me that we both have a disease, which is called transsexualism. But I didn't think I was sick or something, I was just different […] Thanks God, I know English, so I started to search in the Internet for some alternatives of being gay or transsexual. That's how I found this person, Leslie Fienberg. She explained everything so clearly! I thought "Wow! Finally, it makes sense! It is not me that is a problem, but it is this social system of categories. That doesn't let transgender people, who don't fit in socially constructed gender binary categories, to be themselves." – In that moment I realized that I am

transgender, because I want to be free from this gender categories, I want not to care what other people say and to be a man as I feel.

Just like this informant, other individuals who acquired knowledge already in adulthood followed the same pattern of receiving messages transmitted by Ukrainian subcultural system of knowledge about trans* experiences as 'disease', but refusing to internalize it, thus looking for alternative sources of information. As a result, they acquired the knowledge about the concept of transgender suggested by Leslie Fienberg, which they internalized, and, thus, identified themselves as transgender persons. During the interview, transgender respondents expressed the conviction in that their identity is superior to transsexual one. They proclaimed that only because of their "privilege" of having internet-access and English-proficiency provided them with an opportunity to obtain more information about experience of the mismatch with sex/gender binary, and to form an understanding of themselves as "different, but not sick".

Therefore, from the narratives of my respondents I identified that all of them in their search for an explanation of their experiences of mismatch with sex/gender binary acquired the information about trans* phenomena. This knowledge seemed to be fully internalized by them and to determine their self-identities. In such way, similarly to Gagne and Tewksbury's (1999) findings of their sample, I demonstrated how knowledge appear to have affected individuals' experiential understandings of self and so they alter their identities accordingly. This shows that individuals cannot escape the effect of knowledge systems and the hegemonic discourse. Additionally, unlike in homogeneous sample of Gagne and Tewkesbury's (1999) study, where all respondents report to encounter the notion of gender during early childhood, my respondents learned about gender categories in different ages. As I found out, it caused that my informants acquired information about trans* phenomena during various life-periods, thus were impacted by diverse systems of knowledge, either media or subcultural. That resulted in formation of different types of experiential system of knowledge that underlay their either transsexual or transgender identities.

b. Trans identity formation process: two Stages, three Scenarios, and three types of self-identity*

To sum up, the sections above have presented the detailed description of the process which preceded my respondents to self-identify themselves as trans* persons. Firstly, individuals have learned about gender binary order because of the experience of the clash between their experiential system of knowledge and popular wisdom. Being unable to perform themselves in accordance with gender norms, they struggled to identify themselves. These struggles were resolved, when they acquired the information about trans* phenomena through either media or subcultural systems of knowledge, which they internalized, because it provided them with socially recognized gender identity. There were identified and specified three scenarios of this process typical for interviewed Ukrainian trans* individuals. These scenarios are summarized in the following table:

Table 2. Three scenarios of forming trans* identity.

Scenario	**1st scenario**	**2nd scenario**	**3rd scenario**
1st stage: experiential knowledge meets popular wisdom			
Learning of gender binary order	Early in childhood	Later in childhood	In adolescence
2nd stage: experiential knowledge meets mediated knowledge/subcultural knowledge			
Acquiring information about trans*	Late childhood	Adolescence	Adulthood
Source of information (transmitter of knowledge)	Mass media (mediated system of knowledge)	LGB community (subcultural system of knowledge)	LGB community + English Internet sources (subcultural system of knowledge)

Information acquired	Transsexual-*ism* is a mental disease; SRS is a treatment	Transsexual-*ity* is a psychological deviation, SRS is a correction	Transsexual-*ism/-ity* is disease/deviation + transgender is a gender variant person, sex/gender binary is socially constructed
Self-Identity	Transsexual	Transsexual	Transgender

As the *Table 2* illustrates, the first and the second scenarios of this process resulted in self-identity as transsexual, while as a result of the third scenario of this process, individuals identified themselves as transgender. Depending on the way in which individuals interact with other social agents, and the knowledge these social agents transmit to them, the understanding of their experiences and self is formed and transformed. Various scenarios of this process have resulted in the formation of different types of experiential system of knowledge that outline distinctive trans* identities.

