



From invisibility to political witch-hunt

The influence of everyday marginalization on the sense of Polish and European belonging among the LGBTQ+ minority in Poland.

Anna Jastrzemska

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Supervisor: Agnes Malmgren

Abstract

Thirty years after the fall of communism and fifteen years after Poland joined the European Union, there have been more steps backwards than forwards in regards to gender and sexual equality. From the very beginning, this has been a cause of tension between Poland and the EU. The aim of this thesis is to investigate how the conflicting constructs of sexual citizenship in Poland and Europe affect the sense of belonging among the Polish gender and sexual minority (LGBTQ+). The thesis is based on in-depth biographical interviews with non-activist LGBTQ+ young adults in Kraków. Narrative analysis is used to investigate how Poland is (re)constructed as a homogenous queerphobic place that is juxtaposed with queer-friendly “rainbow Europe.” The analysis employs Michel Foucault’s concepts of biopolitics and self-regulation, as well as Sara Ahmed’s role of affect in reinforcing social hierarchies. It is discovered that the constant portrayals as the “pervert-enemy of nation” negatively influenced the interviewees’ sense of belonging to Poland, while their hope in Europe prevailed. However, in light of the deteriorating internal situation, their doubts about whether the EU holds power to positively impact their situation were increasing. Instead, they linked their hopes with the bottom-up influence of the freedom of movement and the possibility of “running away” from Poland to Europe. This thesis contributes an example of how the discourse of “rainbow Europe” facilitates European identification among the people who feel marginalized in their nation-states, and investigates its implications. In particular, the “shallowness” of European sense of belonging is discussed. The thesis gives discursive space to the people whose voices usually go unheard and questions where cultural tradition ends and persecution begins. It is also a reflection on the dangers of the right-wing nationalism to the human and minority rights.

Key words: narrative analysis; LGBTQ+; European identity; sexual citizenship

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Glossary and list of abbreviations

LGBTQ+ - lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, queer + other non-heterosexual and non-cisgender identifications – also referred to as gender and sexual minorities

cisgender – identifying with gender assigned at birth

gender-queer – a person who rejects the gender binary and identifies as neither or both female and male

queerphobia – a fear or hatred of queer people, includes homophobia, transphobia, etc.; here used to complement the wide LGBTQ+ acronym

EU - European Union

EUrope – word used to reflect the blending of Europe and the EU in public discourses and my interviews; mostly synonymous with Western Europe

CEE - Central and Eastern Europe

EP - European Parliament

EC - European Commission

ECHR - European Court of Human Rights

CoE - Council of Europe

PiS - *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* - Law and Justice

PO - *Platforma Obywatelska* - Civic Platform

KPH - *Kampania Przeciw Homofobii* - Campaign Against Homophobia - one of the biggest Polish LGBTQ+ organisations, founded by Robert Biedroń

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Polish dispute about sexual orientation quite quickly stopped being about love and acceptance for the “different” forms of desire and sex. And it started being about Poland. Gays and lesbians became hostages of the tragic transformation. In the years 2003-2007 we moved from a liberal vision of a *Gemeinschaft* based on citizenship towards a narrow, cultural vision based on an assumption that Polishness means Catholicism, and ultra-conservative Catholicism at that, full of fears and prejudices. In such context, the slogan “love is love” is sort of off-topic. (Agnieszka Graff, *Rykoszetem*, 137-138)¹

Despite various unions, treaties, and policies aiming to bring the European nation-states closer, the continent remains highly divided. One of the areas with the greatest differences is the social and legal situation of gender and sexual minorities (LGBTQ+). Within the European Union, Poland regularly comes at the bottom of the equality rankings.² The situation of the Polish LGBTQ+ minority has worsened since the Law and Justice party (PiS) won the elections in 2015³ and further deteriorated this year, preceding the elections to the European and Polish parliaments.⁴

The question of the LGBTQ+ rights in Poland is deeply intertwined with the discourse of European values. Polish EU accession process was the first time when the LGBTQ+ minority was openly acknowledged in Poland. Since then, the EU and all-European institutions are constantly brought up in the context of the LGBTQ+ minority in Poland: as supporters of LGBTQ+ organisations in Poland,⁵ in various cases against institutional queerphobia and

¹ to see the long quotes translated from Polish in original, see Appendix.

² “Country Ranking,” Rainbow Europe, accessed 16 May 2019, <https://rainbow-europe.org/country-ranking>

³ Elżbieta Korolczuk and Agnieszka Graff, “Gender as ‘Ebola from Brussels’: The Anticolonial Frame and the Rise of Illiberal Populism,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 43, no. 4 (2018); Weronika Grzebalska and Andrea Petó, “The Gendered Modus Operandi of the Illiberal Transformation in Hungary and Poland.” *Women's Studies International Forum* 68 (2018).

⁴ Agnieszka Graff, Ratna Kapur, Suzanna Danuta Walters, “Introduction: Gender and the Rise of the Global Right,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 44, no 3 (2019).

⁵ e.g. Jon Binnie, “Relational Comparison and LGBTQ Activism in European Cities,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 38, no 3, (2014); Jon Binnie, “Critical Queer Regionality and LGBTQ Politics in Europe,” *Gender, Place & Culture* 23, no 11 (2016); Jon Binnie and Christian Klesse, “‘Like a Bomb in the Gasoline Station’: East–West Migration and Transnational Activism around Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Politics in Poland,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 39, no 7 (2013); Agnieszka Graff, “We Are (Not All) Homophobes: A Report from Poland,” *Feminist Studies* 32, no 2 (2006).

discrimination,⁶ and struggles of same-gender couples for recognition of foreign acts of marriage or problems with inheritance.⁷ Additionally, the European freedom of movement is often identified as an important factor, facilitating the migration of the LGBTQ+ minority to the other EU member states,⁸ allowing same-gender couples to receive a legal recognition abroad,⁹ and letting the heterosexual cisgender part of the population experience more heterogeneous, open cultures, and bring new experiences home.¹⁰ It also facilitates activism, with the most famous example being Robert Biedroń who had founded Campaign Against Homophobia (KPH) after being a member of Outrage UK,¹¹ and in February 2019 started his own political party (Spring).¹² While the disparities between Poland and Western Europe, as well as the EU impact on the LGBTQ+ minority are well-known, there are no studies attempting to gauge how they affect the sense of belonging to Poland and Europe among the non-activist Polish LGBTQ+ minority. It is a gap that this thesis attempts to fill, using in-depth biographical interviews with young adults who identify with the minority.

Following Nira Yuval-Davis, sense of belonging is about the constant process of self- and other-identification or social categorization.¹³ Identifications are understood here through a poststructuralist lens, as multiple, temporal and subject to transition, depending on the sociocultural factors. They are narratives, stories that explain who we are, where we came

⁶ e.g. Joanna Mizielińska and Agata Stasińska, “Prywatne Jest Polityczne: Strategie Emancypacyjne Rodzin z Wyboru w Polsce. Studium Wybranych Przypadków,” *Studia Socjologiczne* 4, no 215 (2014); Anna Lubecka, “Postawy Polaków Wobec Pracy a Mniejszości na Polskim Rynku Pracy,” *Zarządzanie Publiczne* (2009) 1 no 5; Jowita Wycisk, “Postawy Przyszłych Psychologów Wobec Rodzin Nieheteroseksualnych z Dziećmi,” *Studia Socjologiczne* 4, no 215 (2014); Jon Binnie “Neoliberalism, Class, Gender and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Politics in Poland,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 27 (2014); Francesca Romana Ammaturo “The ‘Pink Agenda’: Questioning and Challenging European Homonationalist Sexual Citizenship.” *Sociology* 49, no 6 (2015).

⁷ Krzysztof Arcimowicz, Aleksander Wasiak-Radoszewski, and Katarzyna Dębska, “Polski Dyskurs Publiczny Dotyczący Rodzin z Wyboru w Latach 2003–2013.” *Studia Socjologiczne* 4, no 215 (2014).

⁸ Binnie and Klesse, “‘Like a Bomb in the Gasoline Station’”; Korolczuk and Graff, “Gender as ‘Ebola from Brussels’”; Agnieszka Graff, “Looking at Pictures of Gay Men: Political Uses of Homophobia in Contemporary Poland,” *Public Culture* 22, no 3 (2010)

⁹ Mizielińska and Stasińska, “Prywatne jest Polityczne.”

¹⁰ Binnie and Klesse, “‘Like a Bomb in the Gasoline Station.’”

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² pl. *Wiosna*

¹³ Nira Yuval-Davis, “Belonging and the Politics of Belonging,” in *Contesting Recognition: Culture, Identity and Citizenship*, ed. Janice McLaughlin, Peter Phillimore, and Diane Richardson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); also Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

from, and where we are going.¹⁴ Importantly, especially in a national context, these stories are institutionalised and become a constant message of who belongs and who does not.¹⁵ The question of belonging in this thesis draws on Koselleck's concepts of "space of experience" (Poland) and "horizon of expectations" (EUrope), where one's experiences influence the expectations of the horizon. While the "space of experience" is richly informed by everyday life, the horizon is mostly vague and imaginary.¹⁶ Poland and EUrope are analysed through the sexual citizenship lens, a concept which investigates the processes in which a nation or supranational institutions reproduce gender and sexual norms. Since identifications do not develop in vacuum but are a result of complex power relations in a particular social environment,¹⁷ it is a crucial concept for this thesis, particularly since, as I suggested, the area of sexual citizenship causes tension between Poland and EUrope. This thesis investigates how the dichotomous constructs of Poland and EUrope affect the sense of belonging among the non-activist LGBTQ+ minority.

Research questions

The purpose of this thesis is to shed light on the everyday experiences of marginalization among the non-activist Polish LGBTQ+ people. I aim to analyse how the emerging constructs of sexual citizenship in Poland and EUrope affect their sense of belonging to these communities. The thesis is based on in-depth biographical interviews with non-activist Polish people identifying as a part of the LGBTQ+ minority, aged 18-25, and currently living in Kraków. The focus on non-activists helps avoid rehearsed narratives about Polishness and Europeaness. Instead it gives voice to people whose experiences usually remain unheard, thus, illustrating how they are affected by mechanisms out of their control.

I engage with the following research questions:

¹⁴ Stuart Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," in *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*, ed. Stuart Hall, et al., (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1996); Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*; Umut Özkirimli, *Nationalism and its Futures* (London: Palgrave, 2003).

¹⁵ Yuval-Davis, "Belonging and the Politics of Belonging"; Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*.

¹⁶ Michael Pickering, "Experience as Horizon: Koselleck, expectation and historical time," *Cultural Studies*, 18 no 2 (2004).

¹⁷ e.g. Gavin Brown, Kath Browne and Jason Lim, "Introduction or Why Have a Book on Geographies of Sexualities," in: *Geographies of sexualities. Theory, Practices and Politics*, eds. Kath Browne, Jason Lim, Gavin Brown, 1-20 (Aldershot: Ashgate 2007); Ken Plummer, *Telling sexual stories: power, change, and social worlds* (London : Routledge, 1995).

RQ1: How do non-activist LGBTQ+ people in Poland narrate their everyday experiences of marginalization?

RQ2: How do constructs of sexual citizenship in Poland and Europe influence their sense of belonging to these communities?

Previous studies

There are multiple studies engaging with analysis of media, institutional, and political discourse of LGBTQ+-related issues.¹⁸ Agnieszka Graff's particularly in-depth media analysis demonstrates how Poland is constantly reproduced as an unchanging entity, standing firmly by the right-wing-conservative notions of a "traditional Polish family," which is seen either as desirable (by right-wing and state-owned media) or causing Poland to lag behind Europe (more liberal private media).¹⁹ Importantly, the right-wing conservative discourse strengthened after 2010 and remains strictly nationalist-ethnocentrist until today.²⁰ In my thesis, I investigate how such discourse affects the sense of belonging among the LGBTQ+ minority.

Research by, for example, Joanna Mizielińska or Anna Weissman also points to the closetedness of the Polish LGBTQ+ minority, often caused by the fear of stigmatization and violence.²¹ It is connected to the homophobic Polish public discourse which is compared to the United States in the 1990s²² and present-day Russia.²³ Attempts towards equality such as

¹⁸ Joanna Mizielińska, *Płeć, Ciało, Seksualność: Od Feminizmu do Teorii Queer* (Kraków: Universitas, 2006); Mizielińska and Stasińska, "Prywatne Jest Polityczne"; Arcimowicz, Wasiak-Radoszewski, and Dębska, "Polski Dyskurs Publiczny Dotyczący Rodzin z Wyboru w Latach 2003–2013"; Bożena Keff Umińska, *Barykady. Kroniki Obsesyjne* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo eFKA, 2006).

¹⁹ Agnieszka Graff, *Rykoszetem: Rzecz o płci, seksualności i narodzie* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Wab, 2008).

²⁰ Maria Jarosz, "Wstęp," in: *Polskie Bieguny: Społeczeństwo w Czasach Kryzysu*, ed. Maria Jarosz (Warszawa: PAN, 2013); Weronika Grzebalska, "Poland," in *Gender as Symbolic Glue. The Position And Role Of Conservative and Far Right Parties in The Anti-gender Mobilizations In Europe*, eds. Eszter Kováts and Maari Põim (Budapest: FEPS, 2015); Graff, Kapur, Walters, "Introduction"; Grzebalska and Pető, "The Gendered Modus Operandi of the Illiberal Transformation in Hungary and Poland"; Wojciech Józef Burszta, *Kotwice Pewności: Wojny Popkulturowe z Popnacjonalizmem w Tle* (Warszawa: Iskry, 2013).

²¹ Joanna Mizielińska, "'The Rest is Silence...' Polish Nationalism and the Question of Lesbian Existence," *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 8 no 3 (2001); Anna L. Weissman, "Repronormativity and the Reproduction of the Nation-State: The State and Sexuality Collide," *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 13, no 3 (2017).

²² Mizielińska, *Płeć, Ciało, Seksualność*.

better sexual education or legalising same-gender partnerships are framed by right-wing conservatives in terms of an attack on “traditional values” or as “special rights.”²⁴ The discourse of “special rights” calls into doubt any prejudice and persecution that the LGBTQ+ minority in Poland might experience²⁵ and evokes what Gayle Rubin calls a “moral panic.”²⁶ This mechanism is especially relevant in light of the recent events, which are elaborated on in Chapter 2.

A vast majority of academic articles about the LGBTQ+ minority in Poland is built on the heterosexual-homosexual binary, excluding any other sexual (and often also gender) identifications and reinforcing their invisibility.²⁷ There is a focus on couples and relationships, especially on the issues of same-gender marriage and child-rearing.²⁸ It leaves out single people and those in non-normative relationships. Focusing on young, mostly single people, with different non-cisgender/non-heterosexual identifications exposes a different set of problems and helps account for similarities and disparities of experience among the LGBTQ+ minority.

There is also a significant focus on Polish LGBTQ+ activism. For example, Dorota Hall researchers Catholic LGBTQ+ activists,²⁹ Jon Binnie and Christian Klesse the impact of the freedom of movement on Polish LGBTQ+ activism³⁰ and Anna Gruszczyńska reflects on the

²³ Francesca Stella and Nadya Nartova, “Sexual Citizenship, Nationalism and Biopolitics in Putin’s Russia,” in *Citizenship and Belonging Trans-National and Intersectional Perspectives*, ed. Francesca Stella, et al. (London: Routledge, 2016).

²⁴ e.g. Mizieleńska, *Płeć, Ciało, Seksualność*; Korolczuk and Graff, “Gender as ‘Ebola from Bruselss’”; Graff, Kapur, and Walters, “Introduction: Gender and the Rise of the Global Right.”

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ Gayle S. Rubin, “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality,” in: *American Feminist Thought at Century’s End*, ed. Linda S Kauffman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

²⁷ Mizieleńska, *Płeć, Ciało, Seksualność*; Paweł Leszkowicz and Tomek Kitliński, *Miłość i Demokracja. Rozważania o Kwestii Homoseksualnej w Polsce* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Aureus, 2005); Renata Ziemińska, “Marginesy Seksualności i Potrzeba Nowej Etyki,” *Studia Socjologiczne* 3, no 214 (2014); Dorota Hall, “Religia i Nieheteroseksualność: Stan Debaty Akademickiej i Wybrane Wątki Badań Prowadzonych W Polsce,” *Studia Socjologiczne* 3, no 210 (2013)

²⁸ Mizieleńska and Stasińska, “Prywatne Jest Polityczne”; Arcimowicz, Wasiak-Radoszewski, and Dębska, “Polski Dyskurs Publiczny Dotyczący Rodzin z Wyboru w Latach 2003–2013”; Dorota Majka-Rostek, “Macierzyństwo Lesbijek: Wybrane Konteksty Społeczne,” *Studia Socjologiczne* 4, no 215 (2014); Weissman, “Repronormativity and the Reproduction of the Nation-State.”

²⁹ Hall, “Religia i Nieheteroseksualność”

³⁰ Binnie and Klesse, “‘Like a Bomb in the Gasoline Station’”

Equality Marches (Polish Pride parades).³¹ While their papers refer to the themes of Poland and Europe, they are investigated at the level of public discourse and activism, not personal identifications.³² Due to the cross-border cooperation between the LGBTQ+ organisations and the support they receive from the EU and individual member states,³³ as well as involvement in different projects that try to challenge the homogenous discourse of Polishness, the activists' sense of belonging could be very different from ordinary citizens. Therefore, in this thesis I focus on the experiences of the non-activists and analyse how they experience mechanisms out of their control.

There is also qualitative research, among which the biggest and most recent is the KPH report about the social situation of the LGBT people in Poland for years 2015-2016. It shows a high distrust towards the Polish public institutions, especially the government, with 71% of the sample declaring a complete distrust and further 25% having a low degree of trust. Comparatively, among the general population only 23% of respondents showed a complete lack of trust towards the government.³⁴ At the same time, the report shows a very high voter turnout at 80% for the 2015 parliamentary elections, with the turnout increasing with levels of education, age, and perceived material situation.³⁵ While the validity of the research can be put into doubt,³⁶ my interviews partially echoed their findings.

The research shows a strong reliance on the European institutions, particularly the ECHR and the EC, among the LGBTQ+ minority in Poland in the struggle for furthering equality and access to rights. Krzysztof Arcimowicz, Aleksander Wasiak-Radoszewski, and Katarzyna Dębska as well as Joanna Mizielińska and Agata Stasińska provide numerous examples of

³¹ Anna Gruszczyńska, "Sowing the Seeds of Solidarity in Public Space: Case Study of the Poznan March of Equality," *Sexualities* 12, no 3 (2009); Anna Gruszczyńska "I Was Mad About it All, About the Ban": Emotional Spaces of Solidarity in the Poznan March of Equality. *Emotion, Space and Society* 2 (2009).

³² *ibid.*

³³ Binnie and Klesse, "Like a Bomb in the Gasoline Station"; Philip M. Ayoub and David Paternotte, "Introduction," in *LGBT Activism and the Making of Europe A Rainbow Europe?* ed. Phillip M. Ayoub and David Paternotte (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014); Francesca Romana Ammaturo, *European Sexual Citizenship: Human Rights, Bodies and Identities* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017); Ammaturo "The 'Pink Agenda'"; Katja Kahlina, "Local Histories, European LGBT Designs: Sexual Citizenship, Nationalism, and 'Europeanisation' in Post-Yugoslav Croatia and Serbia," *Women's Studies International Forum* 49 (2015); Binnie, "Critical Queer Regionality and LGBTQ Politics in Europe."

³⁴ "Sytuacja Społeczna Osób LGBT w Polsce raport za lata 2015-2016," KPH, accessed on 15 April 2019, <https://kph.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Sytuacja-spoleczna-oso%CC%81b-LGBT-w-Polsce-raport-za-lata-2015-2016.pdf>, 32

³⁵ *ibid.*, 38

³⁶ it seems that it was conducted among the people who engage with the KPH, not the LGBTQ+ minority at large

how the freedom of movement enables same-gender couples to get legal recognition abroad, and explain the role of the ECHR as a last-instance resort in cases of institutional queerphobia.³⁷ Importantly, most of the people they talk about are not campaigning for social change, they are just trying to live their lives. My thesis checks if their findings are echoed among my sample and discusses how it affects their sense of belonging to Poland and Europe.

The question of Europe in case of the LGBTQ+ minority is very complex. There are numerous studies investigating how the Europeanisation of the LGBTQ+ issues leads to (re)constructing of the external and internal othering—tolerant Europe against the rest of the world, tolerant Europe versus religious (usually Muslim) immigrants, or internally between progressive, secular Western Europe and backward, traditionalist Eastern Europe.³⁸ In Poland, the discourse of European values is often used in a derogatory way by right-wing politicians and media, meant to reflect the “morally decaying” European reality.³⁹ People protesting against the LGBTQ+ campaigns or same-gender partnerships in Poland say that they act in the name of “national tradition,” or “cultural heritage.” While they are not always anti-EU, the LGBTQ+ minority and feminists are seen as a “foreign import” from the West.⁴⁰ In such discourse it is “alright to be a homophobe” because it is interpreted as a token of patriotism.⁴¹ This thesis investigates how the constructs of queer-friendly Europe opposite Catholic-traditionalist Poland are internalized and how they translate into the sense of belonging among the Polish LGBTQ+ minority.

³⁷ Arcimowicz, Wasiak-Radoszewski, and Dębska, “Polski Dyskurs Publiczny Dotyczący Rodzin z Wyboru w Latach 2003–2013;” Mizieleńska and Stasińska, “Prywatne Jest Polityczne.”

³⁸ Paul Mepschen, Jan Willem Duyvendak, and Evelien H. Tonkens, “Sexual Politics, Orientalism and Multicultural Citizenship in the Netherlands,” *Sociology* 44, no 5 (2010); Ayoub and Paternotte, “Introduction;” Ammaturo, *European Sexual Citizenship* and “The ‘Pink Agenda’”; Kahlina, “Local Histories, European LGBT Designs”; Robert Kulpa, “Western Leveraged Pedagogy of Central and Eastern Europe: Discourses of Homophobia, Tolerance, and Nationhood,” *Gender, Place & Culture* 21, no 4 (2014); Kevin Moss, “Split Europe: Homonationalism and Homophobia in Croatia,” in *LGBT Activism and the Making of Europe A Rainbow Europe?* ed. Phillip M. Ayoub and David Paternotte (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014); Gianmaria Colpani and Adriano José Habed, “‘In Europe It’s Different’: Homonationalism and Peripheral Desires for Europe,” in *LGBT Activism and the Making of Europe*, ed. Philip M Ayoub and David Paternotte, 73-93 (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

³⁹ Moss, “Split Europe;” see also Graff, “Looking at Pictures of Gay Men”; Korolczuk and Graff, “Gender as ‘Ebola from Brussels;” Ayoub and Paternotte, “Introduction.”

⁴⁰ Mizieleńska, *Płeć, Ciało, Seksualność*; Graff, *Rykoszetem*.

⁴¹ Graff “We Are (Not All) Homophobes.”

Thesis outline

In this thesis I use the word EUrope to reflect the blending of Europe and the EU in public discourse and the participants' stories—the lack of knowledge about the functioning in the EU combined with the positive imaginings of “Europe” that clearly referred to the West. Only where the distinction is clear I use the EU or Europe as appropriate.

Chapter 2 provides background information about the history of the LGBTQ+ minority in Poland and explains the role of the European integration in bringing it out of the closet.

Chapter 3 draws a theoretical framework for the thesis. The main discussed theories are: (1) national identity, (2) othering, belonging, and shame, and (3) European identity. I explain how they correlate and contribute to the understanding of the sense of belonging of the Polish LGBTQ+ minority.

Chapter 4 discusses and justifies the methods used in this thesis. The thesis is based on in-depth biographical interviews and uses holistic-content narrative analysis to engage with the emerging themes. The practice of storytelling, narratives, as well as ethical issues and reflexivity are discussed.

Chapter 5 provides an in-depth analysis and discussion of the themes emerging from the interviews, linking it with the discussed theory. The themes are: (1) shame, fear, no pride, (2) political fatigue, (3) Polishness and queer other, (4) hetero-Catholic alpha males, and (5) European influence and EUropeanness.

Chapter 6 summarises the findings and elaborates on the research questions. I also make suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2: A short history of sexuality in Poland

[...]gays and lesbians in this country can place their hopes with European norms, not Polish. Between that which is European and that which is Polish there still exists an impassable border. Thanks to the country's accession to the European Union the future of the Polish gays and lesbians looks bright. (Leszkowicz and Kitliński, *Miłość i Demokracja*, 21)

This chapter summarises the developments in the Polish LGBTQ+ discourse. Historical background is necessary to understand the current debate on Polish and European values and its influence on the sense of belonging among the Polish gender and sexual minorities. Crucially, this chapter shows how the idea of Europe simultaneously inspires the Polish LGBTQ+ movements and fuels conservative-nationalistic backlashes.

Gender, sexuality and communism

While homosexuality in Poland has been decriminalized since 1932, the Polish People's Republic shared the Soviet homophobia. Homosexuality was considered "cosmopolitan" or even "fascist," and homosexuals were treated with suspicion and put under state surveillance.⁴² Conversion therapy was held at mental institutions.⁴³ At the same time, homosexuality was not spoken about publicly, contributing to the invisibility of the sexual minorities, strengthening the compulsory heteronormativity, and, oftentimes, making self-identification difficult, resulting in confusion of the sexual minorities and popularity of white marriages.⁴⁴ The culmination of homophobic tensions was "Operation Hyacinth" in 1985-1987, when people suspected of homosexuality were forced to sign papers "confessing" their sexuality and a huge database was created.⁴⁵ Some researchers connect it to the fact that the first homosexual movements in Poland emerged in the 1980s, and they often advocated for human rights and took part in the resistance against the political regime, which provided an

⁴² Leszkowicz and Kitliński, *Miłość i Demokracja*.

⁴³ *ibid.*; Hall, "Religia i Nieheteroseksualność."

⁴⁴ Hall, "Religia i Nieheteroseksualność"; Graff, "We Are (Not All) Homophobes."

⁴⁵ Gruszczynska, "Sowing the Seeds of Solidarity in Public Space" and "I Was Mad About it All, About the Ban"; Łukasz Szulc, "Queer in Poland: Under Construction," in: *Queer in Europe: Contemporary Case Studies*, eds. Lisa Downing and Robert Gillett (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 162.

excuse for the action against them.⁴⁶ Importantly, the oppression centred on male homosexuality, resulting in further invisibility and silencing of other queer experiences.⁴⁷

1989-2004: “Returning to Europe”

The fall of the communist regime in Poland gave hope to the queer and feminist environments, as with democracy came liberalisation of the public discourse and freedom of expression. However, the victory of the Church-affiliated Solidarity movement meant a return to the romantic, androcentric, Catholic-traditionalist vision of Polishness and any deviation from the ideal was seen as another attempt at imposing foreign rules over Poland.⁴⁸ From this ideology stems the Constitution of 1997 with the Article 18 that articulates marriage as an institution “between a man and a woman,”⁴⁹ and which has been repeatedly used to stop the sexual minorities from achieving legal equality.⁵⁰

However, transition to capitalism also meant disbanding the “socialist myth of a uniform Polish society.” “New” minorities, that were previously, voluntarily or not, “in the closet,” emerged, for example, the disabled, Germans, and sexual minorities.⁵¹ The 1990s saw the creation of the first registered LGBTQ+ movements in Poland, facilitated by the easier flow of people and ideas from the West. The transition from invisibility to visibility of the sexual minorities in Poland meant politicising and (re)creating them in the political discourse as an internal Other, juxtaposed with a “normal” Pole. A “queer Other” became a “politically useful object of hatred,” in opposition to whom the Polish national identity could be (re)constructed by conservative elites.⁵²

⁴⁶ Barbara Törnquist-Plewa and Agnes Malmgren. “Homophobia and Nationalism in Poland”, *Trondheim Studies on East European Cultures & Societies* 23 (2007); Leszkowicz and Kitliński, *Miłość i Demokracja*.

⁴⁷ Izabela Filipiak, et al. *Homofobia po Polsku* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sic!, 2004); Leszkowicz and Tomek Kitliński, *Miłość i Demokracja*.

⁴⁸ Graff, *Rykoszetem*; Leszkowicz and Kitliński, *Miłość i Demokracja*.

⁴⁹ Konstytucja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, accessed 1 April 2019,

<http://www.sejm.gov.pl/prawo/konst/polski/kon1.htm>

⁵⁰ Mizielińska and Stasińska, “Prywatne Jest Polityczne”; Arcimowicz, Wasiak-Radoszewski, and Dębska, “Polski Dyskurs Publiczny Dotyczący Rodzin z Wyboru w Latach 2003–2013”; Leszkowicz and Kitliński, *Miłość i Demokracja*.

⁵¹ Szulc, “Queer in Poland.”

⁵² Błażej Warkocki, “Trzy Fale Emancypacji Homoseksualnej w Polsce,” *Porównania* 15 (2014): 132.

The period was characterised by preparations for the EU accession, with major tension in case of Poland centring from the beginning on the conflicting ideas about family and gender roles. The biggest step towards equality to date remains the law against discrimination on sexuality bases that appeared in the Polish Labour Law in November 2003 as a part of the accession criteria.

2004-2010: Fears of “Western degeneracy”

The “Europeanisation” of the Polish politics is often interpreted as a true beginning of the LGBTQ+ activism in Poland.⁵³ However, the EU accession sparked a nationalist sentiment in Poland. The Festival of Tolerance in Kraków was disturbed by violent right-wing counter-manifestations,⁵⁴ and the Equality Marches (Polish equivalent to Pride parades) in Warsaw and Poznań were banned on morality grounds.⁵⁵ However, as the right to the freedom of assembly was understood not only in terms of democracy but as the Solidarity heritage, these events sparked a public uproar and brought publicity to the LGBTQ+ activists.⁵⁶

Significantly, the question of LGBTQ+ rights at the time was brought up in the EU context. For politicians, voicing their opinions about the minority was seen as “a litmus test for her or his views on modern democracy, Poland's Westernization, freedom of speech, and traditional Catholicism,”⁵⁷ while for the participants in the Polish LGBTQ+ movements in the mid-2000s advocating LGBTQ+ rights was a way “to express their desire to fully participate in the new Europe, with its culture of tolerance and pluralism.”⁵⁸ The nationalistic fears connected to the EU accession manifested in the 2005 elections when the Catholic-traditionalist Law and Justice party (PiS) won. A lot of Polish queer and feminist academic research focuses on this period and draws parallels to the current situation.⁵⁹

⁵³ e.g. Törnquist-Plewa and Malmgren, “Homophobia and Nationalism in Poland”; Szulc. “Queer in Poland”; Leszkowicz and Kitliński, *Miłość i Demokracja*.

⁵⁴ Törnquist-Plewa and Malmgren, “Homophobia and Nationalism in Poland.”

⁵⁵ Gruszczynska, “Sowing the Seeds of Solidarity in Public Space” and ““I Was Mad About it All, About the Ban””

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁵⁷ Graff, “We Are (Not All) Homophobes,” 436

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 437

⁵⁹ e.g. Graff, “We are (Not All) Homophobes” and *Rykoszetem*; Leszkowicz and Kitliński, *Miłość i Demokracja*; Binnie and Klesse, ““Like a Bomb in the Gasoline Station””; Binnie “Neoliberalism, Class, Gender and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Politics in Poland”; Grzebalska “Poland.”

2010-2015: The culture wars

The turning point in the modern Polish politics was 10 April 2010 or the “Smolensk tragedy,” when the presidential plane crashed and ninety-six people died, among them some of the most important figures in the country. It is often argued that the Smolensk tragedy accelerated the division of the Polish society and political sphere into two camps: conservative-nationalists and everyone else (traitors).⁶⁰

Since 2005 the Polish political scene has been dominated by right-wing-nationalist PiS and conservative-neoliberal Civic Platform (PO). Both parties are to some extent similar, as they both trace back to the “Solidarity” movement and are closely related to the Catholic Church (with PiS openly linked to them and PO’s decisions influenced by the fear of upsetting the Church).⁶¹ Importantly, while PO is often portrayed as the enemy of nation by PiS, the party is internally divided between social conservatism and more liberal views and, therefore, from the queer-feminist standpoint, their vision of Polishness is often not much better than PiS’s.⁶²

It is often argued that the political situation enforces a dichotomous breakdown of the society with two competing visions of Poland and Polishness: the “solidary” and the “liberal,”⁶³ or “anti-equality” and “pro-equality.”⁶⁴ Burszta dubs this question the “culture wars.”⁶⁵ They are fought over various “moral” concerns, among them LGBTQ+ rights, abortion, and separation of Church and state.⁶⁶ The “culture wars” reached their peak around 2012, about the same time that the Smolensk plane crash began to be framed in terms of an “attack” rather than an “accident.”⁶⁷ The shift was accelerated by the eruption of moral panic around gender that

⁶⁰ Burszta, *Kotwice Pewności*; Jarosz, “Wstęp.”

⁶¹ Jarosz, “Wstęp”.

⁶² e.g. Maciej Gdula, *Nowy Autorytaryzm* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2018); Jarosz “Wstęp”; Grzebalska, “Poland”; Grzebalska and Pető, “The Gendered Modus Operandi of the Illiberal Transformation in Hungary and Poland”; Arcimowicz, Wasiak-Radoszewski, and Dębska, “Polski Dyskurs Publiczny Dotyczący Rodzin z Wyboru w Latach 2003–2013”

⁶³ *ibid.*; Grzebalska, “Poland.”

⁶⁴ Arcimowicz, Wasiak-Radoszewski, and Dębska, “Polski Dyskurs Publiczny Dotyczący Rodzin z Wyboru w Latach 2003–2013.”

⁶⁵ Burszta, *Kotwice Pewności*.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁶⁷ Jarosz, “Wstęp”; Zbigniew Mikołajko, “‘Religia Smoleńska.’ Przyczynek do obrazów pewnego dysensu,” in *Polskie Bieguny: Społeczeństwo w Czasach Kryzysu*, ed. Maria Jarosz (Warszawa: PAN, 2013).

swayed people towards the PiS Catholic-traditional values, culminating in their double victory in 2015 parliamentary and presidential elections.⁶⁸

Post-2015: Illiberal democracy

The current political situation in Poland is often called “illiberal democracy,” which is understood as a combination of democratic features (elections, multi-party system) with abuse of power and disregard for individual rights.⁶⁹ The newest research proposes that one of the causes of the “illiberal” transformations in the CEE were the anxieties surrounding “gender ideology,” which in turn was a reaction to the Istanbul Convention of 2012.⁷⁰ It was interpreted by the right-wing politicians and the Catholic Church as an attempt by supranational organisations to redefine the concept of family and, therefore, a threat to a nation. “Gender ideology” became a metaphor of the fears of the social transformations and the EU influence over the “national values.”⁷¹

These anxieties become a trigger for the national governments to redefine the meanings of human rights and equality. In illiberal democracies, opposition to the “equality politics” is normalized.⁷² The current PiS political program focuses on the “family crisis” idea—it prioritizes protection of “traditional family values” and has a strong stance against abortion.⁷³ PiS is also known for the MPs with queerphobic comments.⁷⁴ The extent of the current oppression of females and the LGBTQ+ minority in Poland is described as probably the worst in Polish history.⁷⁵

At the same time, the radicalized public discourse and the proposed total ban of abortion resulted in the biggest wave of feminist movement in Poland. As Graff, Kapur and Walters

⁶⁸ Grzebalska, “Poland”; Graff, Kapur, Walters, “Introduction.”

⁶⁹ Grzebalska and Pető, “The Gendered Modus Operandi of the Illiberal Transformation in Hungary and Poland.”

⁷⁰ *ibid.*; Korolczuk and Graff, “Gender as ‘Ebola From Brussels’”; Graff, Kapur and Walters, “Introduction”; Agnieszka Graff, “Report from the Gender Trenches: War Against ‘Genderism’ in Poland,” *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 21 no 4 (2014).

⁷¹ Grzebalska and Pető, “The Gendered Modus Operandi of the Illiberal Transformation in Hungary and Poland”; see also: Graff, Kapur and Walters, “Introduction”

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ PiS 2014 quoted in Grzebalska, “Poland.”

⁷⁴ Grzebalska, “Poland”; Binnie “Neoliberalism, Class, Gender and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Politics in Poland”; Diane Richardson, *Sexuality and Citizenship* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018); Gruszczynska “‘I Was Mad About it All, About the Ban’”; Graff, “We Are (Not All) Homophobes”, *Rykoszetem* and “Looking at Pictures of Gay Men.”

⁷⁵ Graff, Kapur and Walters, “Introduction.”

describe, the recent years is the first time when the Polish females on a massive scale started rethinking their place in society and tens of thousands took to the streets for “Black Protests.” The proposed abortion ban became a trigger to protest against wider inequalities, traditional gender roles, right-wing politics, and the role of the Catholic Church.⁷⁶ Importantly, there is an increasing cooperation between the Polish queer and feminist academics and activists.⁷⁷

The newest developments: immediate context

When I was starting writing this thesis, there appeared to be a positive shift in the public attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ minority in Poland. Three big steps were taken in February 2019 that seemed like a chance to move beyond the *status quo*. Mayor of Warsaw, Rafał Trzaskowski (PO), passed a “card of LGBT rights,” a symbolic commitment to the protection of the gender and sexual minority.⁷⁸ Days afterwards, a court in Warsaw ruled in favour of transcribing an act of (gay) marriage that had been performed abroad. While it was overruled by the Minister of Justice, it remains the first ruling of a Polish court that said that the Constitution’s Article 18 does not need to be seen as an “exclusive” right of people of different genders to get married.⁷⁹ Finally, Robert Biedroń, the first openly gay Polish politician, started a political party Spring in preparation for the May 2019 European and October 2019 Polish parliamentary elections. One of their postulates is marriage equality.⁸⁰

However, these developments triggered a backlash against the LGBTQ+ community. The Minister of Education for Małopolskie region, Barbara Nowak (PiS), was the first to react against the “LGBT card”, naming the minority “paedophiles.”⁸¹ Then followed strong opposition from different political parties and the Church, warning against the dangers of

⁷⁶ *ibid.*

⁷⁷ Jon Binnie and Christian Klesse, “Solidarities and Tensions: Feminism and Transnational LGBTQ Politics in Poland,” *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 19, no 4 (2012); Anika Keinz, “Negotiating Democracy’s Gender Between Europe and the Nation,” *Focaal* 53 (2009).

⁷⁸ Wojciech Karpieszuk, “Prezydent Warszawy podpisał Kartę LGBT. To pierwszy taki dokument w Polsce,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, February 18, 2019, <http://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/7,54420,24468532,prezydent-warszawy-podpisał-karte-lgbt.html>

⁷⁹ “Sąd: Konstytucja nie zabrania małżeństw homoseksualnych,” *Do Rzeczy*, February 11, 2019, <https://dorzeczy.pl/kraj/93147/Sad-Konstytucja-nie-zabrania-malzenstw-homoseksualnych.html>

⁸⁰ “Program,” *Wiosna*, accessed 15 May 2019, <https://wiosnabiedronia.pl/program>

⁸¹ “Małopolska Kurator Oświaty: LGBT to propagowanie pedofilii,” *Do Rzeczy*, February 20, 2019, <https://dorzeczy.pl/kraj/94265/Malopolska-Kurator-Oswiaty-LGBT-to-propagowanie-pedofilii.html>

sexual education and returning to the familiar rhetoric of “children and family at risk.”⁸² In the middle of my interviews, a town in Poland passed a law prohibiting “LGBT ideology”⁸³ and was soon followed by another.⁸⁴ Queerphobic slogans appear on banners, buildings, and passing cars around the country.⁸⁵ It would seem that while 2015 elections were framed around “gender ideology,” the elections in 2019 will be influenced by the LGBTQ+ moral panic. Simultaneously, more Equality Marches than ever are planned for 2019.⁸⁶ Therefore, the picture is very complex.

Conclusions

In recent history, the Polish-EU clashes often came down to questions of “values,” usually connected to the situation of the LGBTQ+ minority. Initially, it has been interpreted as an expression of uncertainties related the transition to capitalism, rebuilding Polish identity, and the fears of the impact of joining the EU on national identification and sovereignty.⁸⁷ However, thirty years after the fall of the communism and fifteen years after the EU accession, there have been no political achievements for the LGBTQ+ rights in Poland. Moreover, the political climate and public discourse is becoming increasingly Catholic-traditionalist.⁸⁸ In the latest “Rainbow Europe” report by ILGA-Europe, Poland ranked twenty-seventh out of

⁸² Wojciech Karpieszuk, “Ostre stanowisko biskupów w sprawie deklaracji LGBT+. Straszą deprawacją dzieci i zagrożeniem demokracji,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, March 13, 2019,

<http://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/7,54420,24544417,ostre-stanowisko-biskupow-w-sprawie-deklaracji-lgbt-strasza.html>; Magda Sroda, “Prezes Kaczyński i jego straszny gej,” March 13, 2019,

<http://wyborcza.pl/7,75968,24542163,prezes-kaczynski-i-jego-straszny-gej.html>

⁸³ “Powiat Świdnicki Wolny Od LGBT”. Rada Powiatu Przyjęła Deklarację,” *TVP Info*, 27 Mar. 2019, www.tvp.info/41923829/powiat-swidnicki-wolny-od-lgbt-rada-powiatu-przyjela-deklaracje.