B. Trans identity of Ukrainian individuals and Western scientific narratives*

In this section, I examine the relation between trans* identities of Ukrainian individuals and Western scientific narratives. Firstly, I detail my findings of the informational schemas that form experiential systems of knowledge that outline trans* identities of my respondents. Further, I discuss these systems of knowledge in relation to Western authenticity, performative and transgression science discourses. In such way, I intend to support the point of Namaste (2000) that the social discourse about trans is constructed by scientific discourse, and to illustrate the globalization of Western science discourse.

a. Understanding of Sex, Gender and Trans: What Outlines Trans* Identity*

Aiming to describe the schema that outline trans* identity of my respondents, I asked them several questions specifically aimed to reveal their understanding of sex/gender binary in relation to their experiences as trans* persons. Firstly, as the words ‘gender’ and ‘sex’ are not

originally distinguished in Russian and in Ukrainian languages, my research participants were particularly asked to define them. Then, they were asked to explain the relationship between sex and gender categories. Finally, it was asked them to define the word 'trans'. Further, they were asked to explain their understanding of relations between sex/gender binary and their experiences. From the data collected, I reveled three types of experiential systems of knowledge that outline transsexual and transgender identities, which appear to be formed by three scenarios of the process of trans* identity formation which was described in the first part of this chapter.

The first type of experiential system of knowledge was the case for those individuals who followed the first scenario of learning sex/gender and trans* during childhood. Uniformly, they described their experiences using the narrative "I was born in wrong body" and using words such as "abnormal", "insane", "natural defect" and "disease", "transsexual-*ism*". Being asked to define notions of gender and sex, or to relate them with their experiences, most of them struggled to answer. Some of them returned the question to me, asking me to define these words. Finally, the common for all of them definition was that gender is an intrinsic component of personality, determined at birth by sex as a set of male/female genitalia. For instance, one of these research participants, said:

Each of us has a feminine or masculine origin. Man must be a man and women must be a woman. There is no further explanation. Can you define it? You just feel it inside, and you know who you are. Sometimes it happens something, maybe mom falls during pregnancy. So, a child with feminine origin is born in the wrong body with wrong genitalia. It is a disease and should be treated…That is somehow what happened to me, that's why I want to undergo SRS, so my body will coincide with a soul.

This respondent as well as others that answered in similar terms considered sexual reassignment surgery to be the only treatment for their 'disease'. They all expressed the belief that SRS allows people to have "a body that coincides with a soul". I interpret this definition of gendered 'soul' as 'the self' that is superior to the body. 'The body' in the narratives of my respondents is mostly mentioned in relationship with genitals and secondary sexual characteristics. Thus, I read it as their understanding of the notion of 'sex'. Generally, the first experiential system of knowledge constituted in understanding of gender/sex binary as an

inevitable law of nature. Therefore, the personal experience of mismatch with this order was interpreted as a disease.

The second type of experiential system of knowledge was typical for those my respondents who followed the second scenario of recognizing gender categories and learning about trans* phenomena during late childhood. They explained their mismatch with sex/gender binary as a "psychological deviance, which is called transsexuality". They defined gender as "social sex" departing from the assumption that "normally sex [what they explained as genitals] determine gender". They considered sex/gender binary system to be functional and useful in organizing interaction among people, because it is a "fundamental law of society that has existed for ages and, thus, determined the human psychology". Relating sex/gender binary with their experiences, my respondents explained gender in terms of psychological qualities, which men and women must have and which roles they should perform in society. To illustrate this point, for example, one of them explained:

Gender categories organize life and makes it simpler. I know what to expect and how to act when I am looking for a sexual partner […] Since apes there were man and women. Women are tender and week, so they stayed at home. Men are strong and brave, so they hunted. Now, it is the same! Men is a breadwinner and women should take care of home and children. I am a man, because I am strong and want to take care of tender women. But try to imagine that your man suddenly has a breast. It is weird and abnormal. So, in order me to be able to be a man, I need to get rid of these extra-parts of my body.