⁸⁴ Angelika Pitoń, “Kalwaria Zebrzydowska: ‘Samorząd wolny od LGBT,’” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, April 2, 2019, <http://krakow.wyborcza.pl/krakow/7,44425,24607284,kalwaria-zebrzydowska-samorzad-wolny-od-lgbt.html>

⁸⁵ Jacek Brzuszkiewicz, “Wojna na billboardy w Świdniku. Dwa banery przeciwników ‘ideologii LGBT’ skradzione,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, April 30, 2019, <http://lublin.wyborcza.pl/lublin/7,48724,24713108,wojna-na-billboardy-w-swidniku-dwa-banery-przeciwnikow-ideologii.html>; Paweł Rutkiewicz, “Krucjata przeciw LGBT. Po Łodzi jeździ baner z homofobicznymi hasłami,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, April 26, 2019,

<http://lodz.wyborcza.pl/lodz/7,35136,24703515,kruczata-przeciw-lgbt-mieszkancy-skarza-sie-na-akty-homofobii.html>; “Bydgoszcz mówi nie LGBT” napisał na prześcieradle i wywiesił na balkonie,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, April 26, 2019, <http://bydgoszcz.wyborcza.pl/bydgoszcz/7,48722,24703645,bydgoszcz-mowi-nie-lgbt-napisał-na-przescieradle-i-wywiesil.html>

⁸⁶ Wojciech Karpieszuk, “Robert Biedroń apeluje do prezydenta Dudy, by przeciwstawił się nagonce na osoby LGBT,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, March 21, 2019, <http://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/7,54420,24570456,robert-biedron-apeluje-do-prezydenta-dudy-by-przeciwstawil.html>

⁸⁷ see e.g. Törnquist-Plewa and Malmgren, “Homophobia and Nationalism in Poland”; Gruszczynska, “Sowing the Seeds of Solidarity in Public Space”; Graff, *Rykoszetem*.

⁸⁸ Grzebalska and Petó, “The Gendered Modus Operandi of the Illiberal Transformation in Hungary and Poland”; Graff, Kapur, Walters, “Introduction.”

twenty-eight in the EU and thirty-eighth out of forty-nine European countries in terms of LGBTQ+ equality.⁸⁹ At the same time, there is little research into how these values resonate with the society at large and, especially, the LGBTQ+ minority, which is a question that this thesis attempts to answer.

⁸⁹ “Country Ranking,” Rainbow Europe, accessed 16 May 2019, <https://rainbow-europe.org/country-ranking> (Latvia came in last in the EU, one percent point below Poland)

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

Identities are narratives, stories people tell themselves and others about who they are (and who they are not)[...] The identity narratives can shift and change, be contested and multiple. They can relate to the past, to a myth of origin; they can be aimed at explaining the present and, probably above all, they function as a projection of a future trajectory. (Yuval-Davis, “Belonging and the Politics of Belonging,” 24)

This thesis analyses the narratives of belonging and exclusion among the LGBTQ+ minority in Poland. As I suggested in Chapter 1, the sense of belonging depends on the constant process of social categorization, of locating self in relation to others,⁹⁰ a process which is institutionalised at national level.⁹¹ The messages of belonging and exclusion are (re)created and internalized through repetition and performance,⁹² and they are affectively charged.⁹³ All these factors are highly visible in the analysis of the sense of belonging among the LGBTQ+ minority in Poland. To investigate it in detail, in this chapter I consider the concepts of (1) national identity, (2) othering, belonging and shame, and (3) European identity.

National identity

National identity is understood as a sense of belonging, feeling “at home” and “safe”⁹⁴ in the “imagined community” of a nation. The imaginary part refers to an act of social construction,⁹⁵ largely facilitated by the narrative of the nation. The narrative of the nation is a concept introduced by Stuart Hall and refers to the repetitive story of who “we,” as a nation, are. It shows familiar landscapes, stories, symbols, histories of triumphs and tragedies, all of them binding the citizens together under the umbrella of the nation.⁹⁶ The official narrative also encompasses all the “grand events”, public holidays, sporting events, and parades.⁹⁷ It is a story based on and revolving around the tradition and national culture, where repetition and

⁹⁰ Yuval-Davis, “Belonging and the Politics of Belonging;” also Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*.

⁹¹ *ibid.*

⁹² Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Richardson, *Sexuality and Citizenship*.

⁹³ Yuval-Davis, “Belonging and the Politics of Belonging.”

⁹⁴ *ibid.*

⁹⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (London: Verso, 1991).

⁹⁶ Hall, “The Question of Cultural Identity.”

⁹⁷ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: SAGE, 1995).

familiarity are understood as crucial for the sense of belonging.⁹⁸ Therefore, as Benedict Anderson suggests, even if one will never meet most of the other community members, they share a similar mental image of what their nation is like.⁹⁹ This mental image is mostly reproduced through the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs): political and religious organisations, schools, and media.¹⁰⁰

However, while the state controls the narrative of the nation, it is not the sole holder of the regulatory power. Michel Foucault's concepts of biopower and biopolitics are especially useful for this thesis. They account for the complex power relations between a state, sexuality, and society. Particularly, state's interest in regulating sexual and reproductive rights in the name of "national values" is a prime example of biopolitics.¹⁰¹ Importantly, Foucault suggests that individuals also hold regulatory power. The power is omnipresent and the focus on the state makes one miss the normalizing power of individuals, where every social interaction, real or imaginary, extends regulatory power. Society is understood as an omniopicon, with everyone watching everyone else. Foucault suggests that this surveillance is internalized from the youngest age and one learns to self-regulate, always cautious of what others would think and what the punishment for deviating from the norm would be.¹⁰² Foucault's work provides tools to investigate how social categories are assigned by others and internalized,¹⁰³ which is crucial in analysing how the participants negotiate their gender and sexual identifications, and their influence on the sense of belonging to Poland and Europe.

To investigate the sense of belonging of the LGBTQ+ minority in Poland, it is important to understand how the Polish identity is conceptualised. First of all, there is a difference between a state and a nation. Nation here is used to describe a group with common culture, beliefs, ancestry, or values, whereas state refers more to the political institutions. Therefore, Polish nation refers to the Polish people with all their commonalities, and the state refers to the government. Simultaneously, as it has been mentioned, the state holds inclusionary/exclusionary power over the nation. This distinction is

⁹⁸ *ibid.*

⁹⁹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

¹⁰⁰ Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, ed. Louis Althusser (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971).

¹⁰¹ see Stella and Nartova, "Sexual Citizenship, Nationalism and Biopolitics in Putin's Russia," for discussion of biopolitics in Russia

¹⁰² Chloe Taylor *The Routledge Guidebook to Foucault's The History of Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 2017); also Ziemińska, "Marginesy Seksualności i Potrzeba Nowej Etyki."

¹⁰³ Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*.

important as researchers argue that in Poland there tends to be a big gap between the state institutions and the society, which does not identify with them. In fact, the long history of distrust to the state institutions might be seen as a trait of the Polish national identity.¹⁰⁴ At the same time, there is a strong attachment and belief in the Polish nation among Poles. Together with family and friends it forms the foundation of social ties in Stefan Nowak's influential research.¹⁰⁵

As I suggested in Chapter 2, most of the public discourse on Polishness is created in ethnonationalist terms. Ethnic nationalism focuses on common ancestry, on being born in a particular place with common ethnicity, traditions, religion and language.¹⁰⁶ Importantly, it sees nation as an extension of a family.¹⁰⁷ The question of female roles, especially their sexuality and procreation (for example, the figure of Matka Polka),¹⁰⁸ as well as the sexual minorities becomes central in the narrative of the nation. The mental link between a nation and a (traditional) family is often subconscious.¹⁰⁹ Heterosexuality, family, and nation are all social concepts, products of repetition, and are understood as a norm only because this repetition is concealed.¹¹⁰ Particularly, same-gender couples and people unwilling to form couple-based relationships are still excluded from the definition of family, which resonates deeply with the LGBTQ+ community.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁴ Sławomir Kaprański, "The Problem of 'Struggles for Recognition' in Polish Sociology," *Polish Sociological Review* 3, no 175 (2011); Mizieleńska and Stasińska, "Prywatne Jest Polityczne."

¹⁰⁵ Stefan Nowak, "Values and Attitudes of the Polish People," *Scientific American* 245 no 1 (1981); also repeated in newer research, e.g. Burszta, *Kotwice Pewności*; Jarosz "Wstęp."

¹⁰⁶ Fligstein, Polyakova, and Sandholtz, "European Integration, Nationalism and European Identity."

¹⁰⁷ Kaprański, "The Problem of 'Struggles for Recognition' in Polish Sociology."

¹⁰⁸ a popular imaginary of Polish females, the figure of Matka Polka (Polish Mother) stems from the romanticism, and describes a female who devotes herself to her children and home, she can be quite heroic, putting her family above all and protecting it from the enemies; however, in this discourse the female role in nation is degraded to motherhood; see e.g. Renata Hryciuk and Elżbieta Korolczuk, *Pożegnanie z Matką-Polką?: Dyskursy, praktyki i reprezentacje macierzyństwa we współczesnej Polsce* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2012); Weissman, "Repronormativity and the Reproduction of the Nation-State"; Törnquist-Plewa and Malmgren, "Homophobia and Nationalism in Poland."

¹⁰⁹ Kaprański, "The Problem of 'Struggles for Recognition' in Polish Sociology."

¹¹⁰ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014); Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

¹¹¹ Arcimowicz, Wasiak-Radoszewski, and Dębska, "Polski Dyskurs Publiczny Dotyczący Rodzin z Wyboru w Latach 2003–2013."

It is argued that the Polish identity is “past-oriented” and Poland is constructed as a martyr nation that has suffered throughout its history but always returned stronger.¹¹² Especially important here is the strong connection between Poland and the Catholic Church, given its role as a harbinger of the struggling and resurfacing nation.¹¹³ As it had been explored in detail in Chapter 2, the Catholic value system is reproduced by the state and ISAs. Polishness is narrated as tightly related to Catholicism, which becomes its specificity and marker of difference in the EU.¹¹⁴ It is crucial for this thesis as the Catholic Church is firmly against the sexual minorities and took an important role in spreading moral panic around the concept of gender.¹¹⁵

This understanding of Polishness has to be problematized. Even if Poland comes to be associated with the ruling party, there are other actors and visions. For example, the biggest Polish newspaper, “Gazeta Wyborcza,” started “Stop LGBT+ Witch-Hunt” newsletter in April.¹¹⁶ Also the internal division of the second biggest party, PO (see Chapter 2) became more pronounced in light of the newest developments. The mayor of Warsaw, Rafał Trzaskowski not only introduced the “LGBT Card” and also sponsored the 2019 Warsaw Equality March¹¹⁷ as did Hanna Zdanowska in Łódź¹¹⁸ and Rafał Bruski in Bydgoszcz.¹¹⁹ On the other hand, the mayor of Gniezno, Tomasz Budasz, tried to forbid the first Equality March

¹¹² Kaprański, “The Problem of ‘Struggles for Recognition’ in Polish Sociology”; similar discourses can be observed in many other CEE countries.

¹¹³ Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, “The Complex of an Unwanted Child: The Meanings of Europe in Polish Discourse,” in *The Meaning of Europe: Variety and Contention Within and Among Nations*, ed. Mikael af Malmberg and Bo Stråth, 215-242 (Oxford: Berg, 2002).

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*; Graff, *Rykoszetem*.

¹¹⁵ Arcimowicz, Wasiak-Radoszewski, and Dębska, “Polski Dyskurs Publiczny Dotyczący Rodzin z Wyboru w Latach 2003–2013;” Korolczuk and Graff, “Gender as ‘Ebola from Brussels.’”

¹¹⁶ Malwina Pająk, “Stop Nagonce na LGBT+. Nowy Newsletter ‘Wyborczej,’” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, April 3, 2019, <http://wyborcza.pl/7,75398,24612704,stop-nagonce-na-lgbt-nowy-newsletter-wyborczej.html>

¹¹⁷ Wojciech Karpieszuk, “Parada Równości po Raz Pierwszy z Patronatem Prezydenta Warszawy,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, May 14, 2019, <http://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/7,54420,24781667,parada-z-patronatem-prezydenta-powiem-kilka-slow-a-potem.html>

¹¹⁸ Paweł Rutkiewicz, “Łódzki Marsz Równości Pierwszy Raz z Patronatem Prezydent Hanny Zdanowskiej,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, March 29, 2019, <http://lodz.wyborcza.pl/lodz/7,35136,24595612,lodzki-marsz-rownosci-z-patronatem-hanny-zdanowskiej.html>

¹¹⁹ “I Bydgoski Marsz Równości Pod Patronatem Prezydenta Bydgoszczy Rafała Bruskiego,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, April 11, 2019” <http://bydgoszcz.naszemiasto.pl/artikul/i-bydgoski-marsz-rownosci-pod-patronatem-prezydenta,5076761,artgal,t.id,tm.html>

there,¹²⁰ and the previous mayor of Warsaw, Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz spoke against the “special rights” rhetoric of the “LGBT Card.”¹²¹ Therefore, while PiS controls a lot of the public discourse, the picture is more complex.

Othering, belonging and shame

Identifications are constructed in social interactions through the self/Other dynamic.¹²² The fear of the Other is necessary for the (re)creation of the safety of one’s self-identity and to reaffirm the commonality of the in-group in contrast to the out-group.¹²³ The “Other” can be physically encountered in interaction or imagined and represented in the narrative of the nation. State, seen as a harbinger of nation, in particular is what Brubaker calls a “powerful ‘identifier,’” due to its vast symbolic and material power to (re)construct the social categories and draw the lines of belonging and exclusion.¹²⁴ Importantly, the self/Other binary is often built on stereotypes.¹²⁵

Self-identification is also related to the issues of visibility, recognition and social justice.¹²⁶ There is the question of “internal others,” who are formally a part of the nation but who, for various reasons, are excluded from or openly Othered by the narrative of the nation. It is a crucial issue for this thesis, as sexual minorities are often constructed as the “Other” to the Polish “self,” a threat to the “national values,” “children” and “family.” As a marriage between a male and a female with children is constructed as the main building block of the Polish nation, females who are not mothers become “secondary,” and sexual minorities “tertiary” citizens, with non-heteronormative females and non-cisgender people being at the

¹²⁰ Tomasz Nyczka, “Prezydent z PO Zakazał Marszu Równości w Gnieźnie. Sąd w Poznaniu Zmienia Jego Decyzję.” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, April 11, 2019, <http://poznan.wyborcza.pl/poznan/7.36001.24639162.prezydent-z-po-zakazal-marszu-rownosci-w-gnieznie-sad-w-poznaniu.html>; a decision was revoked by a regional court

¹²¹ Michał Szaflarski, “Gronkiewicz-Waltz o Karcie LGBT+: Mam Wątpliwości Co Do Standardów WHO, w Sprawie Karty Miałam Inną Koncepcję,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, March 9, 2019, <http://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/7.54420.24532266.gronkiewicz-waltz-o-karcie-lgbt-mam-watpliwosci-co-do-standardow.html>

¹²² Ruth Wodak, et al., *The Discursive Construction of National Identity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999); Yuval-Davis, “Belonging and the Politics of Belonging;” Burszta, *Kotwice Pewności*.

¹²³ Billig, *Banal Nationalism* ; Burszta, *Kotwice Pewności*.

¹²⁴ Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*, 42; also Yuval-Davis, “Belonging and the Politics of Belonging;” Ahmed *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*.

¹²⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983); Billig, *Banal Nationalism*; Burszta, *Kotwice Pewności*.

¹²⁶ Axel Honneth, *Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995); Kaprański, “The Problem of ‘Struggles for Recognition’ in Polish Sociology.”

greatest disadvantage.¹²⁷ This thesis investigates how being Othered by the narrative of the nation influences the sense of national belonging.

There is also the paradox of the closet—there is a need to “pass for straight” among the Polish LGBTQ+ community, to keep one’s gender/sexuality in the private sphere.¹²⁸ Mizielińska called it “the vicious circle of invisibility and exclusion” where “silence strengthens silence.”¹²⁹ This is a complex issue discussed by many researchers, as while there is little hope for change without challenging heteronormativity, coming out of the closet in many cases means a threat of violence.¹³⁰

This relates to the concepts of shame and self-regulation.¹³¹ Charles Cooley’s idea of the “looking-glass self,” where one realizes who they are by seeing themselves through the imagined eyes of the other, always incorporates an element of judgement. The result is pride or shame in self, contributing to the self-monitoring and self-regulatory practices.¹³² The relation between the nation, sexual minorities and shame is also explored in Sara Ahmed’s theory of cultural politics of emotion. In the narrative of the nation, queer citizens are portrayed as “shaming and non-reproductive” since “they cannot reproduce the national ideal,” which secures the heteronormativity of a nation.¹³³ According to Graff, this dynamic is particularly visible in Poland, both on personal level and in public discourse, where “homosexuality appears to make interesting news only in the context of shame and fear.”¹³⁴ Importantly, shame is often accompanied by fear of stigma and social exclusion or violence, which strengthens its self-regulatory power.¹³⁵

¹²⁷ Graff, *Rykoszetem*; Rawłuszko, “Polityki Równości Płci–Możliwości i Ograniczenia Rozwoju na Poziomie Samorządowym;” Majka-Rostek, “Macierzyństwo Lesbijek.”

¹²⁸ Ziemińska, “Marginesy Seksualności i Potrzeba Nowej Etyki”; Gruszczynska, “Sowing the Seeds of Solidarity in Public Space”; Graff “We Are (Not All) Homophobes.”

¹²⁹ Mizielińska, “The Rest is Silence,” 293.

¹³⁰ *ibid.*; Davina Cooper, *Challenging diversity. Rethinking equality and the value of difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2004); Weissman, “Repronormativity and the Reproduction of the Nation-State”; Majka-Rostek, “Macierzyństwo Lesbijek”; Gruszczynska, “Sowing the Seeds of Solidarity in Public Space”; Graff “We Are (Not All) Homophobes”; Mizielińska and Stasińska, “Prywatne Jest Polityczne.”

¹³¹ Thomas J. Scheff, “Shame in Self and Society,” *Symbolic Interaction* 26, no 2 (2003); Ziemińska, “Marginesy Seksualności i Potrzeba Nowej Etyki.”

¹³² Charles H Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order* (New York: Scribner’s, 1922)

¹³³ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 108.

¹³⁴ Graff, “We Are (Not All) Homophobes”: 443.

¹³⁵ *ibid.*; Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*; Scheff, “Shame in Self and Society.”

One of the most powerful ways of reinforcing the social hierarchies are “sticky signs.” In this concept, coined by Ahmed, one word evokes another, while the “stickiness” refers to “saturation with affect,” which means that hearing the word evokes assigned emotions¹³⁶—for example, in the Polish narrative of the nation there is the “queer pervert,” which automatically mobilizes people in the name of the protection of family.¹³⁷ Sticky signs are hard to combat as they are powerful signifiers, deeply rooted in the subconscious, and constantly (re)constructed in public discourses and propagated through ISAs. Simultaneously, affect plays an important role in reinforcing social categories and hierarchies and, thus, influencing the sense of belonging.¹³⁸

European identity

European identity is an elusive concept. Cultural diversity and dozens of languages spoken across the continent make the researchers link European identification with its utilitarian value, where one’s identification with Europe depends on the perceived benefits.¹³⁹ As a result, European identity is often linked to the EU citizenship, and while they are not mutually constitutive or exclusive,¹⁴⁰ it helps that this thesis concerns Poland, which is a part of the EU.

European identity is also (re)constructed in contrast to the “Other.” Recent examples include mobilization in contrast to the US and immigrants from non-European countries.¹⁴¹ It can also be (re)constructed in contrast to the CEE, and, sometimes, Southern European “Other.”¹⁴² This imaginary often recreates the Cold War division of Europe, with anyone outside of the Northern/Western Europe seen as “backward,” “not-there-yet,” and constantly aspiring to the (Western) European standards.¹⁴³ The feeling of being “behind” the “civilized” Europe is

¹³⁶ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*:195.

¹³⁷ e.g. Graff, *Rykoszetem*.

¹³⁸ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*:195.

¹³⁹ Ayoub and Paternotte, “Introduction”; Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fear of Barbarians: Beyond the Clash of Civilizations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); Neil Fligstein, Alina Polyakova, and Wayne Sandholtz, “European Integration, Nationalism and European Identity.” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 50, no 1 (2012).

¹⁴⁰ Todorov, *The Fear of Barbarians*; Ammaturo, *European Sexual Citizenship*.

¹⁴¹ Todorov, *The Fear of Barbarians*.

¹⁴² Merje Kuus, “Europe’s Eastern Expansion and the Reinscription of Otherness in East-Central Europe,” *Progress in Human Geography* 28, no 4 (2004); Ayoub and Paternotte, “Introduction;” Ammaturo, *European Sexual Citizenship*; Richardson, *Sexuality and Citizenship*; Binnie and Klesse, ““Like a Bomb in the Gasoline Station.””

¹⁴³ *ibid.*

usually internalized by Poles and reproduced by media.¹⁴⁴ In analysis I investigate whether this feeling resonates with my research sample and if it affects their sense of belonging to Europe.

Such division hints that European identity is constructed in terms of values. The most commonly recalled “European values” are tolerance, pacifism, democracy, and cultural diversity.¹⁴⁵ Thus, European identity is usually understood through the civic paradigm, connected to political institutions and shared (liberal) values and principles, rather than common language or culture.¹⁴⁶ Crucially for this thesis, the idea of Europe is often associated with strong advocacy for human rights.¹⁴⁷ A number of researchers argue that the contemporary debate about Europeanness comes down to the struggle for gender and sexual equality¹⁴⁸—the question of sexual citizenship. The discourse of sexual citizenship investigates heteronormativity and its institutionalization by nation-states and supranational state structures. It focuses on inequalities towards females and the LGBTQ+ minority.¹⁴⁹ There are two points about sexual citizenship crucial for this thesis: (1) The EU and all-European institutions such as the CoE and the ECHR, play a central role in developments and advocacy of more inclusive forms of sexual citizenship. (2) The discourse of sexual citizenship reveals the biggest tension between Poland and “Europe”—Poland constantly reaffirms its heteronormativity, while “Europe” is often seen as a “homonormative” actor.

¹⁴⁴ Binnie and Klesse, “‘Like a Bomb in the Gasoline Station;’” Helena Chmielewska-Szlajfer, *Reshaping Poland's Community after Communism: Ordinary Celebrations* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), Mizielińska and Stasińska, “Prywatne Jest Polityczne.”

¹⁴⁵ Fligstein, Polyakova, and Sandholtz, “European Integration, Nationalism and European Identity”; Ayoub and Paternotte, “Introduction.”

¹⁴⁶ Fligstein, Polyakova, and Sandholtz, “European Integration, Nationalism and European Identity.”

¹⁴⁷ Ammaturo “The ‘Pink Agenda’”; Richardson, *Sexuality and Citizenship*; Joke Swibel, “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Human Rights: The Search for an International Strategy,” *Contemporary Politics* 15, no 1 (2009); Kelly Kollman and Matthew Waites, “The Global Politics of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Human Rights: An Introduction.” *Contemporary Politics* 15, no 1 (2009).

¹⁴⁸ e.g. Binnie, “Critical Queer Regionality and LGBTQ Politics in Europe”; Colpani and Hated, “‘In Europe It’s Different.’”

¹⁴⁹ e.g. David Bell and Jon Binnie, “Sexual Citizenship: Marriage, the Market and the Military,” in *Handbook of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, ed. Diane Richardson and Steven Seidman (London: Sage, 2002); Leticia Sabsay, “The Emergence of the Other Sexual Citizen: Orientalism and the Modernisation of Sexuality,” *Citizenship Studies* 16, no 5 (2012); Kahlina, “Local Histories, European LGBT Designs;” Ammaturo, “The ‘Pink Agenda’” and *European Sexual Citizenship*; Richardson, *Sexuality and Citizenship*.

The idea of “rainbow Europe”¹⁵⁰ reflects on how the promotion and protection of the LGBTQ+ rights are reproduced as foundations of “Europe’s uniqueness” and “European exceptionalism on human rights.”¹⁵¹ European self becomes (re)constructed in terms of being in favour of gender equality, female, and LGBTQ+ rights, and the idea of Europe is (re)produced as the harbinger of tolerance and equality.¹⁵² This binary is used to create metaphorical boundaries of Europe and the discourses of gender and sexuality are used to discuss potential candidate member states,¹⁵³ immigrants, especially from the Muslim countries,¹⁵⁴ as well as the differences between the EU member states. Thus, the paradigm of gender and sexuality is used to (re)produce the binary between the West and the East, where the East is both internal and external.¹⁵⁵ It is highly visible in Poland, as the discourses about the difference between Polish and European values have focused from the beginning on the diverse ideas about gender, sexuality, and family. While the Europeanization of the LGBTQ+ issues is problematized by scholars,¹⁵⁶ within the Polish LGBTQ+ minority any step forward from the current situation would be hailed as a victory.¹⁵⁷

Crucially for this thesis, the idea of queer-friendly “Europe” is often used by the LGBTQ+ movements to demand certain rights and the LGBTQ+ movement in Europe is often seen as one of the best examples of European identity today, “a positive sense of solidarity” reaching across the national borders.¹⁵⁸ There is a free flow of ideas and support between different LGBTQ+ organizations in Europe, based around the concepts of shared values, struggle for

¹⁵⁰ Colpani and Habed, “‘In Europe It’s Different,’”

¹⁵¹ Ayoub and Paternotte, “Introduction;” Ammaturo, “The ‘Pink Agenda’” and *European Sexual Citizenship*.

¹⁵² *ibid.*

¹⁵³ Kahlina, “Local Histories, European LGBT Designs;” Kulpa, “Western Leveraged Pedagogy of Central and Eastern Europe;” Moss, “Split Europe.”

¹⁵⁴ Colpani and Habed “‘In Europe It’s Different;” Mepschen, Duyvendak, and Tonkens, “Sexual Politics, Orientalism and Multicultural Citizenship in the Netherlands.”

¹⁵⁵ Maria Janion, *Niesamowita Słowiańszczyzna. Fantazmaty literatury* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2006); Graff, *Rykoszetem*; Binnie and Klesse “Solidarities and Tensions;” Binnie, “Relational Comparison and LGBTQ Activism in European Cities;” Grzebalska, “Poland;” Stella, et al. “Introduction,” in *Citizenship and Belonging Trans-National and Intersectional Perspectives*, ed. Francesca Stella, et al. (London: Routledge, 2016); Richardson, *Sexuality and Citizenship*.

¹⁵⁶ the main concerns are its orientalising nature (West vs the rest), using queer-friendliness to cover other sorts of prejudices such as racism and Islamophobia, and instrumentalisation of the LGBTQ+ issues to forward political agendas; see e.g. Ammaturo, “The ‘Pink Agenda.’”

¹⁵⁷ Mizielińska, *Pleć, Ciało, Seksualność*; Ziemińska, “Marginesy Seksualności i Potrzeba Nowej Etyki.”

¹⁵⁸ Neil Fligstein, *Euroclash: The EU, European Identity and the Future of Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 136; Ayoub and Paternotte, “Introduction.”

recognition, and solidarity, and the Polish movements benefit a lot from it¹⁵⁹ (see Chapter 1). It also links with the research suggesting that European identity is particularly salient in people who feel somehow excluded from their nation-state. While the existing research focuses more on separatist movements, for example the Scots in the UK or the Catalans in Spain,¹⁶⁰ it is interesting to see if there are similar tendencies among the Polish LGBTQ+ minority.

Simultaneously, EUrope has virtually no influence over national legislation concerning gender and sexual minority rights.¹⁶¹ Even within the EU legislation, LGBTQ+ rights remain marginal, which suggests that EUrope should be seen rather as a soft power.¹⁶² Despite this disparity between real and imaginary power, it is difficult to find a study that would not put an EU lens on the LGBTQ+ issues in Poland. The idea of EUrope that emerges from these debates is highly contested. Polish imaginary of EUrope is always exaggerated and there is no consistent message—EUrope is presented as both the only way for Poland to go forward and the biggest threat to its existence and sovereignty.¹⁶³ Therefore, it would seem that the question of identifying with Europe depends on how one understands it and the perceived benefits.

Conclusion

Ever since the EU accession process, the major clash between the Polish and European values remained unchanged. The question of the LGBTQ+ rights is one of the most divisive issues. It could be argued that ever since the 1990s Poland is Othered as the EUropean Other in terms of sexual citizenship and reproduced as a part of a binary: queerphobic Poland versus tolerant EUrope. EUrope is idealized and romanticised, shown as a safe haven for gender and sexual minorities. However, there is no research showing how such binary affects the sense of belonging among the LGBTQ+ minority in Poland. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, identifications are stories. Most of the existing research of the Polish LGBTQ+

¹⁵⁹ Binnie and Klesse “Solidarities and Tensions” and “Like a Bomb in the Gasoline Station.”

¹⁶⁰ Fligstein, Polyakova, and Sandholtz, “European Integration, Nationalism and European Identity”; Juan Diez Medrano, “Unpacking European Identity,” *Politique Européenne*, 1 no 30 (2010).

¹⁶¹ Colpani and Habed “In Europe It’s Different.”

¹⁶² Ayoub and Paternotte, “Introduction.”

¹⁶³ Miezielińska and Stasińska, “Prywatne Jest Polityczne”, Graff “We Are (Not All) Homophobes”; Grzebalska and Pető, “The Gendered Modus Operandi of the Illiberal Transformation in Hungary and Poland”; Graff, Kapur, Walters, “Introduction.”

minority focused on how their stories are told by others.¹⁶⁴ The purpose of this thesis is to give voice to the minority itself and show how they negotiate their stories: the sense of belonging to Poland that is increasingly built in contrast to the LGBTQ+ minority, as well as to Europe, that in its tolerant discourse embraces gender and sexual minorities but, especially since 2015, excludes Poland.

¹⁶⁴ e.g. Graff, *Rykoszetem*; Binnie and Klesse, ““Like a Bomb in the Gasoline Station;”” Miezielińska and Stasińska, “Prywatne Jest Polityczne.”

Chapter 4: Methods and data collection

It's one thing to discuss a "faceless" problem and another a problem with a specific face that, at first glance, makes you notice the everyday burden of the lack of legal regulations and the connected tragedies, strategies of coping with exclusion, and the lack of social and legal recognition. (Mizielińska and Stasińska, "Prywatne jest Polityczne," 113)

This chapter provides a rationale for the methods used in this thesis. My research is based on in-depth biographical interviews and uses a narrative approach. Personal narratives are ways of making sense of one's experiences; accounts that describe how reality is experienced by the narrator, shaping their identifications and personality.¹⁶⁵ They provide a continuous and personal attempt at placing, naming, and locating self and Other, or self and society¹⁶⁶—thus, they are stories of belonging.¹⁶⁷ A narrator is simultaneously "a 'who' and a 'what'", an actor (re)constructing their own world and "acted upon" by mechanisms out of their control.¹⁶⁸ As this thesis is concerned with the sense of belonging, understanding how the interviewees placed themselves in relation to others is crucial. Narrative method takes a critical look at the story, its construction, language, and the cultural resources it employs,¹⁶⁹ which helps analyse the factors affecting the participants' sense of belonging. Moreover, storytelling is "a vital human strategy for sustaining a sense of agency in the face of disempowering circumstances."¹⁷⁰ Telling a story means taking action wherein private meanings and experiences become public discourse—it is an act of self-justification,¹⁷¹ which is particularly important for minority members whose voices are regularly silenced.

The rest of this chapter discusses the sample, in-depth biographical interviews, the interview process, data processing as well as ethics and reflexivity.

¹⁶⁵ Amia Lieblich, Rivka Tuval-Mashiach, Tamar Zilber, *Narrative Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1998), 9.

¹⁶⁶ Mark Freeman, "Narrative and Relation: The Place of the Other in the Story of the Self" in *The Meaning of Others: Narrative Studies of Relationships*, ed. Ruthellen Josselson, et al. (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2007).

¹⁶⁷ Yuval-Davis, "Belonging and the Politics of Belonging

¹⁶⁸ Michael Jackson, *The Politics of Storytelling: Violence, Transgression and Intersubjectivity* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2002): 13.

¹⁶⁹ Catherine Kohler Riessman *Narrative Analysis* (Newbury Park, CA: SAGE, 1993), 2.

¹⁷⁰ *ibid*, 15.

¹⁷¹ Jackson, *The Politics of Storytelling*.

Sample

The sample is purposeful: Polish people identifying as a part of the LGBTQ+ minority, aged 18-25, not actively participating in any LGBTQ+ organisations, and currently living in Kraków. I used the wide LGBTQ+ acronym as self-identification with this group was key for this thesis rather than specific gender or sexual identifications. I chose to focus on the experiences of “ordinary” people as activists use “identities” to push for change. Especially since many of the Polish LGBTQ+ organisations benefit from cooperation with the EU institutions and member states, it might impact the activists’ attitudes towards Europe. Conversely, when non-activists discuss the questions of identification and belonging, they do not express any organisation’s views, they are not paid for it, and they do not have rehearsed scripts—they reflect on their experiences and perceived reality.¹⁷² It provides an insight into how larger structures and (self-)regulating mechanisms affect “ordinary” people,¹⁷³ how they internalize, avoid, or subvert the pre-existing social categories (e.g. Pole, gay, European) that are constantly employed by activists, politicians or media.¹⁷⁴ Additionally, majority of my interviewees were largely closeted. In many cases, the interviews were the first time when they talked in depth about their self-discovery and the questions of belonging. Providing minority members with a safe space to talk about their experiences gives them an opportunity to become performative agents,¹⁷⁵ to give their meanings to the discourse.

The lower age was chosen due to legal reasons and the upper one to ensure that the participants would not have much personal memory of Poland before it joined the EU. Kraków was selected as it is usually assumed that LGBTQ+ people feel safer in bigger cities, especially with a significant student population.¹⁷⁶ The initial interviewees responded to my post on two different LGBTQ+ Kraków Facebook groups, and the next ones were targeted using a snowballing technique when I asked the respondents about other people they knew.

¹⁷² Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity,’” *Theory and Society* 29 (2000).

¹⁷³ Mizielińska and Stasińska, “Prywatne Jest Polityczne.”

¹⁷⁴ Brubaker “Ethnicity Without Groups”: 13.

¹⁷⁵ Jackson, *The Politics of Storytelling*.

¹⁷⁶ e.g.: Justyna Struzik, “Seksualność Intersekcjonalnie. Spotkania, Dyskusje, Badania.” *Studia Socjologiczne* 4, no 215 (2014); Justyna Struzik, ed. *O Wsi Bez Uprzedzeń: Raport z Badan.* (Kraków: Fundacja Przestrzeń Kobiet 2016).

There were seven participants and they constituted a highly varied group. Three of them identified as male, three as female, and one as gender-queer. Four graduated from technical high schools and three from regular high schools. Three started working after high school, three are students, and one has graduated from university. Four grew up in Kraków, two in small villages, and one in another big city. Two have lived abroad for some time. They used six different gender and sexual identifications. However, despite their differences, their narratives about how their gender and sexual identifications affected their sense of belonging to Poland and Europe were largely similar.

The interviewees were:

1. Piotr¹⁷⁷ – trans* heterosexual male, twenty-five years old, grew up in the countryside and moved to Kraków to attend university. High school and university (computing) graduate.
2. Sara – (bi)romantic asexual female, twenty-two years old, lived in Kraków all her life. Finished a technical high school and currently works in a bar.
3. Tomek – homosexual male, twenty-three years old, grew up in Kraków. Participated in Erasmus exchange in the Netherlands and worked for three months in Turkey. High school graduate, currently finishing a Bachelors degree (sociology).
4. Wiktoria – bisexual female, twenty-two years old, lived in Kraków all her life. Technical high school graduate, currently studying at a polytechnic (computing).
5. Natalia – homosexual female, twenty-two years old, grew up in the countryside. Finished a technical high school in Kraków. Due to health issues only does occasional graphic design commissions.
6. Marcin – bisexual male, twenty-two years old, lived in Kraków all his life, finished a technical school. Dropped out during his first year of university, currently works in a cinema.
7. Gabriel – androromantic¹⁷⁸ gender-queer half-Pole, half-Mexican. Grew up in Mexico City, moved to Kraków to attend university (Slavic languages).

¹⁷⁷ to ensure anonymity, all names have been changed

¹⁷⁸ attracted to masculinity/males

In-depth biographical interviews

A qualitative research interview aims to “understand the world from the subjects’ points of view.”¹⁷⁹ In particular in-depth biographical interviews aim to obtain personal narratives (see introduction to this chapter). As Kvale and Brinkmann suggest, the specificity of in-depth biographical interviews called for preparing themes rather than particular questions.¹⁸⁰ The themes were: Poland and Polishness, political activism, and Europe and Europeaness. The participants were informed of the themes at the beginning of the interview and encouraged to elaborate, based on their own experiences. To test the effectiveness of the approach, a pilot interview was conducted before I left to Kraków. It helped me adjust the themes, prepare more follow-up questions, and clarify phrasing.

Life stories provide narrative truth, which, while is key to identity formation, does not have to reflect the outside reality accurately—it is understood as a truth for this particular person at the time of the interview.¹⁸¹ Therefore, while this thesis might not provide an accurate description of experiences of every member of the LGBTQ+ minority in Poland, it highlights the inclusionary/exclusionary mechanisms as experienced by young urban-dwellers. It is consistent with the need for more localised research of the LGBTQ+ experience in the post-communist Europe, as it varies greatly from country to country, city to city, and between the urban centres and peripheries.¹⁸²

The interview process

Kvale and Brinkmann warn that each interview differs from another and that most decisions have to be made on spot.¹⁸³ It was highly visible in the interview process and it made the loose, theme-based approach to the questions all the more valuable. Approximately half of the sample provided me with their life story and reflected on the research themes with minimal prompts from my side. Others required more questions and prompts. Each interview took approximately two hours.

¹⁷⁹ Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann *InterViews* (Thousands Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2009), 1.

¹⁸⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁸¹ Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, Zilber, *Narrative Research*.

¹⁸² Robert Rhodes-Kubiak, *Activist Citizenship and the LGBT Movement in Serbia*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2015).

¹⁸³ *ibid.*, 15-16.

Overall, I conducted seven in-depth biographical interviews. The small sample reflects the difficulty in finding potential participants and the reluctance to participate in the study, mostly due to fear of repercussions. However, the narrow sample allowed me to engage more deeply with the personal stories, which are at centre of my research. Moreover, the participants reflected on numerous issues, exposing a myriad of complex power relations. Their stories provided a reflection of the social environment as informed by their experience, especially drawing attention to the issues of inclusion/exclusion or visibility/invisibility, which deeply affected their sense of belonging. Looking back at the interviews, I realized that I could have begun by asking about belonging in general. While starting from Poland put the interviewees at ease, I believe that a more general opening question could have opened a wider debate.

Data processing

I transcribed and analysed the recorded interviews. I translated selected quotes into English. As they are usually lengthy and would not fit well in the footnotes, I provided the original in the appendix. I used ellipses “...” to convey pauses in the participants’ speech and square bracket ellipses “[...]” to indicate places where I removed parts of the original text. I divided the collected data into emerging themes and analysed it using the holistic-content narrative analysis, as proposed by Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber.¹⁸⁴

The holistic-content narrative analysis investigates the story (or, in this case, stories) as a whole, looks for repetitions and focal points, experiences that the narrator pays special attention to. Simultaneously, the things that are mentioned in passing, omissions, and contradictions are of equal significance. I traced the themes throughout the story to account for their evolution throughout a narrator’s life, paying particular attention to the beginnings. Since I use several in-depth biographical interviews, the analysis focuses on the similarities and differences of experience within the major themes¹⁸⁵ and investigates the reasons behind them. As this sort of analysis requires looking beyond the story into wider societal and political structures, to avoid over-interpretation, I drew parallels to the theoretical framework.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, Zilber, *Narrative Research*.

¹⁸⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ Tina Miller, “Doing Narrative Research? Thinking Through the Narrative Process,” in: *Feminist Narrative Research*, eds. Jo Woodiwiss, Kate Smith, Kelly Lockwood (Palgrave Macmillan, London 2017).

The potential pitfall of the holistic-content narrative analysis is that the themes are decided by the researcher and my selection was motivated by the research questions. While doing this I focused on what seemed the most important to the participants, however, some of the themes did not make it into the thesis. For example, invisibility/exclusion in the school curricula was important to the participants, however, would have been hard to elaborate in the thesis. Similarly, the issues connected with the specificity of the Polish language were largely removed from the analysis. These topics deserve a separate research of their own and I did not feel that I could do them justice within the limited scope of the thesis and make them understandable enough to non-Polish readers.

Ethics and reflexivity

The interviewees were informed about the purpose of the research, the ways of data collection, and analysis prior to the interviews. They signed a consent form and received a copy with my contact information. I informed them that they could refrain from answering questions, stop the interview, or withdraw completely at any point, as well as to ask me to delete the recording after the interview. To ensure their safety and comfort, all names have been changed and the location of the interviews was chosen at the interviewees' discretion. Another ethical issue is the question of encouraging a person talk about difficult topics and then leaving them without help after the interview.¹⁸⁷ As the interviews concerned the topics of invisibility and exclusion, to avoid their reproduction I encouraged the participants to reach out to me whenever they needed someone to talk to. I still maintain contact with most of them through social media. While it is not a standard academic practice, I believe that, given the circumstances, it was the right decision.