Such understanding of their own body, which should be altered in order to perform preferable gender, was expressed by all respondents that understood gender as 'social sex'. And so, the necessity of altering their body was explained in terms of inevitability from pressure of social norms. Thus, the second type of experiential system of knowledge constitutes understanding of sex/gender binary as a social order, which determined psychological traits normal for man and for women. Any personal deviance from these norms should be corrected in order to keep this order to function and structure society.

Finally, two individuals who followed the third scenario of coming to trans* identity in adolescence articulated the understanding of the relationship between sex, gender and trans* experiences which I interpret as the third type of experiential system of knowledge. They considered their experiences of mismatch with social expectation regarding gender performance to be consequences of "stupid gender stereotypes", and denied the idea of gender/sex binary and claimed for "free choice between pink and blue". Gender was defined by them as a "groundless categorization of appropriate and inappropriate" performance of the self in society, which does not depend on sex. Relating these statements with their own bodies and selves, they expressed a strong desire to enact gender freely from social expectations about gender performance of sex. One of them stated:

All these limitations that only girls can wear skirt are just bullshit. Look at Scottish men! Why that I want to dress or how I want to behave is determined by what I have in my pants? I want a freedom in self-expression. If I want to be a woman today – it is fine, and a man the other day – it is fine also. What is this man and woman about, anyway? All these categories don't make sense…

Additionally to claiming for freedom from gender and sex categories, individuals with transgender identity also expressed a strong disapproval of transsexual individuals and their "obsession with SRS as a solution of their problem". However, despite their disapproval thereof, they expressed their own intention to undergo SRS in near future. One of these respondents explained:

They [transsexuals] think they are sick or deviant. And they are convinced that SRS is a panacea that may fix all their problems. But it is not true! We are not ill and SRS is just one more way to impose on us, gender variant people, socially constructed sex/gender binary order…On the other hand, we live in society, in which everything is either for women or for men. And it doesn't matter whether you believe it to be socially constructed or not, you don't have other choice than just belong to one of those categories. I prefer to be a man. But nobody would recognize me as a man if I have a patronymic "Petrovna" [feminine patronymic, see discussion in the Contextualization chapter] and "sex: female" in my passport. To have a proper passport, I also need SRS, obviously. You know how things work here in Ukraine.

This quote illustrates that individuals with the third type of experiential system of knowledge who self-identified themselves as transgender, rejected the interpretation that their experiences were either a ‘disease’ or a ‘deviation’, claiming that SRS was not a treat, but one more way of normalization of the ‘gender variant’ experiences, while sex/gender binary is a socially constructed order. However, they also understood this order to be something inevitable; and so, they expressed their intention to conform to it by undergoing a SRS. The explanation they provided refers to specifics of Ukrainian context, where the gender recognition system, together with a highly gendered language creates an environment in which individuals do not have other choice but to conform with discursive pressure. Therefore, in accordance to the third type of experiential system of knowledge, individuals demonstrate a disapproval of sex/gender binary system. However, they also express a desire to belong to one of gender categories, what is explained by the inevitability of binary order in society.

Thus, in this section, there were described three ways of understanding sex and gender categorization in relation to trans* experiences that form three types of experiential systems of knowledge which outlined my respondents’ identities as transsexual or transgender persons. They are summarized in the following table:

Table 3. Types of experiential system of knowledge that outline trans* identities.