As a non-heterosexual Pole myself, I could sympathize and relate to the participants' experiences, which facilitated the interview process. Donna Haraway argues that, since in the qualitative social research scientific objectivity is impossible, the position of a researcher who is also an insider in the research group can be highly valuable. Especially in research that deals with deeply personal questions of belonging and exclusion, it is hard to replace personal

¹⁸⁷ Virginia Dickson-Swift, et al. "Doing sensitive research: what challenges do qualitative researchers face?" *Qualitative Research* 7 no 3 (2007).

insight.¹⁸⁸ In this case, my insider position opened access to the research sample. For example, the LGBTQ+ Kraków Facebook groups that I used are “private” and prospective members have to answer questions to “prove” that they are part of the minority. Additionally, almost every person I contacted asked about my own identification before agreeing to the interview. This echoes Val Colick-Peisker’s observations that the “insider” status must be granted by the researched community. Similarly, her comments on the importance of the insider-researcher giving voice to people that would not have spoken otherwise¹⁸⁹ are highly relevant for this thesis.

My position in relation to the research group is also important from the ethical standpoint, as it is often argued that members of minority groups feel more at ease relying their experiences to other minority group members.¹⁹⁰ While my experiences differ in many ways from the research group—I grew up in a smaller city on the other end of Poland and I have lived all my adult life abroad, which makes me what Abu-Lughod calls a “halfie,” a researcher that is somewhat a part of a sample but at the same time distanced from it¹⁹¹—each researcher brings in a unique insight and, as research is a social process, it is important to acknowledge their potential influence.¹⁹² The choice of the research method with focus on personal narratives helped me limit my interference in the interview process—I was mostly a listener to the participants’ stories, only using occasional open questions and prompts to minimize my influence.

¹⁸⁸ Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” *Feminist Studies*, 14, no. 3 (1988); similarly Val Colick-Peisker, “Doing Ethnography in ‘One’s Own Ethnic Community’: The Experience of an Awkward Insider,” in *Anthropologists in the Field: Cases in Participant Observation*, ed. Lynne Hume and Jane Mulcock, 82-94 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Charlotte Aull Davis *Reflexive Ethnography* (London: Routledge, 1998); Ruth Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that Breaks Your Heart* (Boston: Beacon Press 1996); Jason De Leon, “The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail” (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015).

¹⁸⁹ Colick-Peisker, “Doing Ethnography in “One’s Own Ethnic Community,” 86.

¹⁹⁰ Patrick McNeill, Steve Chapman, *Research Methods* (London: Routledge, 2005), 65.

¹⁹¹ Lila Abu-Lughod “Writing Against Culture,” in *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*. School of American Research Press, ed. Richard G. Fox, 137-154 (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1991).

¹⁹² e.g. Davis, *Reflexive Ethnography*.

Chapter 5: Findings and analysis

The previous chapters demonstrated how the concept of sexual citizenship becomes bases for belonging/Othering in EUrope and within Poland. This chapter uses the conducted interviews to analyse how Poland and EUrope are (re)constructed by the members of the Polish LGBTQ+ minority and how it affects their sense of belonging. As mostly closeted non-activists, their narratives are unrehearsed and provide a valuable insight into the experiences of an “ordinary” member of the LGBTQ+ minority in Poland—a voice which is usually unheard in the discourse dominated by the state, Church, media, and activists.

The chapter draws on the concepts of “space of experience” and “horizon of expectations,” where Poland is the space of the interviewees’ everyday experiences, while EUrope emerges as “supreme locus of promise and possibility.”¹⁹³ It is further divided in relation to the themes emerging from the interviews: (1) shame, fear, no pride, (2) Polishness and queerphobia, (3) hetero-Catholic alpha males, (4) political fatigue, and (5) EUropean influence and EUropeanness. I start with shame and fear due to its influence on the sense of belonging among the participants. Catholicism is treated as a separate theme due to its significance in the participants’ stories. Such structure helps engage with the research questions, to investigate how non-activist LGBTQ+ people in Poland narrate their everyday experiences of marginalization and how the constructs of sexual citizenship in Poland and EUrope influence their sense of belonging to these communities. In discussion, I try to assess the implications of these findings.

Shame, fear, no pride

Shame and fear were the dominating feelings in the participants’ stories, particularly when it came to discovering their gender and sexuality. It was also visible in the interview process, starting with the selection of location—most of the participants invited me to their homes and the two who chose to meet in public selected crowded cafés in the city centre where we were surrounded by foreign tourists, and picked the seats under music speakers. I interpret it through the prism of deeply internalized social norms that demand to keep the topics relating

¹⁹³ Pickering, “Experience as Horizon: Koselleck, expectation and historical time,” 272.

to sexuality, especially non-heterosexual, in the private sphere.¹⁹⁴ Additionally, throughout the interviews, the participants doubted themselves, constantly justified themselves and tried to gauge my opinions before voicing theirs:

I went to a psychiatrist to see if I'm really trans or if there is something wrong with my head... you know, mind plays different tricks. But no, I am trans because that's the way I am and I can't do anything about it. (Piotr)

I'm so sick and tired of being forced to conform to heterosexual norms. Oh, I'm sorry, I'm getting angry[...] Are you sure I can talk like this? Because it makes me so angry, why do we have to conform to the group that's oppressing us? We are who we are, we cannot change it. (Gabriel)

The trope of “I cannot change who I am,” often said in an apologetic way, was visible throughout all interviews and surfaced repeatedly. It relates to Foucault's theory that shame is one of the most successful internal mechanisms of control, playing on the internalized discourse of what is proper and what is improper, which is “so automatically replayed that its cultural source remains unrecognized.”¹⁹⁵ Shame was also visible in the way the participants talked about LGBTQ+-related topics. They called heterosexuals “normal,” and, even though they identified with the LGBTQ+ minority, they kept referring to it as “them,” “such people,” or, in Piotr's case, “weird rainbow people,” and most of them did not see any reason to look for others who identified in a similar way.

[Do you seek out other LGBTQ+ people?]

Honestly? No, I don't feel a need to meet *such* people or even hang out with them.

(Wiktoria; stress original)

Therefore, it seemed that while they identified as non-cisgender and/or non-heterosexual, they were reluctant to identify with the LGBTQ+ minority. I interpret it as a result of the deeply internalized shame and fear associated with the minority. This tendency was also highly visible in the banalization of non-physical queerphobic violence as something natural and to be expected:

¹⁹⁴ Ziemińska, “Marginesy Seksualności i Potrzeba Nowej Etyki”; Gruszczynska, “Sowing the Seeds of Solidarity in Public Space”; Graff “We Are (Not All) Homophobes”; Mizielińska, “The Rest is Silence,”

¹⁹⁵ Ziemińska, “Marginesy Seksualności i Potrzeba Nowej Etyki,” 298; also Taylor, *The Routledge Guidebook to Foucault's The History of Sexuality*.

I had a date with a boy... We were talking, walking around the city centre, it was nice, but he... he was holding my hand and I was so scared. All the time. And he even kissed me... on the cheek... And people were staring. It was winter, dark. And I had the same in Mexico but I'm scared more here. Maybe because I don't really understand how it works here. I'm scared of violence. There too, of course, but here I don't think I fear death. In Mexico? Sometimes. So I don't want to say that it's better there and worse here because it's a lie and it's generally safe here. But I'm scared. (Gabriel)

If I go down the street holding a girl's hand, people might look weirdly... there might be some problems in a tramway because people usually feel more confident there... There is less space... There might be some pushing around, yelling, stopping the tramway, and so on... But on the street, apart from some name-calling or a glare, it's not so bad. But that's Kraków, if we went to the countryside, they'd talk about it for years... Especially in church, at sermons. (Wiktoria)

The calm way the participants talked about their experiences with queerphobia suggests that they have internalized their “tertiary citizen” status and did not see a way to move beyond it. Only one of the participants was openly out, with most of them reserving the information only for their closest friends—the exception was Tomek, the only cisgender gay participant. However, even for him it was a novelty that started after returning from a student exchange in the Netherlands, which indicates the positive impact of the European mobility:

It started when I came back from the Netherlands. Before I'd only tell the people who needed to know, my friends... girls who seemed to have crushes on me...that's it. But now I'm more open about it. It was such a positive experience, no one cared I was gay. So I don't want to be in the closet anymore, at least not at university. (Tomek)

The participants' closetedness extended into a rather negative stance towards the Equality Marches, the Polish version of Pride parades:

A group of people who want to be treated normally, averagely... They walk down the street in latex pants, well, maybe not all, and scream while waving a flag... Damn, if you want to be treated okay, don't behave like clowns. I don't understand the aim. Will someone accept such people seeing this? Will someone think: okay, that's actually okay? I doubt it. (Piotr)

None of the participants had ever taken part in an Equality March. While not all of them were as negative as Piotr, many feared violence or said that they would feel uncomfortable in “such a crowd.” They have also stated that the Equality Marches are where the binary between the

nationalists and the LGBTQ+ minority was the most visible and they were reluctant to emphasise their “tertiary citizen” status:

If we have an Equality March, they organize some nationalist thing or another and they all start fighting[...] You know how it is, if there’s one thing, there must be the opposite. The opposite here is the nationalist movement. (Marcin)

Marcin’s words resemble Graff’s suggestion that the Equality Marches are “more about Polish nationalism than the sexual minority rights,”¹⁹⁶ which made them unappealing to the participants. This reveals the duality of the shame in their narratives, which was related not only to their gender/sexuality but also Polishness. It was especially visible when they talked about admitting where they came from to foreigners:

I think that a lot of people assume that Poles are racist and homophobic. When I was on Erasmus in the Netherlands, when I said where I’m from, people were like, uh-huh, what will happen now, how do we behave[...] But also Poles abroad don’t seek each other out. If they hear someone speak Polish on the street, they go silent, so that no one would realize they’re Polish, too. I was doing that, too. I think that we either don’t like other Poles or we are ashamed to be Polish. Or both. (Tomek)

Graff suggests that the “ostentatious shame of Poland” is a symptom of the post-socialist resentments,¹⁹⁷ which is here manifested as a self-perceived binary between a racist-homophobic Pole and an open-minded European. However, while the participants found the Pole-queerphobe stereotype harmful, all of them admitted to being queerphobic themselves especially before they started discovering their sexuality and reading more about the topic. Therefore, while they all had experienced Othering and often persecution on account of their gender and/or sexuality, they were understanding of queerphobia as they participated in the reproduction of hierarchies and stereotypes themselves. They repeated that queerphobia is deeply rooted in every sphere of life in Poland and that it would not change without proper education:

I think it’s generally about the lack of education because I started thinking it might concern me only when I started learning about it. Before I didn’t think about it because there was no information. And I’m not surprised that if people learn all their information from the TV that

¹⁹⁶ Graff, *Rykoszetem*, 122.

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.*, 65.

they have such views because they can't have any other. I don't think that most of them are bad people or anything just... they hear that we're perverts and they have to protect the family. Oh no, if you have to protect the family, if it's presented in such way, I'd be upset, too, right... It's only that we know that it's not true and they don't. (Natalia)

What Natalia refers to is a phenomenon well-recognized among the Polish (and not only) queer academics of “created in the nationalist-Catholic discourse a figure of a pervert-enemy of nation.”¹⁹⁸ It could be understood in relation to Sara Ahmed’s “sticky signs”¹⁹⁹ as the word “queer” (or gay, homosexual, LGBT, etc.) comes to signify a pervert, a deviant, an enemy of nation. Marcin noted that the negative representation of the LGBTQ+ minority extended to pop culture:

Someone has to be gay so the audience can laugh at them. They are either very stereotypical or just do stupid things. And when I look at it, how can I be surprised that the society is the way it's if they have this picture. And I'm so embarrassed, I want to leave, leave this cinema, this city... That's the LGBT representation in Polish romantic comedies, in Polish films in general. Crude comic relief. It's so harmful. (Marcin)

Therefore, while the participants observed an increase in portrayals of non-heterosexuals in the Polish media, their construct oscillates between an enemy of nation and comic relief, which deepens the Polish-self/queer-Other dynamic, and could be seen as a regulatory use of biopolitics by the state.²⁰⁰ Interestingly, the participants recognized the power structures at play and often questioned them:

No one ever mentions that there is such thing as non-hetero. My defining that I might not be hetero started only in late middle school [age 15-16] because of browsing internet on this topic. And all conversations, questions about it were considered as something... evil, at the time. You shouldn't ask about it because if you ask it means that, oh, you're perverted. Why do you want to know, for example, how not to get pregnant. And, similarly, apart from my mum, no one ever mentioned that a girl should go regularly to a gynaecologist, and that a guy should also go to a doctor. (Wiktorja)

I interpret it as the role of the cisgender heterosexual normative apparatus in obscuring other forms of attraction. While sexuality in general was considered as something deeply private, we

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.*, 14.

¹⁹⁹ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*:195.

²⁰⁰ Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses.”

can also observe here the disciplinary power of individuals²⁰¹ in shaming non-normative desires. A particularly moving story comes from Natalia, about a book about puberty she received from her mum:

There was... it wasn't homophobic, it was only that... someone doesn't understand the topic and wrote it. It was something like, don't worry, only about 2 to 5% of people aren't heterosexual so... don't worry because there's a small chance that it'll concern you. Um, and after I read it, I started noticing that... damn, I'm thinking in a strange way about this (female) friend... And there was, for example, that you can look at your (female) friends in such way but don't worry, every girl does it[...] After I read it I was so scared[...] What will happen if I'm homosexual, of God, is it some sort of disease, because it's written as if it's a disease... And there were no other materials. The internet wasn't so accessible back then... I had an hour on a computer a day because there was only one at home... So that's how it looked like. All my knowledge came from this book where it was written, it's all in your head, don't worry... and no one has ever mentioned it in school, never... and it messed with my head so bad, I would see a girl that I'd like and I'd think "I just like her jacket, I just like her jacket." It took me so long to unlearn that and realize what is going on. (Natalia)

As it can be seen, the interviews mostly conveyed stories of invisibility and fighting through misinformation. It took the participants years to admit to themselves that they do not fit in the homogenous representation of Polishness and most of them were not ready to talk about it with anyone apart from their closest friends. I believe that the fact that they decided to share their stories with me shows a need for validation of their experiences, which is so contrary to the homogenous narrative of the nation. It is important as simply speaking up can be interpreted as an act of emancipation, claiming discursive space, and a performative practice reaffirming the validity of one's identification.²⁰²

The participants repeated that even within the LGBTQ+ minority itself, the cisgender gay male experience is the most recognizable. However, while it facilitated their process of self-identification, it also meant that they carried the greatest burden of fighting stereotypes and hate speech. Female sexuality was perceived as still somewhat taboo, while the asexual and queer-gender experience were completely invisible. Following Mizielińska:

²⁰¹ Taylor, *The Routledge Guidebook to Foucault's The History of Sexuality*.

²⁰² Butler *Gender Trouble*; Jackson, *Politics of Storytelling*.

Silence regarding homosexuality is a strategy that reinforces “compulsory heterosexuality,” which then in the dominant social mentality becomes the only possible and natural way of life. This leads to the problem of social ignorance and intolerance, which is probably the most serious effect of this kind of nationalistic discourse. (Mizelińska, “The Rest is Silence...,” 293)

Mizelińska’s conclusions from 2001 are still relevant today. Most of the participants’ stories of self-discovery ended in their late teens, which was linked to better internet accessibility and improved English skills that allowed them to educate themselves on the LGBTQ+-related topics. However, the stories took a drastic turn when they reached the present times and they became stories of political witch-hunt. That is because the timing of the interviews coincided with a change in the Polish political landscape:

There has always been in the society in general this... I don’t want to hear about this. Don’t flaunt your sexuality. But now that it’s more talked about there’s even more distaste than before.... And media caught on to it and they’re on a witch-hunt and people are getting angry.
(Marcin)

All interviewees were worried about the recent developments, the beginnings of the LGBTQ+ moral panic in media and politics (see Chapter 2). However, they were not surprised by the antagonisms directed at their community, which was seen as a natural culmination to the nationalist tensions. As Burszta notices, the current susceptibility to moral panic is a natural result of the “culture wars” between the two camps in the Polish society (see Chapter 2) and “intrusive persuasion towards the ‘correct’ Polishness,” which is linked with the traditionalist-Catholic values.²⁰³ Therefore, the participants, as the recipients of tensions, were resentful towards the politicians who had challenged their invisibility and had mostly negative opinions when it came to the Warsaw “LGBT card”²⁰⁴ that attracted attention to the minority:

I think that this card isn’t really necessary... Maybe these safe houses and, of course, they should talk about tolerance in schools but why the fuck make such a big thing out of it. Why jump out and upset others. It just makes LGBT into some separate society... like some monkeys in the zoo that have to be protected and marked for their otherness. Why stick out.
(Piotr)

²⁰³ Burszta, *Kotwice Pewności*, 174.

²⁰⁴ the card promising certain privileges (a safe house, a hotline, better sexual education in schools) to the LGBT minority by the mayor of Warsaw, Rafał Trzaskowski (see chapter 2)

It's everywhere, in media, in churches. Everyone is suddenly an expert on LGBT, talking about perverts and teaching children masturbation. And it's so sad because the card is a great idea, it's written so nicely[...] But when you read it, there's nothing really in there. It's all very general. So I'm not sure if it was worth it. (Natalia)

These opinions echo the long-standing debates in the queer studies about the discourse of “special rights” and moral panic²⁰⁵ (see Chapter 1). The participants preferred invisibility because the only alternative they knew was violence. The newest developments made them especially pessimistic:

What happened today²⁰⁶ ... how a town hall can pass a law like that, it's some sort of joke... They used the word “homopropaganda” in the text. And they also said “rightly forbidding,” so there is some sort of opinion. In a law. I have no more questions. That's... I'm not sure if this isn't against some human rights. (Marcin)

The participants noted that both invisibility and the current moral panic are related to language. Throughout the interviews, the participants constantly used English words, especially “gender” and “coming out” but also “attraction,” “crush,” or even “white heterosexual males.” Many saw the language barrier as an obstacle to embracing the LGBTQ+ minority in Poland. It echoes similar comments from the Polish queer researchers that “the first barrier that queer movement encounters in Poland is a communication barrier or misunderstanding,”²⁰⁷ Since the first language of the minority is English, for the majority of the society their vocabulary and, more importantly, identifications are meaningless.²⁰⁸ It was visible in the case of the asexual participant: “I'm always surprised when someone knows that asexuals exist at all,” (Sara) a problem that has been long noted by researchers and activists who call asexuality “the invisible orientation.”²⁰⁹ While Sara embraced the identification, she rarely used it to describe herself to others—not because of the fear of violence but because the word itself is foreign and meaningless to most. That was also true for Gabriel, who found it

²⁰⁵ Mizielińska, *Plec, Ciało, Seksualność: Od Feminizmu do Teorii Queer*; Rubin, “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality.”

²⁰⁶ The Polish town, Swidnica, passing the law forbidding “LGBT ideology”, see: “Powiat Świdnicki Wolny Od LGBT. Rada Powiatu Przyjęła Deklarację,” TVP Info, 27 Mar. 2019, www.tvp.info/41923829/powiat-swidnicki-wolny-od-lgbt-rada-powiatu-przyjela-deklaracje.

²⁰⁷ Skowrońska, “O Trudnych Spotkaniach Wielokulturowości i Kategorii Gender/Queer,” 58; also Mizielińska, *Plec, Ciało, Seksualność*.

²⁰⁸ Skowrońska, “O Trudnych Spotkaniach Wielokulturowości i Kategorii Gender/Queer.”

²⁰⁹ Julie Sondra Decker, *The Invisible Orientation: An Introduction to Asexuality* (New York: Carrel Books, 2014).

nearly impossible to convey their gender-queer experience in Polish and had to use a lot of Spanish and English substitutes. They also mentioned that the language is the reason they choose to introduce themselves as gay to other Poles—it is hard to introduce oneself as gender-queer in a language where there are no words for “gender” or “queer” and talking about self constantly forces you to choose a male or a female form. In this way, language reinforced the participants’ closetedness as it did not provide ways to describe certain experiences.

Polishness and queerphobia

The previous theme investigated how the feelings of shame and fear affected the sense of belonging among the participants. This section focuses on how it related to the way they (re)constructed Polishness. As Poland is the participants’ “space of experience,”²¹⁰ analysing the Polish sexual citizenship helps understand where their sense of exclusion stems from and the way it affects their construction of the “horizon of expectations”²¹¹ (EUrope).

The emergent picture of Poland is largely negative and often referred to stereotypes. The participants associated Polishness with provincialism, stubbornness, and uncritically following the teachings of the Catholic Church:

I always have very negative connotations with this typical Pole, even though I am not sure if I have met such a typical-typical one, it’s just a stereotype that they’re... umm... well, such intolerant pricks... I am not surprised that abroad they have such a bad opinion about us if even in Poland people think about each other that “oh, we, Poles, we can only fight.” (Natalia)

While the participants were mostly aware that their outlooks were based on stereotypes, the negative connotations seemed deeply-rooted and they found it difficult to move past them. As Burszta notices “stereotypical thinking is always an expression of an emotional position that contrasts ‘us’ and ‘others.’”²¹² Therefore, the way the participants constantly distanced and contrasted themselves with a “Pole” stresses that they did not really feel as if they belonged to this category. One of the re-emerging Polish traits was narrow-mindedness:

²¹⁰ Pickering, “Experience as Horizon”

²¹¹ *ibid.*

²¹² *ibid.*, 19.

It's in the blood, from childhood, passed down the generations, this stubbornness, and sometimes it's good but in many cases it's extremely harmful and... well, it kind of moves a person backwards. Instead of moving forwards, we're either standing still or going backwards.

(Sara)

In the participants' stories all the negative Polish traits were connected with reluctance towards change. This became more salient for them as they discovered their gender and sexual identification. The more they educated themselves on the minority topics, the more critical they became of Poland and Polishness. Only one participant called himself a patriot and proud to be Polish. Interestingly, it was also the only person identifying as heterosexual (trans) male, which I interpret as reinforcement of the idea of Poland as a nation built around the (heterosexual) male experience.²¹³ However, even he had problems specifying what being a patriot means for him:

I don't know... I'm a Pole, proud of the history... And a Catholic, but not a thoughtless one. And I'm not ashamed of that... though sometimes I'm ashamed of the Janusz [stereotypical] Poles abroad. (Piotr)

Therefore, for Piotr there was a visible hierarchy: there are Catholics blindly following the teachings of the Church and more critical ones. He also distinguished between a patriot and a stereotypical Pole. However, for all the other respondents it blurred into one negative picture that they distanced themselves from:

If someone says they're a patriot, they're usually quite... romantic. As in a romance man. All about this longing for Poland, that Poland is so poor but he's such a hero, he's sacrificing himself for this whole country... They cannot look at the West more openly because they're constantly thinking that in Poland it's the coolest and that Poland is so good, and the rest, if they have other views, they're bad and... let's think about it. Why do they have a different worldview? What are the reasons? I don't know, be a little critical. (Natalia)

For all participants the idea of patriotism referred to romanticism and nationalism which made it unappealing. They seemed to equate Polishness with readiness to fight and die for the country. This echoes Graff's observation of the dominant notion of patriotism in Poland which "treats militarism, racism and patriotism as synonyms and confuses the desire for

²¹³ e.g. Hryciuk and Korolczuk, *Pożegnanie z Matką-Polką?*; Weissman, "Repronormativity and the Reproduction of the Nation-State."

independence with aggression,” and makes anyone outside of the conservative-nationalist spectrum unlikely to identify with it.²¹⁴ It was visible in the participants’ stories, where there was no middle ground—one is either a nationalist-patriot, glorifying Poland and the Catholic Church or one does not belong there:

I wouldn’t want to die for this country because what’s there to die for? And people are like, well, then you aren’t a true Pole, I’m more of a patriot than you. Cool, great, and so what? We’re too invested in that... We’re so buried in the past, we cannot dig ourselves out... Let’s at least look at the present if we cannot look towards the future. (Marcin)

Marcin’s words refer back to Burszta’s “culture wars” where the nationalistic-Catholic discourse is treated as the only true version of Polishness.²¹⁵ All participants commented on it and in their stories such highly divisive narrative of the nation was present everywhere: in schools, politics, Church, and media, which aligns with Althusser’s ISAs.²¹⁶ They found this omnipresence of the nationalist narrative overwhelming and exhausting, particularly in the school curricula. Majority of them not only did not feel attached to Poland but contemplated emigration:

My only worry is to have money so I can run away and not, oh my God, I will leave the country. No. Oh my God, it’s a piece of land, there will be another. (Sara)

I’m only Polish in the way that my passport says so[...] If the situation got any worse and if I had a chance to run away, I’d do it as fast as I can. Honestly, if I had money and knew that I can manage abroad, I’d leave now. (Wiktoria)

As discussed above, the participants were worried about the situation in Poland and its potential to deteriorate. Only one participant did not consider emigration and most were held back mostly by finances and fears of leaving their support network behind. Tomek started making preparations to emigrate after he graduates from university. It is also important to note that they referred to migration as “running away.” This affective choice of wording stressed their negative attitude to Poland and their inability to have a normal life there.

²¹⁴ Graff, *Rykoszetem*, 218.

²¹⁵ Burszta, *Kotwice Pewności*; similarly Jarosz “Wstęp.”

²¹⁶ Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses.”

One of the biggest struggles for the participants was that Poland is (re)constructed in a very homogenising way, as white, Catholic, heterosexual, cisgender, ethnically Polish, and that anything deviating from this is seen as Other and threatening. This exclusion was especially visible in Gabriel's story. As half-Mexican, they were the only person of colour among the interviewees and, moreover, due to the language structures making it impossible to convey their gender-queerness, they tried to express it with their looks:

There are these double standards. You cannot flirt in a hetero bar but you also have to be very similar to the heterosexuals. You cannot look feminine. Like, I like these scarves with Slavic patterns but what would happen if I wore it to a lecture? I don't want to care but I do because there is the threat of violence and I draw enough attention to myself already because I'm not white. And it makes living here so hard. It was my decision, I came from a very different country, different life and... it's so hard to adjust. But it's also why I notice certain things[...] Even on Grindr people write that they are looking for someone masculine, someone hetero-looking, someone discrete. And I don't want to be like that. (Gabriel)

The observation about the need to “pass for straight” among the Polish LGBTQ+ community refers to Yuval-Davis politics of belonging where “‘individuals’ need to conform to the groups they belong to out of fear of exclusion.”²¹⁷ It can be also linked to the “looking-glass self” theory²¹⁸ and seen as a self-regulatory practice to avoid the shame and subsequent stigma of being recognized as queer. Similar notes about how “privatizing” queer experience reinforces queerphobia were made about the UK in the 1960s²¹⁹ and the current situation in many CEE countries.²²⁰ However, it is also consistent with Mizielińska and Stasińska's research, where they note that Polish non-heterosexuals mostly just want to blend in and be treated like everyone else.²²¹ It also relates to the long-standing debate among scholars and activists whether the Polish LGBTQ+ movement should take a normalizing or queering stance to push for equality.²²²

²¹⁷ Yuval-Davis, “Belonging and the Politics of Belonging,” 21

²¹⁸ Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order*.

²¹⁹ Cooper, *Challenging diversity*.

²²⁰ Michał Buchowski, “The Specter of Orientalism in Europe: From Exotic Other to Stigmatized Brother,” *Anthropological Quarterly*, 79 no 3 (2006): 466; Ammaturo, “The ‘Pink Agenda.’”

²²¹ Mizielińska and Stasińska, “Prywatne Jest Polityczne”: 126.

²²² for in-depth discussion see e.g.: Mizielińska, *Płeć, Ciało, Seksualność*; Kochanowski, *Fantazmat Zróżnicowany*; Skowrońska, “O Trudnych Spotkaniach Wielokulturowości i Kategorii Gender/Queer.”

While Gabriel's story was unique, all participants struggled with the homogenising representation of Polishness. The first words from Marcin were: "Let's start with that Poland is not a good place to be LGBT." However, the participants were not sure if this meant you cannot be both Polish and queer:

I think you can be both Polish and gay. I don't feel very Polish but I think it's possible. But when it comes to whether you can *live* in Poland and be gay, that depends on a person. I think that... because there's no legal security and because the state pretends that these people don't exist... Well, there's really no space for them here. When it comes to the legal situation, Poland is like an island. It's not alone but there're only few countries that have such a bad legal situation. When it comes to the social situation, I think it's better than the legal one but there's still political acquiescence towards hate speech and these... extreme positions. In this area, I think Poland is an exception. (Tomek)

Everyone described Poland as a queerphobic country, which manifested in a number ways, from the lack of legal security to the way nationalism and queerphobia interlink in the public discourse. In terms of the legal situation, all participants were resentful that civil partnerships are not legal, making it impossible to formalize a same-gender relationship. Those of them attracted to the same gender knew that they would not be able to form a legal family in Poland, which resonates with the concept of sexual citizenship and institutionalisation and reproduction of heteronormativity by the state.²²³ Particularly calling Poland an "island" somewhat mocks the nationalist discourse of "Poland as an island of 'normalcy' in the sea of Western European degeneracy"²²⁴ as for the participants the lack of legal recognition of the LGBTQ+ minority was seen in terms of national shame, not pride, as a source of backwardness in relation to the Western norms.

The perceived level of queer-othering and persecution depended on a number of factors. The participants who have lived all their lives in Kraków had better experiences than those who grew up in the countryside:

I grew up in the countryside and I had to run away to the other side of Poland to have a normal life. There's no way that I'll go back home and tell my family that I'm trans. They haven't even

²²³ e.g. Bell and Binnie, "Sexual Citizenship"; Sabsay, "The Emergence of the Other Sexual Citizen"; Kahlina, "Local Histories, European LGBT Designs;" Ammaturo, "The 'Pink Agenda'" and *European Sexual Citizenship*; Richardson, *Sexuality and Citizenship*.

²²⁴ Graff, "We Are (Not All) Homophobes," 447.

heard about gender equality, much less LGBT. And I miss home but I cannot go back and grow out my hair and wear dresses.... I couldn't bear it. (Piotr)

Every time I'd walked down the street with a (male) friend, everyone would see and, by the time I got home, my mum would have heard from all our neighbours that Natalia is out with a boy and when are they getting married. Everyone knew everything about everyone. And it's not like I'd tell them that he prefers boys and I prefer girls. So it's definitely easier in Kraków, there's this anonymity, if you pass someone on the street, chances are you'll never see them again. (Natalia)

Both Natalia and Piotr felt safer since moving to Kraków. Similarly, cisgender males felt more secure and were more positive towards the situation in Poland. It relates to the complexities of the politics of belonging, where one's "social location is constructed along multiple axes of difference, such as gender, class, race and ethnicity, stage in the life cycle, sexuality, ability and so on."²²⁵ The social location is constituted by and affects the power relations which are reproduced by discourse²²⁶—in this case the narrative of the nation. It was highly visible in the participants' stories, where the queer-Othering worked in the top-down way: they blamed the government's Catholic-traditionalist narrative and the laws that rendered them invisible.

At the same time, they realized that not everyone in Poland subscribed to the Catholic-traditionalist narrative of the nation. Despite the fears connected to the current situation, most of the participants seemed to think that there is a chance for Poland to change—only not anytime soon and they were not willing to wait around and help it happen. Therefore, there was a feeling of hopelessness.

I hope that it'll finally change, that we'll open to others, to other opinions to... to the fact that what we're thinking might not be the best, that you can live in another, better way, that you can live more openly[...] I think it's better elsewhere when it comes to this openness... tolerance, so to speak, to other people's opinions... About LGBTQ but also when it comes to health, when it comes to environment... That you can actually breathe... And about religion, how it influences your daily life, how people treat each other[...] I think there is [a chance for Poland], however, it would take lots of work from the Polish side, and patience from others, because we won't do it alone. (Wiktoria)

²²⁵ Yuval-Davis, "Belonging and the Politics of Belonging," 22

²²⁶ *ibid.*

Open-mindedness, secularism, and more environmentally-friendly ways of living were the qualities that emerged in all conversations and which the participants used to describe “elsewhere,” where life is better than in Poland. The picture of Poland emerging from the participants’ stories strongly resonates with Burszta’s description of the nationalistic fear of tolerance, where opening to Others is equated with losing one’s cultural identity.²²⁷ The participants juxtaposed this construct with better “elsewhere,” which usually referred to Western Europe and sometimes to the US.²²⁸

Hetero-Catholic alpha males

All interviewees were openly feminist and blamed the nationalist turn in Poland on the patriarchal culture that prioritises heterosexual males and silences other experiences. They had different ways of describing it: Sara called them simply “white heterosexual males” (in English), Natalia “hetero alpha males,” and Wiktoria talked about “hetero-Catholics”:

I think that the government thinks that everyone here is a white hetero-Catholic male[...] Most of all Catholic because there’s no other religious minority in Poland or any other religion in Poland, because everyone is a hundred percent Catholic... Of course... No matter the opinion of a child who is getting baptised. (Wiktoria)

All participants were vocal about their perceived negative influence of the Catholic Church and its role in reinforcing the traditional views on gender and sexuality or even miseducating people. It echoes the previous research about the connection between non-heterosexuality and religion.²²⁹

We have a priest who’s just said that LGBT means teaching children masturbation. That’s what he said. This week on Sunday, my brother told me. And then you’re surprised that you see all these opinions... it’s terrifying. (Natalia)

The Church... it controls the society. In the sermon they say: this is bad, this is bad, this is bad. And it has bigger authority outside of the bigger cities, so especially there they can convey their... truths... propagandas about homopropaganda. So it would be easier without it because it has a huge impact on the worldview of the majority of the society. (Marcin)

²²⁷ Burszta, *Kotwice Pewności*.

²²⁸ most of the participants were highly critical about the newest developments in the US

²²⁹ e.g. Hall, “Religia i Nieheteroseksualność.”

The participants' stories reflect Graff's words that "the Church in Poland has a monopoly in the sphere of axiology and defining collective identity."²³⁰ Importantly, all participants were part of the Catholic Church and had a Catholic upbringing: observed the Catholic traditions, attended masses, and took part in religion classes at school at least until confirmation (age 15-16). However, only Piotr still identified as a Catholic and even he did not attend masses anymore. Most of them had a number of negative experiences with the Church that made them stop going:

When I was still going to Church, when I was still, let's say, unaware of my sexuality or anything... I just liked colour black. And I went to the mass[...] and two women saw that I'm wearing black so instead of listening the priest, they spent the entire mass discussing that there is a *Satanist* behind them... So even if there are different priests who can be more or less open-minded, I think that this whole Churchy environment, people who go there are mostly less educated[...] they are very closed-minded to even to the smallest differences, say, hair colour, let alone skin colour or sexuality... Not to mention that any other sexuality than hetero is treated as a mental health problem, of course. (Wiktorja, stress original)

Like Wiktorja, most participants were worried about the Church community. They all tended to believe that the Church was reserved for less-educated people who could not consider it critically and often subscribed to the romantic-nationalist ideology. Dorota Hall noted similar sharp decline in Church attendance among the Polish Catholics after they discovered their non-heterosexuality. Importantly, she also noted that it was not necessarily related to loss of faith but rather fears of persecution from the Church community.²³¹

In most of the stories, discovering one's sexuality was for the participants the main reason to stop going to church. Interestingly, they talked about admitting their reluctance towards the Catholic Church to their parents in the terms of "coming out"—not necessarily as atheists but mostly as "doubting Christians" or "religious but not believing in Church."²³² Additionally, there was a link between their parents' reaction to their "religious coming-out" and the participants' later decision to (not) admit their non-heterosexuality to their family:

²³⁰ Graff, *Rykoszetem*, 226.

²³¹ Hall, "Religia i Nieheteroseksualność."

²³² it mirrors the general patterns observed among young Poles who more often stop attending Church but in many cases still acknowledge Catholicism as a part of their cultural heritage, e.g. Stefan Nowak, "System Wartości Społeczeństwa Polskiego," *Studia Socjologiczne* 1, no 200 (2011).

My mum cried when I told her I'm an atheist. Asked where did she make a mistake. It was the same with my mental health problems. It was just so sad to hear so I don't want to tell her about my orientation. I think that dad would understand better, he might already suspect it. (Natalia)

The participants' fears of the Catholic narrow-mindedness were multiplied by the Church's influence over state, from politics (strict abortion laws) to education (crucifixes in classrooms), economy (shops closed on Sundays), and female rights (struggles in accessing contraception due to "morality clauses"):

"God, Honour, Fatherland."²³³ It's hard to argue with the degree of significance of religion in this country. Especially since so many laws, so many changes are introduced according to what the Catholic Church wants... It's so important[...] It's like a mafia, at least in Poland. (Sara)

Let's say that during the Christianization of Poland [966] it made sense, but afterwards not really. Yes, religion helped Poles through difficult times, blablabla[...] So I understand the attachment but people who should actually live by the Christ's word, who was saying we should *love* others... they don't do that, they're there just for their own benefit[...] And now we even can't have shops open on Sundays which is a direct interference of religion on consumption. (Wiktorja)

The degree of the Church's influence over every aspect of people's lives, private, public, and political was in the interviewees' minds a mark of Polish exceptionalism on the European scale—a view which is reflected by a number of studies.²³⁴ Following Kapralski, in Poland "legal regulations happen to be interpreted as principles that should have their roots in God's will"²³⁵ which Graff describes as "instrumentalisation of religion by the resurgent aggressive nationalism."²³⁶ Because of the increasingly blurred lines between the Church, politics, and the narrative of the nation, the participants did not see much hope for the situation changing soon. It echoes the findings of Graff, Kapur and Walters about the post-2015 environment in Poland:

²³³ pl. *Bóg, Honor, Ojczyzna*, Polish army slogan

²³⁴ e.g. Graff, *Rykoszetem*; Arcimowicz, Wasiak-Radoszewski, and Dębska, "Polski Dyskurs Publiczny Dotyczący Rodzin z Wyboru w Latach 2003–2013;" Weissman, "Repronormativity and the Reproduction of the Nation-State."

²³⁵ Kapralski, "The Problem of 'Struggles for Recognition' in Polish Sociology," 355.

²³⁶ Graff, *Rykoszetem*, 16.

Voices previously viewed as a lunatic fringe are now just right of the new mainstream; right-wing extremists are seen marching in the streets as “patriots,” while Catholic fundamentalists are now writing our laws.²³⁷

The participants were also critical of the Catholic androcentrism:

I have many issues with the Church but the final straw is the way they treat women. You can see that it’s an institution run by men. The women who work for the priests are basically slaves, they earn some pennies. The female monasteries don’t progress[...] And all these sexist comments, especially about female reproduction, I just can’t stand it. Our priest once told us that the conception happens like that, straightaway. God makes it happen. And I was like, no, it’s a process. And he told me that it’s my philosophy and I’m allowed to have my philosophy but it’s wrong[...] Has he ever seen a biology book? That’s so wrong. And that was during a religion class, in school. (Natalia)

All participants were worried about the impact of the Church on the female rights and while they mostly believed that the LGBTQ+ minority in Poland should remain invisible, they strongly believed in fighting for gender equality. It resonates with Graff, Kapur and Walter’s finding that the post-2015 PiS rules in Poland facilitated “the birth of a massive and radical feminist movement.”²³⁸ Importantly, as it has been suggested in Chapter 2, the feminist movements in Poland take an increasingly intersectional stance and work alongside other disprivileged groups, including a close cooperation with the LGBTQ+ movements.²³⁹ Therefore, supporting the feminist movements, especially given their present popularity, might be seen as a “safer” way of supporting LGBTQ+ rights and working towards more inclusive visions of Polishness.

Political fatigue²⁴⁰

Despite their worries about the political situation, only two of the interviewees said that they might vote in the upcoming elections (the EP and Polish). The rest explained that they did not feel adequately prepared as they were not interested in politics.

²³⁷ Graff, Kapur, and Walters, “Introduction,” 559.

²³⁸ *ibid.*, 560.

²³⁹ e.g. Rawłuszko, “Polityki Równosci Płci”; Kochanowski, *Fantazmat Zróźnicowany*; Keinz “Negotiating Democracy’s Gender Between Europe and the Nation”; Graff, “Report from the Gender Trenches.”

²⁴⁰ it could be argued whether it is political fatigue or apathy, however, I believe that fatigue reflects my findings better—the participants cared about the political situation, they were just tired of the hope-backlash pattern and did not believe that anything could change soon.

Most of the people we can choose from are the same[...] It's just choosing the least evil. It's not the question that I'd choose someone who will change something, do something sensible, but that I'd vote in a way that we won't all regret bitterly. (Wiktorja)

Wiktorja's lack of belief that anything can change was repeated by other participants. It is supported by Gdula's observations that following the 2015 elections most of the people with left and central views are deeply disappointed and "treat their views increasingly as a private thing, not seeing any hope that they will be mirrored by some project of political change,"²⁴¹ and echoes the wider patterns of low political engagement in the CEE.²⁴²

Even though half of the participants had heard about Biedroń's new party, Spring (see Chapter 2), they were not sure if they have any chances of entering the parliament. The low interest in voting among the interviewees reflects the general patterns observed among the young adults²⁴³ but is contrary to the KPH findings about a very high voter turnout among the LGBTQ+ population in Poland.²⁴⁴ It might indicate the difference between activists and non-activists, since, as I suggested in Chapter 1, the KPH report seems to have been conducted among the people who engage with them. I believe it is also linked to the personal experience. In the participants' lives, every hope towards equality has been met with a political backlash (see Chapter 2). Especially in the past nine years the situation has been only deteriorating. This coincided with the time when participants' became more aware of the current affairs as well as started identifying as a part of the LGBTQ+ minority. Since their "space of experience" is bleak, their Polish "horizon of expectations"²⁴⁵ is filled with fears of even stronger backlash. As Timothy Snyder suggests, the democratic process requires hope that future can bring change.²⁴⁶ Therefore, the participants' political fatigue is not surprising.