	1st type of experiential system of knowledge	**2nd type of experiential system of knowledge**	**3rd type of experiential system of knowledge**
Identity	Transsexual	Transsexual	Transgender
Understanding of sex/gender binary	Sex/gender binary is "immutable law of nature"	Sex/gender binary is "immutable social order"	Sex/gender binary is socially constructed
*Understanding of own trans*sex/gender experiences*	Transsexualism is a mental disease, which should be treated by undergoing SRS	Transsexuality is a psychological deviation, which should be corrected by undergoing SRS	Transgender people should be free to express themselves regardless gender stereotypes. However, as dictates of sex/gender binary are inevitable in Ukraine, even trans* people must undergo SRS in order to change their bodies and documents, thus to be able to present themselves in society in preferred gender.
Intention to undergo SRS	Yes	Yes	Yes

The *Table 3* demonstrates that the understanding of sex and gender categorization in relation to trans* experiences significantly varies among different types of experiential systems of knowledge that outline trans* identities. These differences appear to be consequence of three different scenarios of the process by which the knowledge about gender and trans* phenomena was acquired and internalized by individuals whom I interviewed. I would argue that this

finding further exemplifies the tendency of how social discourses impact the trans* identity of individuals, which has been identified and described in the first part of this chapter.

However, despite differences between the experiential systems of knowledge that outlined their trans* identities, all my respondents claimed a uniform intention to undergo a SRS. Individuals who identified themselves as transsexuals considered the surgery to be treatment of their disease, while self-identified transgender persons explained their intention by discursive pressures and specifics of Ukrainian contexts. In the next section, I discuss these findings in relation to Western science discourses intending to illustrate the tendency of them to be globalized and to support Namaste's (2000) argument that social discourse about trans* is constructed by theoretical narratives.

b. Trans identities in Ukraine and Western science discourses*

In this section, I examine the relations between three types of experiential knowledge systems that outline trans* identities of Ukrainian individuals identified above and the authenticity, performativity and transgression Western science discourses. In such way, I intend to illustrate that social discourse about trans* in Ukraine is influences by Western discourses that according to Namaste's (2000) claim are constructed by theoretical narratives. From my data, I identified considerable similarities between the information that individuals acquire in the process of trans* identity formation, the experiential systems of knowledge (further, I refer to it as ESK) that outlined their trans* identities and fundamental assumptions of Western scientific discourses. The table below compile my findings previously described in this chapter and the Hird's (2002) typology of fundamental assumptions of authenticity, performative and transgression theoretical paradigms about trans* phenomena:

Table 4. Trans* identities of individuals in Ukraine and Western science discourses.

The kind of knowledge transmitted to individuals by social discourse	**The experiential system of knowledge that outline identity as trans* person**	**Fundamental assumptions of science discourses**
Mediated system of knowledge	*1st type of ESK– outlines self-identity as transsexual*	*Authenticity science discourse*
Transsexual-*ism* is a mental disease	Sex/gender binary is "immutable law of nature", transsexualism is a mental disease	Sex and gender are 'real', stable, fixed and immutable categories, trans* experiences are abnormal, deviant, pathological
Subcultural system of knowledge (Ukrainian LGBT community)	*2nd type of ESK - outlines transsexual identity*	*Authenticity science discourse*
Transsexual-*ity* is a psychological deviation	Sex/gender binary is "immutable social order", transsexuality is a psychological deviation	Sex and gender are 'real', stable, fixed and immutable categories, trans* experiences are abnormal, deviant, pathological
English Internet sources (speeches of Leslie Fienberg)	*3rd type of ESK– outlines identity as transgender*	*Performativity science discourse*
Transgender is a gender variant person, sex/gender binary is socially constructed	Sex/gender binary is socially constructed, gender variant people should be free to express themselves regardless gender stereotypes	Gender and sex are 'fictive', socially constructed and discursively produced notions that are part of power relations systems. Trans* experiences can throw light into the processes of naturalization and essentialization of sex and gender in contemporary society.

As the *Table 4* demonstrates, the mediated and subcultural systems of knowledge transmitted to individuals the information that became a part of their experiential system of knowledge outlining their identities as transsexual. This information is almost identical to the fundamental assumptions that construct authenticity science discourse. In particular, transsexual individuals' narratives about their experiences as "consequences of mental/psychological diseases" and sex/gender binary as an "immutable law of nature" seem *to*

replicate narratives of the medical discourse constructed by authenticity science discourse. On the other hand, transgender people tend to speak about sex/gender categories and their experiences in terms of the interpretation suggested by Leslie Fienberg. This knowledge, which they acquired from English internet sources, particularly, understanding of sex and gender as socially constructed categories, *completely coincides* with the central claim of performativity science discourse.