Interestingly, the current students and a university graduate were the most sceptical that anything could change, whereas the two participants who said that they would vote had only technical high school education. It contradicts the suggestion that more education leads to

²⁴¹ Gdula, *Nowy Autorytaryzm*, 11.

²⁴² Bolzendahl and Gracheva, "Rejecting the West?"

²⁴³ Mikołaj Cześnik and Agnieszka Kwiatkowska, "Uczestnictwo wyborcze w 2014 i 2015 roku," in *Demokratyczny Audyt Polski 2: Demokracja wyborcza w Polsce lat 2014-15*, ed. Radosław Markowski, 27-48 (Warszawa: Biuro Rzecznika Praw Obywatelskich, 2017), 39

²⁴⁴ "Sytuacja Społeczna Osób LGBTA w Polsce raport za lata 2015-2016," KPH, 38

²⁴⁵ Pickering, "Experience as Horizon."

²⁴⁶ Timothy Snyder, *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* (London : The Bodley Head, 2017):119.

increased political participation.²⁴⁷ However, they were also the only participants who followed news. They themselves made the connection between the two:

My friends are open-minded but they don't follow news because they don't care, it's politics, it's boring, so they won't vote. But I started reading news and I'm terrified by what's going on in Poland so of course I'll vote. (Natalia)

The lack of interest in news was caused by the belief that the media are untrustworthy. Therefore, most of the participants preferred to educate themselves from social media or by word of mouth:

Usually they either talk shit or some propagandist nonsense and even if they say something interesting, I'll find out either way, because I work behind the bar. (Sara)

[Q: Do you follow the news?] No, no, no, no, no. Never. They're filled with these, um, very specific right-wing views where any sort of... non-recognition of their values is treated like... a treachery against the country, society, God, culture and everything... all other creatures in the sky and on earth. Um, and also because these news are usually fake, made up only to support their political ideas. (Wiktoria)

Wiktoria's words point to the power of media as one of the ISAs that reproduces the narrative of the nation. Interestingly, only Natalia distinguished between the state-owned (TVP) and private media:

When I visited my grandpa I put on the TV so it could play in the background... It was shocking, you have just two channels, TVP1 and TVP2, and it's something completely different... I'm really not surprised that some people have such views if you have only the Church and this one channel that tells you such things[...] It's all about abortion, protecting life, and anti-LGBT, because now there's this card so they talk about it all the time[...] And it's so detached from reality, what they're showing. That's the most terrifying thing. You read other news and they say something completely different. (Natalia)

Once again, the normative power of media and its capability to reaffirm the social hierarchies in affective ways is visible.²⁴⁸ Therefore, I interpret the political fatigue among the participants as a result of the combination of the repetitive discourse of the LGBTQ+ minority as “the

²⁴⁷ e.g. “Sytuacja Społeczna Osób LGBTA w Polsce raport za lata 2015-2016,” KPH; Bolzendahl and Gracheva, “Rejecting the West?”

²⁴⁸ e.g. Hall, “The Question of Cultural Identity”; Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*.

pervert-enemy of nation” and lack of hope for change. It also stresses the disparity between the Polish understanding of nation and state (see Chapter 3).

EUropean influence and EUropeanness

As I mentioned, the highly critical and negative view of Poland and Polishness was juxtaposed with better “elsewhere,” which usually meant Western Europe. The positioning of EUrope in the emergent stories is very interesting. EUrope was highly important but not very present in the participants’ lives. It was more of an imaginary construct than a real place or community. Simultaneously, most participants linked the only hope for change of the LGBTQ+ situation in Poland with the EU. However, they were not optimistic about it happening:

[Do you think that the EU has any influence over the LGBTQ+ situation in Poland?] God, how much I’d want it to. So much. I’m just praying that the EU does something. Some people say that Poland is an island but in my opinion... God, please, make them do something. (Natalia)

Russia also belongs to Europe so... comparing to the West, we’re a bit of a shithole. Comparing to Russia, unfortunately, I think we’re getting closer to that... I hope that the EU or maybe society will say something. A lot of people are allies so maybe... Maybe they’ll do something. But for now we’re between very bad and very good. So, mediocre. Nothing happened here for a long time. Now it’s getting loud because, oh no, they want to introduce some rights. That don’t take rights away from others, just gave some special rights to some. And the society doesn’t like it. (Marcin)

As implied by the discourse of sexual citizenship,²⁴⁹ the participants idealized EUrope. They were particularly in favour of the freedom of movement and “European Courts” (none of the participants could distinguish between the European and EU institutions), as the true facilitators of change. It connects with the research on European identity that suggests that it holds mostly an utilitarian value.²⁵⁰

For example we have the freedom of movement. Many people go abroad and see what’s normal there, what’s accepted there, and they return with this knowledge and they want more. Also, there are all these European Courts that we can appeal to and people do that and we hear about it. (Tomek)

²⁴⁹ e.g. Ammaturo, “The ‘Pink Agenda’” and *European Sexual Citizenship* ; Richardson, *Sexual Citizenship*; Stella, et al. “Introduction”; Sabsay, “The Emergence of the Other Sexual Citizen”; Kahlina, “Local Histories, European LGBT Designs.”

²⁵⁰ Ayoub and Paternotte, “Introduction.”

The EU freedom of movement also attracted tourists to Poland, which is especially visible in Kraków. The participants noted the positive change coming from seeing more diversity on the streets:

Some dozen years ago it was hard to find someone in Poland who wouldn't be white, right? And now tourists come more and more willingly to Poland, so it's... slowly starting to be a norm that we're not all the same... For example, when my grandma had seen for the first time in her life a person with a... darker skin colour, she thought it was a devil and run away. Because no one had ever told her that someone like that exists. In all her life. So, like I'm saying, I think that more people... with their own opinions, ideas, come and they share them, and more and more of them [ideas] stay. We're more and more educated, we're more open[...] We've been on our own for a long time, people have had the same views for, I don't know, fifty years... It's always a breath of fresh air. (Wiktorja)

In many ways the participants' views and trust in Europe reflected the hopes that the Polish LGBTQ+ minority has held since the EU accession process.²⁵¹ However, for them the change was happening mostly bottom-up, facilitated by the movement of people and, to a lesser extent, connected to the ECHR that could be appealed to as a last resort. Simultaneously, as Binnie and Klesse note, while the freedom of movement might positively influence the social attitudes in Poland towards the LGBTQ+ minority, it does not replace legal equality.²⁵² Europe that the participants linked their hopes with was not actively improving their situation, and, in light of the deteriorating internal situation, most participants started realizing it. Some voiced their doubts if the EU was really working, which provides a sharp contrast to the attitudes of the Polish LGBTQ+ minority in the 2000s:

The EU in the Polish context is this... this creation that we're somewhat in but not really, because in theory we are a part but... we are this wall between the East and the West, blablabla, and, it's like, the EU has their thing and we have ours, if they give us money, that's cool, but if they try to set some standards that we don't really like, we'll ignore them until they threaten to punish us, and then it goes quiet... So I'm not sure if this Union really functions. (Sara)

All participants stressed the Polish specificity in Europe, as a country in the middle, between the East and the West, or, in Sara's words, "standing with one leg in Russia and one leg in Europe," with the Western (European) way of life put as an ideal. This self-awareness of the

²⁵¹ Leszkowicz and Kitliński, *Miłość i Demokracja*.

²⁵² Binnie and Klesse, "Like a Bomb in the Gasoline Station."

Polish position as a part of the more “backwards” part of Europe was also noted by other researchers.²⁵³

The participants blamed the current situation partially on the history:

It’s also connected to the history, there was communism and so on, so all these countries, Yugoslavia and so on, all these countries are a bit poorer... and it’s not only about money but about some... civilization experiences. (Marcin)

The comparison to the Balkans is important as the researchers from the post-Yugoslav countries repeatedly note that the local situation of the LGBTQ+ minorities reinforces the binary between queer-friendly Europe and hetero-centric East, contributing to its orientalisation.²⁵⁴ Meanwhile the participants used the Czech Republic as an example of a country with a similar history that managed to move beyond it. This distancing from the CEE and comparing the Polish situation to the Balkans seems to stress how bad in their experience the situation in Poland is on a European scale.²⁵⁵

An additional differentiating factor for the participants was the Polish Catholicism:

I heard that Rydzyk²⁵⁶ wants to compete to the European Parliament. Because our current stance isn’t conservative enough. But it’s good. Poles will vote him in and if he tries to put forward some Catholic postulate, he’ll be destroyed by people chosen from the other countries. That’s a good thing about this European Parliament, they have mostly left-wing views. (Marcin)

While not always factually correct, the participants’ stories conveyed a vision of Europe that is left-wing, liberal, and reasonable, and where discourses that are common in Poland would never take place. The general lack of knowledge about the EU and its institutions among the participants stressed the “imaginary” quality of Europe in their minds. It resonates with

²⁵³ e.g. Binnie and Klesse, ““Like a Bomb in the Gasoline Station;”” Chmielewska-Szlajfer, *Reshaping Poland's Community after Communism*.

²⁵⁴ e.g. Kahlina, “Local Histories, European LGBT Designs;” Richardson, *Sexuality and Citizenship*; Binnie, “Critical Queer Regionality and LGBTQ Politics in Europe”; Ammaturo, “The ‘Pink Agenda.’”

²⁵⁵ however, it is just their reconstruction of the Balkans as the European internal Other, whereas the newest Rainbow Europe ranking shows that, in fact, only North Macedonia has worse LGBTQ+ situation than Poland; see: “Country Ranking,” Rainbow Europe, accessed 16 May 2019, <https://rainbow-europe.org/country-ranking>

²⁵⁶ Tadeusz Rydzyk, famous priest, owner of the biggest Polish Catholic media, Radio Maryja and TV TRWAM.

Koselleck's distinction between "space of experience" and "horizon of expectations"²⁵⁷—the everyday "space of experience" of the participants, Poland, made their expectations of the "horizon," the promised place of possibilities—EUrope—this much greater. Importantly, it was a consistent image, repeated by all participants, which correlates with the research about how the idea of EUrope is (re)constructed in terms of the sexual citizenship as "rainbow Europe", a liberal and open-minded place: "Europe emerges under the sign of sexual exceptionalism: as a space where sexual freedom can and does take place and as a subject able to grant such freedom to others."²⁵⁸

This positive image extended into a sense of belonging. All participants stressed their EUropeanness and preferred to identify with EUrope over Poland. Those who came originally from Kraków liked to prioritize their regional identification, however, EUrope came just afterwards. The only exception was Gabriel, who, despite their Polish passport, after moving to Poland started realizing that they might be half-Polish, however, because they grew up in a post-colonial country (Mexico), they could never feel EUropean.

I definitely feel more European than Polish... To put it bluntly, I don't really care about Poland. And I feel more European because it's the area that I'm from, it's familiar. Not like a country but if I go... to Germany or Croatia, or anywhere in Europe, I'll be in a similar culture, similar way of life, similar climate, everything is similar. And if I went somewhere to Asia or America, everything would be completely different. So in this way... I feel European. (Sara)

Others were more critical, as they perceived their Eastern European inferiority. However, even then they preferred to identify with EUrope than with Poland:

I'd feel more European if we had more equal rights. For me there could be no countries, just Europe. It's about getting more equality but also I'm not a patriot, so, whatever. So yes, I feel more European than Polish. And I don't care if the EU interferes because it's good, right? At last someone intelligent will take care of things. (Natalia)

²⁵⁷ Michael Pickering, "Experience as Horizon: Koselleck, expectation and historical time," *Cultural Studies*, 18 no 2 (2004).

²⁵⁸ Colpani and Habed, "In Europe It's Different," 81.

Once again, there is a visible idealisation of Europe, as a place of gender and sexual equality, consistent with the discourse of sexual citizenship.²⁵⁹ The participants distanced themselves from the nationalist discourse that constructed Europe as “a cultural coloniser, corrupting innocent Polish children and suppressing the Polish national culture”²⁶⁰ because they believed that Europe could positively impact their situation. As Todorov argues, European identity is especially attractive to those who accept and benefit from the European diversity.²⁶¹ The appealing picture of Europe strengthened the participants’ sense of belonging, especially as it came as a part of the binary with a backwards, closed-minded Poland.

At the same time, the participants had problems describing what being European means. They often named particular citizenship, especially British, German, and Dutch. While naming the UK might seem counterintuitive given the current political context, these locations simply reflected the places where the participants had migrant friends and family, and, therefore, were more familiar with. They also said that it would be best to ask an American because to them Europeanness was indescribable. Only Gabriel, with their half-Mexican roots found it easy:

People don’t talk about themselves at all. About.. private, let’s say, topics, you know?[...] People don’t like expressing their feelings, they are very cold and... um, there’s a Spanish word, *insípido*... not tasteless... bland. Especially in Northern and Western Europe. But for example Ukrainians are a bit more... expressive than Poles. And Poles a bit more than Germans. Does it make sense? And then it’s way different in the Balkans and in Spain.
(Gabriel)

Therefore, the qualities that made Europe appealing to most of the participants, seemed to be off-putting to Gabriel, who grew up in a very different environment. While no one else had a comparison to a such a vastly different culture, Tomek was able to describe Europe in relation in Turkey, where he had worked one summer. Interestingly, his comment happened in passing, when he was comparing Turkey and Poland: “But without Erdogan, it would all go towards secularisation... um, open-mindedness, Europeanness” (Tomek). This quote is this much more interesting since, as I demonstrated, the participants repeated how closed-mindedness,

²⁵⁹ e.g. Ammaturo, “The ‘Pink Agenda’” and *European Sexual Citizenship*; Richardson, *Sexual Citizenship*; Stella, et al. “Introduction”; Sabsay, “The Emergence of the Other Sexual Citizen”; Kahlina, “Local Histories, European LGBT Designs”; Colpani and Habed, “In Europe It’s Different.”

²⁶⁰ Grzebalska, “Poland,” 92.

²⁶¹ Todorov, “The Fear of Barbarians”; similarly Fligstein, Polyakova, and Sandholtz, “European Integration, Nationalism and European Identity.”

Catholicism, and disregard for environment were the qualities that made Poland different to “elsewhere.” However, they were not able to recall the same traits when it came to Europeaness, which stresses its unreflexive nature, the need for an outside comparison.²⁶² At the same time, the participants’ inability to describe Europeaness did not diminish their sense of belonging.

Discussion

Given the many differences between the participants, their stories conveyed a striking similarity of experience. I demonstrated that their sense of belonging to Poland and Europe was influenced by the feelings of shame and fear. As suggested in Chapter 3, the participants’ picture of Polishness largely echoed PiS narrative of the nation. While they acknowledged that the society was more varied, the Catholic-traditionalist discourse of Poland made the participants feel excluded from the narrative of the nation and a majority of them were considering emigration. Simultaneously, the positive image of Europe as an open-minded and tolerant community triggered European identification.

The internalized perception of being a “tertiary citizen,” an “enemy of nation,” strengthened the participants’ closetedness and the need to “pass for straight,” thus, reinforcing the invisibility of the queer experience in Poland. The shame and fear, strengthened by the alienating and affective narrative of the nation, became bases for their (often subconscious) need to try to fit in with the homogenous narrative of Polishness. As I stressed in Chapter 3, nation is one of the most important social ties for the Poles,²⁶³ which makes exclusion from it very difficult. Therefore, it is unsurprising that most of the participants were doing their best to fit in and not subvert the societal norms. It is clear that the homogenising narrative of the nation is deeply alienating and fractures the society.

I believe that the results would be very different among the LGBTQ+ activists, who have their own societal network of other non-cisgender/non-heterosexual Poles. The feeling of isolation from the rest of the society—stressed by the participants calling them “normal” people—definitely negatively affected their sense of belonging. At the same time, the persistent fear of

²⁶² for discussion on unreflexive nature of territorial identity see: Billig, *Banal Nationalism* or Tim Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2002).

²⁶³ Nowak, “Values and Attitudes of the Polish People.”

violence and deeply internalized shame made them reluctant to break the invisibility. It refers back to the vicious circle of closetedness²⁶⁴ and is tightly connected with the self-regulating mechanisms and the state's use of biopower.²⁶⁵

It is also interesting to consider that in their narratives top-down, institutionalised queerphobia was juxtaposed with a hope of bottom-up change associated with the evolving people's attitudes. It links back to the omnipresence of power. In some cases it was disciplinary, however, the participants seemed to believe that, given enough time, the bottom-up processes could instigate a wider, positive change.

The current situation was also very significant. Last year, the narrations would have probably been entirely about invisibility and shame. However, the fear of violence has resurfaced recently, triggered by the current moral panic about the LGBTQ+ minority. It contributed to the participants' negative opinion about Poland and hopelessness about the future. Most of them did not see the point in voting because they did not believe that the situation could improve. It stresses the deep-rootedness of the Catholic-traditionalist discourse in the narrative of the nation.

The feeling of exclusion from the narrative of the nation made the participants turn towards Europe. In their narrations, Europe was an idealized construct, the "rainbow Europe" from the sexual citizenship discourse. It served as the "horizon of expectations"²⁶⁶ that they linked their only hopes with—as a supranational institution with a degree of influence the political situation in Poland or as a place to run away to. However, such mind-set stresses the orientalist East/West binary and, in a way, can serve as an excuse for the state for the situation of the LGBTQ+ minority in Poland. Thirty years after the fall of the communism and fifteen years after joining the EU, the only progress towards the gender and sexual equality in Poland remains the law against discrimination on sexuality grounds at work from 2003. That leads to important questions of how long can tradition of oppression stop equality measures and whether "national values" can be seen as a valid reason to discriminate against a part of the society.

²⁶⁴ Mizielińska, "The Rest is Silence..."

²⁶⁵ Taylor, *The Routledge Guidebook to Foucault's The History of Sexuality*.

²⁶⁶ Pickering, "Experience as Horizon."

It is also interesting to consider the question of belonging to Poland and EUrope in the ethnic/civic nationality paradigm. The idea of Poland (re)constructed by the participants focuses on ethnonationalist issues of family, national culture and religion. Conversely, they talked about EUrope mostly in terms of values and legal rights—the civic paradigm.²⁶⁷ This could be once again seen in terms of the homogenising narrative of Polishness that excludes them, contrasted with the much more open narrative of EUropeanness—a place to run away from contrasted with a place to run away to. Simultaneously, in the participants’ narratives Polishness was equated with the state, not the society, which might be seen as contrary to the ethnonationalism.

Additionally, it is important to notice that the participants’ idea of EUropeanness was much more “shallow” than Polishness. When describing EUrope, they talked about open-mindedness, safety, and more legal rights. They were usually unable to elaborate beyond that. Conversely, their construct of Poland came with a huge load of culturally-specific ideas, from language, religion, and politics, down to the way a typical Polish person is expected to behave. It resonates with Koselleck’s “space of experience”/“horizon of expectations,” where the space is detailed, while the horizon is often vague.²⁶⁸ Additionally, Fligstein, Polyakova, and Sandholtz as well as Diez Medrano also notice that European identity is often preferable over the national to the groups who feel excluded by the state precisely because it is “shallower,” and, thus, allowing for more diversity and individual expressions.²⁶⁹

This could be understood in terms of the perceived costs and benefits. Trying to fit in Poland for the participants meant silencing or rendering invisible an important part of themselves—for safety reasons but also because their non-cis-gender/non-heterosexual part of identity is understood as “unPolish.” It also meant a lack of legal support if they ever wanted to start a non-normative family. Therefore, the perceived cost was high. Conversely, their construct of EUrope welcomed their queerness, promised safety, and distant but prominent institutions that could potentially protect them (the ECHR and the EC). In this perspective, there are clear benefits from identifying with EUrope.

²⁶⁷ Fligstein, Polyakova, and Sandholtz, “European Integration, Nationalism and European Identity.”

²⁶⁸ Pickering, “Experience as Horizon.”

²⁶⁹ Fligstein, Polyakova, and Sandholtz, “European Integration, Nationalism and European Identity”; Diez Medrano, “Unpacking European Identity.”

Simultaneously, it is important to stress that EUrope was not changing their lives. On the one hand, there was the indirect influence from the freedom of movement as well as the EU funds to local businesses, investments, and activists. On the other hand, the participants were aware that there has been no progress towards the gender and sexual equality since Poland has joined the EU. Therefore, while they put a lot of faith in EUrope, they themselves admitted that it was not improving their situation. While “rainbow Europe” was perceived as a threat in the Catholic-nationalist discourse and hope for the Polish LGBTQ+ activists, its involvement remained theoretical and indirect. It seems to stress the “shallowness” of the participants’ EUropean sense of belonging.