These similarities between the knowledge that outlines trans* identities of Ukrainian individuals and the Western science interpretation of trans* phenomena reveal that there is the relationship between Ukrainian and Western discourses about trans* people. This relationship as well as the testimonials of transgender individuals that English internet sources determined the understanding of their trans* experiences (detailed in the previous section) illustrates the tendency of Western trans* discourses to 'globalize' beyond US and Western Europe (Valentine, 2005, Stryker, 2013) and to be 'exported' and integrated into Ukrainian discourse about trans* people. What is more, these discourses seem to replicate theoretical narratives of Western scientist. I consider this finding to be an illustrative example of Namaste's (2000) claim that social discourse about trans* phenomena is constructed by academics. While Namaste (2000) derives this claim from the analysis of the ways in which science discourse significantly impacts lives of trans* people via construction of policies and regulations, my findings described above demonstrate that theoretical narratives influence the way trans* people understand their experience that determine their self-identity and, also, form the intention to undergo sexual reassignment surgery.

Additionally, analyzing the relationship between the knowledge that outlines trans* identities of Ukrainian individuals and the Western science interpretations of trans* phenomena (illustrated in the Table 4), I identified that Ukrainian trans* individuals do not proclaim anything similar to the narratives produced by *transgressive* Western science discourse. In attempt to explain this finding, I returned to my theoretical framework, in particular to Hird's (2002) typology of theoretical paradigms that formed the basis of my analysis of various Western science discourses about trans*.

As Stryker (2006) notices, the most of modern societies are dominated by *the pathological* social discourse about trans* phenomena, replicates medical discourse that is formed by authenticity theoretical narratives. This may explain why the authenticity science discourse dominates in the Ukrainian social discourse and why most my respondents understand their experiences as a disease similarly to the pathological interpretation. Further, it explains that the intention to undergo SRS was uniform for all my respondents including those who identify themselves as transgender and denied pathological interpretation of trans* experience. According to their claims, the power of sex/gender binary normative order is inevitable due to highly gendered language and the necessity of legal gender recognition in order to successfully interact in Ukrainian society. This power of discursive pressure underlines specifics of Ukrainian context as it significantly differs from findings of Gagne and Tewksbury's (1999) study, which they conclude with the claim that their respondents "were not passive recipients of the knowledge offered by various systems" and resisted to them (p.80).

Moreover, the authenticity, performative and transgressive theoretical paradigms about trans* phenomena were developed sequentially, as a reaction and a critique on previously produced interpretation of trans* experiences (Hird, 2002). Considering that, I suspect that Western science discourses are integrating into Ukrainian discourse one after another. Also, as Ukraine is a post-soviet country, where gender had been completely silenced till the ninetieth (Coleman & Sandfort, 2014, Hankivsky & Salnykova, 2013), I expect that its social discourses about sex/gender and trans* phenomena started to be influenced by Western discourses only after the fall of 'iron curtain'. That may explain the fact that the transgressive science discourse, which was developed the latest, has not started to circulate in Ukraine; thus, as my findings demonstrate, that has not impacted lives of Ukrainian individuals. This hypothesis may be supported by the other finding of this study about the availability of the knowledge produced by performative science discourse only for those Ukrainians who acquired information about trans* during their adulthood, had access to the Internet and English proficiency. Also, that illustrates that the performative science discourse yet has not been contextualized into Ukrainian or Russian languages.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

In this thesis, I have examined the ways in which social discourse affects the identity formation process of Ukrainian trans* individuals. For that purpose, I have replicated the study of Gagne and Tewksbury's (1999) and combined premises of symbolical interactionism and poststructuralism theories. In this sense, my analysis was based on the presumptions that in the process of social interaction individuals acquire the knowledge that being internalized outlines their identities. The knowledge they obtain is a subject of the power of social discourse, which in turn influences on trans* identity formation process.

Further, I addressed in my analysis two recently discovered trends: 1) 'globalization' of Anglophone trans* discourse beyond US and Western Europe borders (Valentine, 2005, Stryker, 2013); and 2) construction of social discourse about trans* people by theoretical narratives (Namaste, 2000). Thus, I uncover how Ukrainian social discourse is related to Western science discourses.

A. Summary of findings

Among my sample, it appears that the formation process of trans* identity consists of two stages. Firstly, individuals learn gender binary order as the result of experiencing the mismatch between comfortable for them self-expression and social expectations about gender performance. Secondly, struggling to identify themselves in accordance with gender binary categorization, they acquire the information about trans* phenomena. As this information provides them with socially accepted identity and resolution of their struggles, they internalized it and defined their experiences as trans*.

Moreover, there were identified three various scenarios of passing through these two stages of the process of trans* identity formation. The life-period of the first stage (infancy, late childhood or adolescence), on which individuals learned and signified gender binary, seems to determine the age (early childhood, adolescence, or adulthood) of the second stage on which they looked for the explanation of their gender variant experiences and encountered the information about trans* phenomena. The age in which this knowledge was acquired conditions the source of information and the informational content.

In the first scenario, passing the first stage in infancy, individuals go through the second stage during their childhood and bump into the mass media messages that educate them that trans* phenomena are 'mental disease'. The internalization of this information results in that they self-identify as transsexuals.

The second scenario is typical for those of my informants who have gone through the first stage of trans* identity formation in late childhood, thus, passed the second one during adolescence. Primarily, they understood their experiences as homosexual, therefore, joined Ukrainian LGBT community, whose members explained them that their gender variant experiences are the result of a psychological deviation called 'transsexuality'. Having internalized this knowledge, they identified themselves as transsexual persons.

In the case of following the third scenario, my respondents report to freely express themselves regardless gender binary order until their homosexual preferences had signified for them sex/gender binary what happened during adolescence. Alike those individuals who followed the second scenario summarized above, they also acquired the information about trans* phenomena from members of LGB community, who claimed that it a psychological pathology. Receiving this knowledge, they had already come to adulthood and recalled to be critical about such an interpretation, so as to look for alternative explanation of their experiences. The works of Leslie Fienberg, which they encountered in Anglophone internet sources, provided them with the knowledge they internalized as a basis of their transgender identity.

Therefore, there were three manners in which Ukrainian social discourse about gender and trans* impacted individuals, while they were passing through the process of identity formation. These scenarios determined the kind of knowledge systems that outlay their trans* identities either as transsexual with mental/psychological pathology, or transgender as gender variant person.

The analysis of these three kinds of knowledge systems in relationship with Western science discourses shows that Ukrainian trans* individuals appear to define sex/gender

categorization and to explain their experiences similarly to the narratives constructed by authenticity or performative theories about trans* people. I interpret these findings to illustrate the tendency of Anglophone trans* discourse to be moving beyond US and Western Europe borders and to be adopted by Ukrainians. Like in most of contemporary societies (Stryker, 2006), the discourse of pathologizing trans* people seems to be prevalent in Ukraine. The performative discourse shows to be not yet contextualized into Ukrainian or Russian languages and to be replicated in narratives of individuals with English proficiency. Also, it appears that the most recently constructed performative discourse has not start to circulate in Ukraine.

Further, I have discussed my fieldwork to be illustrative example of that discourses about trans* phenomena are constructed by theoretical narratives. I argue that the influence of science discourses on lives of trans* people does not end with the construction of policies and regulations as described by Namaste (2000). As my sample demonstrates, theoretical narratives also influence the ways trans* people understand their experiences; determine their self-identities; and enforce to undergo sexual reassignment surgery.

B. Concluding remarks

Therefore, by informing the ways in which Ukrainian individuals pass through the process of trans* identity formation, this study has provided support for the hypothesis suggested by Gagne and Tewksbury (1999) that social discourses influence trans* individuals via determination of the knowledge that outlines their identities. Also, I believe that my findings of the 'import' of Western trans* discourse to Ukraine would underline the importance of exploring local ways of conceptualizing gender, sex and trans* experiences, instead of reproducing Eurocentric concepts, and treating the experiences of trans* people in the West as generalized practices. Finally, as my data exemplifies the impact that theoretical narratives have on trans* individuals' lives through constructing social discourse about them, I hope to boost the call of Namaste (2000) for the social studies that are accountable for people under research and responsible for the knowledge produced.

C. Further research

In this study, I did not claim to explain the origins of trans* experiences. Rather I attempt to illustrate how the knowledge about these phenomena impacts on Ukrainian individuals and the ways they form their identities as trans* persons. A small scale of this research, as well as its focus on trans* individuals, does not allow to claim for generalization of its results. Nevertheless, it may delineate the way for future research projects which can be done to examine how the power relations and hegemonic discourses may influence the identity formation of social actors, including the ways in which knowledge is communicated, and its power conformed or resisted in different societies. Moreover, extensive research can be carried out to understand the complexity of the relationships between anatomical sex, gender performance, and gender identity. Also, I would suggest that future research is needed to examine the dominant pathological discourse about trans* people and the ways in which it impacts their lives in private and public realms including relationship with important others, marriage, divorce, employment, and public presentation.

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Appendices

A. Invitation letter and informed consent to participate in the research

a. About me and the research

My name is Olena Romaniuk and I am a Master student at Lund University (Sweden). Currently, I am writing my master thesis on lived experiences of transgender people in Ukraine. My interest on this topic arose when I worked for the NGO "Insight" conducting a research on respect for human right of transgender people Ukraine (in 2013). The results we obtained were shocking: a lot of cases of discrimination and transphobic violence was reported. Study of literature made me think that such situation may be caused by lack of knowledge at-first hand from transgender people themselves. Therefore, I turn to you to learn about your experience and knowledge. I would be grateful if you agreed to an interview with me where you would share it with me. Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw from research any time.

b. Confidentiality and Anonymity

I promise you that your name and any information that may indicate your identity will be kept in secret. I would like to ask you whether I can record our conversation. I promise to keep the recording safe. If you request a copy of transcription or my analysis, it will be sent to you. Additionally, any further comments on my conclusions are more than welcome.

During our conversation, please, feel free to interrupt me any time. Beforehand, I beg your pardon if I occasionally use inappropriate gendered language or pronoun. I am a non-transgender person researching transgender topics, thus I may be not fully familiar with vocabulary. Also, I totally understand if you reject to answer any questions you are not comfortable with.

c. Contact and Informed Consent

In case you are interested in participating in the study, please, contact me by:
e-mail: …

skype: …
mobile: …
Note that by agreeing to an interview with me you give your informed consent to participate in the study.

B. Interview guide

a. <u>Warming-up questions and socio-economic information</u>

How old are you?

What is your profession?

What is your education?

Do you live in a city/town/village?

b. Main block

I would like to ask you about your transgender experiences and feelings.

How did you first encountered 'gender'?

Possible clarification: How did you first encountered/realized/understood segregation between male/female?

Follow up: In which age did it happened? How did you feel? What did you think? What did you do?

Did you compare yourself with others? With whom?

Follow up: How did you feel? What did you think? What did you do?

Did you speak about 'gender' and 'sex' with others?

Follow up: With whom? What did they say? How did you feel? What did you think? What did you do?

What did it mean for you to be a girl/a boy?

How did you encounter terms 'trans*/transsexual/transgender'?

Follow up: In which age did it happened? How did you feel? What did you think? What did you do?

How did you learn about Sex Reassignment Surgery?

Follow up: What do you think about it? Do you plan to undergo it/have you underwent it? Why?

Can you, please, define ‘trans/transsexual/transgender’?

Do you know other transgender people? How do you communicate with them?

In which gender do you feel comfortable? In which do you live now? / Is it only one? In which one do you represent yourself to your family, sexual partners, friends, in public, in your work place, to institutions? Why?

How do you self-identify in terms of ‘transsexual/transgender’?

What does it mean man/woman and feminine/masculine for you?