Moreover, their political fatigue extended to the EP elections. It undermines the civic understanding of their relation to EUrope, as even though they subscribed to the EUropean values, most of them did not practice their EUropean citizenship.²⁷⁰ It is also where the contrast from the activists can be seen, as they actively benefit from and participate in EUrope. Taking all of that into consideration, the fact that the participants felt closer to EUrope than Poland seems to stress the depth of the need for the collective sense of belonging and the strength of their hope associated with EUrope.

²⁷⁰ however, it might simply be a reflection of different understanding of citizenship and generally low voting patterns in the CEE, see e.g.: Chmielewska-Szlajfer, *Reshaping Poland's Community after Communism*; Catherine Bolzendahl, Ksenia Gracheva, “Rejecting the West? Homonegative Attitudes and Political Orientations in Contemporary Eastern Europe,” *European Journal of Gender and Politics*, 1, no 3, (2018).

Chapter 6: Conclusions

This thesis provided an insight into the complexities of the sense of belonging among the non-activist LGBTQ+ young adults in Poland. Despite their differences in gender and sexual identifications as well as social and cultural capital, the participants shared the negative perception of Poland as a homogenous, traditionalist-Catholic place that prioritises cisgender heterosexual male experience. The LGBTQ+ minority was treated not only as an “Other” to the national self, but as a “pervert-enemy.”²⁷¹ Feeling excluded from the narrative of Polishness facilitated the participants’ sense of belonging to Europe, which was tied to the discourse of sexual citizenship. The participants linked their hopes with Europe, perceived as a protector of human rights and the facilitator of the freedom of movement. However, even as the nation’s Other, their emotional links to Poland remained strong. Conversely, Europe provided a “shallow” sense of belonging—while highly present in their lives, it was not improving their situation.

The emergent narratives reinforced the East/West binary of Europe on grounds of sexual citizenship. Importantly, it affected the participants’ everyday experiences. Internalization of the “pervert-enemy” discourse made them ashamed of their deviation from the cisgender heterosexual “norm.” I interpreted this in terms of Foucauldian biopolitics and shame as a self-regulatory device,²⁷² as well as Ahmed’s role of affect in reinforcing social hierarchies.²⁷³ Simultaneously, the participants were ashamed of the discourse of Poland as a narrow-minded, Catholic-traditionalist country, which extended to reluctance to identify with the nation. The deteriorating political situation and the LGBTQ+ moral panic strengthened their feeling of hopelessness. The lack of hope for change translated into political fatigue and reluctance to vote in the upcoming elections.

Importantly, despite the hopes of the LGBTQ+ minority during the Polish EU accession, joining the EU did not improve the minority situation. The main difference comes from the freedom of movement and increased visibility, which is often pejorative. Considering the recent developments, it seems that as of 2019, Poland is actually further away from “the

²⁷¹ Graff, *Rykoszetem*, 14.

²⁷² Taylor, *The Routledge Guidebook to Foucault’s The History of Sexuality*.

²⁷³ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*.

rainbow Europe” than it was in 2004. Queerphobia is on a rise, serving as a tool for right-wing politicians to unite their electorates. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, in recent history every little step towards gender and sexual equality has been met with a conservative backlash. While the Polish queer scholars around 2004 expected that the positive change would happen within five to ten years,²⁷⁴ my interviewees thought that it would take at least twenty more.

Importantly, due to the thesis’ limitations, it presents only a small insight into the material collected in the interviews. Especially the topics of female rights and feminism in Poland, sexual education and the education system in general, popular media, the limitations of the Polish language (as a highly gendered language), and instances of casual sexism and queerphobia were elaborated on in-depth by all the participants. It shows the complexity of material and presents a potential for follow-up studies.

The thesis contributes an example of how the discourses of sexual citizenship and “rainbow Europe” facilitate European identification among the LGBTQ+ minority. While these concepts are highly present in the queer-feminist research, they deserve more attention from the European studies perspective, given its potential for forming inter-European connections and supranational forms of belonging in a bottom-up way. Additionally, analysing how socio-political changes affect minorities is important to the understanding of Europe. Producing knowledge about the everyday lives of minorities allows one to see the everyday impact (or lack thereof) of structures and institutions out of their control, such as the national governments or the EU.

The research is an important addition to the current body of Polish and European queer-feminist research, especially as it focuses on the personal level and provides discursive space to the minority that remains largely closeted. It is also a reflection on the dangers of the right-wing nationalism to human and minority rights that might be relevant for the NGOs work, particularly those working with gender and sexual minorities. As right-wing nationalism is a global phenomenon, it would be interesting to do a comparative study and consider the LGBTQ+ situation in, for example, Hungary or Italy, or, beyond the European borders, the US or Argentina.

²⁷⁴ e.g. Leszkowicz and Kitliński, *Miłość i demokracja*.

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Appendix

Original quotes (in Polish), arranged by pages.

Chapter 1

p. 1

“W polskim sporze o orientację seksualną dość wcześnie przestało chodzić o miłość, o akceptację dla ‘odmiennych’ form pożądania i seksu. I zaczęło chodzić o Polskę. Geje i lesbijki stali się zakładnikami tragicznej przemiany. Oto w latach 2003-2007 przeszliśmy drogę od liberalnej wizji wspólnoty, opartej na obywatelstwie, do ciasnej wizji kulturowej opartej na przekonaniu, że polskość to katolicyzm, i to katolicyzm ultrakonserwatywny, pełen lęków i uprzedzeń. W takim kontekście hasło “miłość to miłość” jest jakby nie na temat.” (Agnieszka Graff, *Rykoszetem*, 137-138)

Chapter 2

p. 9

“[...]geje i lesbijki w tym kraju przede wszystkim mogą wiązać swe nadzieje z normami europejskimi, a nie polskimi. Pomiędzy tym co polskie, a tym, co europejskie, ciągle istnieje nieprzekraczalna granica. Dzięki przystąpieniu kraju do Unii Europejskiej przyszłość polskich gejów i lesbijek rysuje się jednak w jasnych barwach.” (Leszkowicz and Kitliński, *Miłość i Demokracja*, 21)

Chapter 4

p. 28

“Czym innym jest bowiem mówienie o „bezosobowym” problemie, a czym innym o problemie, który ma konkretne oblicze i sprawia, że gołym okiem można dostrzec codzienny ciężar braku regulacji prawnych i dramaty z tym związane, strategie radzenia sobie z wykluczeniem i brakiem rozpoznania³ społecznego i prawnego.” (Mizielińska and Stasińska, “Prywatne jest Polityczne,” 113)

Chapter 5

p. 36

“No poszedłem do psychiatry, sprawdzić czy serio jestem trans czy mam cos nie tak z głową... Wiesz, mózg plata różne figle. Ale nie, ja jestem trans, bo taki jestem i nic na to nie poradzę” (Piotr)

“Mam tak dość dostosowywani się do heteroseksualnych norm. O, przepraszam, nawet mówię z gniewem[...] Jesteś pewna, że mogę mówić w taki sposób? Bo mnie to tak wkurza, dlaczego musimy się dostosowywać do grupy, która dokonuje nad nami opresji? Jesteśmy jacy jesteśmy, nie możemy tego zmienić. (Gabriel)

“[Czy szukasz innych osób LGBT?] Szczerze? Nie, nie odczuwam aż takiej potrzeby żeby być z *tymi* osobami w kontakcie czy po prostu się z nimi zadawać.”

p. 37

“Miałem randkę z chłopakiem.... I rozmawialiśmy, chodziliśmy po Śródmieściu, bardzo fajnie, ale on... trzymał mnie za rękę, a ja się tak bałem. Nieustannie. I on niby nawet pocałował mnie... w policzek... I ludzie patrzyli się na nas. To była zima, ciemno. I ja mam też tak w Meksyku, ale bardziej boję się tutaj. Może też bo nie wiem jak to tutaj działa. Tutaj boję się przemocy. Tam oczywiście też, ale tutaj chyba się nie boję śmierci. W Meksyku? Czasem boję się. No, nie mogę mówić, że tu jest lepiej i tu jest gorzej bo to byłoby kłamstwo po prostu i tutaj jest generalnie bezpiecznie. Ale się boję.” (Gabriel)

“Jeśli pójde ulicą, trzymając dziewczynę za rękę, to ewentualnie ktoś się krzywo popatrzy... W tramwaju mógłby być problem, ze względu na to, że ludzie w tramwaju zwykle czują się bardziej pewni siebie... . ze względu na mniejszą przestrzeń... No i tam mogłoby dojść do jakiejś przepychanki, darcia się, zatrzymywania tramwaju i tego typu rzeczy... Aczkolwiek na ulicy, poza ewentualnie jakimś hasłem czy spojrzeniem, nie jest aż tak źle. Ale to Kraków, jakbyśmy pojechały na wieś, by opowiadali o tym przez lata... Szczególnie w Kościele, na kazaniach.” (Wiktoria)

“Zacząłem, jak wróciłem z Holandii. Wcześniej mówiłem tylko ludziom, którzy musieli wiedzieć, moim przyjaciółom... dziewczynom, które się ewentualnie we mnie podkochały... i tyle. Ale teraz jestem bardziej otwarty. To było takie pozytywne doświadczenie, nikogo nie obchodziło, że jestem gejem. Więc nie chcę być już w szafie, przynajmniej nie na uczelni.” (Tomek)

“Grupa ludzi chcących być traktowanie normalnie, przeciętnie... Idą ulicą w lateksowych majtkach, no, może nie wszyscy, i drą mordę wymachując flagą... Kurczę, jak chcesz człowieku być traktowany ok, to się nie zachowuj jak pajac. Nie rozumiem zamierzenia. Czy ktoś zaakceptuje takich ludzi, widząc to? Pomyśli, okej, jednak to jest ok? No raczej wątpię.” (Piotr)

p. 38

“Znaczący w Polsce to jest takie, że jest Parada Równości., to organizuje się jakieś narodowościowe cos i jedni będą na drugich[...] Wiesz jak to jest, jak jest cos, to musi być cos przeciwnego. Przeciwny tu jest ruch narodowościowy.” Marcin

“Wydaje mi się, że dużo osób zakłada, że Polacy są rasistami i homofobami. Kiedy byłem na Erasmusie w Holandii, to było tak, że jak mówiłem skąd jestem, to było takie, o-oł, co teraz będzie, nie, jak się zachowujemy[...] Ale też Polacy się nie wyszukują. Jak słyszą polski język na ulicy, to przestają mówić, żeby ktoś się nie zorientował, że też są z Polski. Też tak robiłem. Wydaje mi się, że albo nie lubimy innych Polaków, albo wstydzimy się, że jesteśmy Polakami. Albo i to i to.” (Tomek)

pp. 38-39

“Moim zdaniem tu generalnie chodzi o brak edukacji, bo ja zaczęłam myśleć, że mnie to dotyczy, kiedy zaczęłam się bardziej poznawać na te tematy. Wcześniej o tym nie myślałam, bo nie było o tym informacji. I ja się naprawdę nie dziwię, jak takie osoby biorą informacje z telewizji, że mają takie opinie, bo nie mają jak mieć innych. Większość z nich podejrzewam, że to nie są źli ludzie ani jacyś tacy, tylko po prostu... słyszą, że jesteśmy zbrojeńcami i trzeba chronić rodziny. O, no to jak trzeba bronić rodziny, jak to jest tak przedstawione, to też bym się wnerwiła, nie... Tylko tyle, że my wiemy, że to nie jest prawda, a oni nie.” (Natalia)

p. 39

“Ktoś musi być gejem, żeby publiczność mogła się z kogo śmiać. Albo takie strasznie stereotypowe, albo jakieś głupie rzeczy robi. I jak potem się dziwić, że społeczeństwo jest jakie jest, jak oni widzą taki obraz. I ja czuję się tak zażenowany, mam ochotę wyjść, opuścić to kino i opuścić to całe miasto.... To jest reprezentacja LGBT w polskiej komedii romantycznej, w ogóle w polskich filmach. Chamskie comic relief. To jest bardzo szkodliwe.”
(Marcin)

“Niewspomniane w ogóle jest, że jest coś takiego jak niehetero... Moje definiowanie, że mogę w ogóle nie być hetero zaczęło się dopiero w późnym gimnazjum przez właśnie przeglądanie internetu na ten temat. A wszystkie rozmowy, pytania na ten temat, były postrzegane jako... coś złego w tamtym okresie. Nie powinnaś się pytać, bo jeśli się pytasz to znaczy, że, o jesteś zбочzona. Czemu chcesz wiedzieć, na przykład, jak nie zajść w ciążę. I tak samo nikt nigdy, poza moją mamą, nie wspomniał o tym że dziewczyna powinna chodzić regularnie do ginekologa, ani że mężczyzna też powinien chodzić do lekarza.... “ Wiktoria

p. 40

“Tam było napisane.. to nie było homofobiczne, to było tylko takie .. że ktoś nie rozumie tematu i napisał. Bo to było takie coś, nie martw się, tylko około 2 do 5% osób nie jest hetero, więc.. nie martw się, bo jest mała szansa, że to będzie ciebie dotyczyć. Yyy, ja potem jak przeczytałam o tym to zaczęłam zauważać, że... kurde, że ja tak sobie dziwnie myślę o tej koleżance... A tam na przykład było, że, o, możesz się patrzeć na swoje koleżanki w taki sposób, ale nie martw się, każda dziewczyna tak robi[...] Jak ja sobie to przeczytałam, ja się potem bałam[...] Co się stanie, jak ja będę homo, o mój Boże święty, co to jest za jakaś choroba, bo to było napisane jak jakaś choroba[...] I nie było nigdzie indziej materiałów. Wtedy internet też nie był taki dostępny... Miałam godzinę na komputerze na dzień bo był tylko jeden komputer w domu... No to.. tak wyglądało że właśnie. Moja jedyna wiedza była z tej encyklopedii, w której było tak napisane, że wydaje ci się, nie przejmuj się.... No i nie było nic na zajęciach, nigdy.... I no i przez to miałam trochę takie zryпки, że widziałam jakąś dziewczynę która mi się podobała, a ja takie „podoba mi się jej kurtka, podoba mi się jej

kurtka.”. No bardzo długo mi to zajęło, żeby się tego oduczyć i żeby ogarnąć co się dzieje” (Natalia)

p. 41

“Znaczy to cały czas było takie w społeczeństwie generalnie... Nie chcę tego słyszeć. Nie obnoś się swoją seksualnością.... Ale teraz jak było głośniej o tym, jakby jest jeszcze większa niechęć niż była wcześniej.... No i jakby media to podłapały i media robią na to nagonkę, i ludzie się wkurwiają.” (Marcin)

“Ja w ogóle myślę, że ta karta trochę niepotrzebna.. Fakt, może te domy pomocy i jasne, że powinni na zajęciach w szkole mówić o tolerancji, ale po chuj aż tak to rozdmuchiwać. Po co z tym tak wyskakiwać i drażnić innych. To jeszcze bardziej ukazuje LGBT jako jakąś odrębną społeczność... Jak jakieś małpy w zoo, co trzeba chronić i zaznaczać ich inność. Po co się wychylać.” (Piotr)

p. 42

“To jest wszędzie, w mediach, w kościele. Wszyscy są nagle ekspertami od LGBT, gadają o zbrodniach i uczeniu dzieci masturbacji. I to jest takie przykre, bo ja uważam, że ta karta to jest cudowny pomysł, to jest bardzo ładnie napisane[...] No, ale jak to przeczytasz to tam w sumie, tam nic nie ma. Takie tylko ogólniki. Więc nie wiem, czy było warto.” (Natalia)

“To, co dzisiaj się stało... jak rada miasta może coś takiego uchwalić, to jest żart... Oni tam użyli słowa ‘homopropaganda’ w uchwale. Jeszcze tam napisali „słusznie zakazująca,” czyli tam jest jakaś opinia. W uchwale. Nie mam pytań. To jest... nie wiem czy to nie jest przeciwko jakimś prawom człowieka.” (Marcin)

p. 43

“Ja zawsze mam z tym typowym Polakiem takie negatywne skojarzenia, chociaż takiego typowego-typowego to nie wiem, czy poznałam, tylko po prostu taki stereotyp jest, że są... yyy... tacy, no, że tacy buce, nietolerancyjni... Ja się nie dziwię że za granicą jest takie podejście jak nawet w Polsce ludzie tak o sobie myślą, że są, że ‘o, my Polacy to tylko umiemy się kłócić’” (Natalia)

p. 44

“Po prostu już we krwi od małego, z dziada pradziada jest to uparcie i czasem ono jest dobre, ale w wielu przypadkach jest strasznie krzywdzące i ... no i, jakby tak cofa człowieka wstecz. Zamiast iść do przodu to albo stoimy w miejscu albo właśnie idziemy w tył.” (Sara)

“No nie wiem.. Jestem Polakiem, dumnym z historii... I Katolikiem, ale nie takim bezmózgim. I nie wstydzę się tego...choć czasem wstyd mi za Polaków Januszy za granicą.” (Piotr)

“Jak ktoś mówi, że jest patriotą, to zazwyczaj jest taki... romantyczny. Że jest człowiek romantyczny. O tej tęsknocie za Polską, że Polska jest taka biedna, ale on jest takim bohaterem, on się tak poświęca za ten cały kraj... Oni nie potrafią się patrzeć na Zachód tak bardziej otwarcie, bo oni myślą cały czas, że w Polsce jest najfajniej i Polska jest taka dobra, a reszta to jak ktoś ma inne poglądy, to są źli, a ... pomyślmy na ten temat. Czemu oni mają inne poglądy? Z czego to wynika? Nie wiem, popatrzmy jakoś krytycznie.” (Natalia)

p. 45

“Nie chciałbym umierać za ten kraj, bo niby za co miałbym umierać? I ludzie mają takie, no to w takim razie nie jesteś prawdziwym Polakiem. Jestem większym patriotą niż ty. Super, fajnie, i co z tego? Za bardzo się tym przejmujemy... Jesteśmy tak bardzo zagrzebani w przeszłości, nie możemy się z niej wygrzebać... Więc patrzmy się chociaż na teraźniejszość, jeśli nie możemy patrzeć w przyszłość.” (Marcin)

“Jedyne moje zmartwienie to by było żeby mieć pieniądze, żeby uciec, a nie, że o Boże, opuszczę kraj. Nie. O Boże, to jest skrawek ziemi, będzie drugi” (Sara)

“Jestem Polką tylko w tym sensie, że tak mówi mój paszport[...] Jeżeli sytuacja się pogorszy i miałabym okazję uciec to jak najprędzej bym to zrobiła. Szczerze, jakbym miała pieniądze i jakbym wiedziała, że dam sobie radę za granicą, pewnie bym wyjechała teraz.” (Wiktoria)

p. 46

“Są te podwójne standardy. Nie możesz flirtować w klubie hetero, ale musimy być bardzo, bardzo podobni do hetero. Nie możesz być kobiecy. No, ja lubię te chusty w słowiańskie wzory, ale co by się stało, gdybym to ubrał na wykłady? Nie chcę się tym przejmować, ale się

przejmuję, bo jest ta groźba przemocy i już wystarczająco przyciągam do siebie uwagę, bo nie jestem biały. I dlatego dla mnie to jest bardzo trudno tutaj żyć. Ja tak zdecydowałem, przyjechałem z zupełnie innego kraju, z innego życia... I dla mnie to jest bardzo trudno się przystosować. Ale właśnie dlatego zauważam wiele rzeczy[...] I na przykład na Grindrze ludzie piszą, że szukam kogoś męskiego, kogoś kto wygląda hetero, kogoś dyskretnego. A ja nie chcę taki być.” (Gabriel)

p. 47

“Wydaje mi się, że możesz być Polakiem i gejem. Ja się nie bardzo czuję Polakiem, ale wydaje mi się, że jest to możliwe. Ale jeżeli chodzi o to, że można *mieszkać* w Polsce i być gejem, no to jest takie indywidualne podejście. Ja uważam, że Dlatego że nie ma jakiegoś takiego zabezpieczenia prawnego i ponieważ państwo uważa że tych osób nie ma,.... No to wydaje mi się że nie ma tu specjalnie dla nich miejsca. Jeżeli chodzi o sytuację prawną, no to Polska jest taką wyspą. Nie jest jedyna, ale jest kilka tylko państw które mają aż tak złą sytuację prawną. Jeżeli chodzi o sytuację społeczną, to wydaje mi się, że jest trochę lepsza, niż sytuacja prawna, aczkolwiek jest duże przyzwolenie polityków na mowę nienawiści i na takie... skrajne postawy. Więc pod tym względem wydaje mi się, że jest to ewenement” (Tomek)

pp. 47-48

“Dorastałem na wsi I uciekłem na drugi koniec Polski, żeby móc żyć normalnie. I wiem, że nie ma szans, żebym wrócił do domu i się przyznał, że jestem trans. Oni nawet nie słyszeli o równouprawnieniu, co dopiero o LGBT. I tęsknię za domem, ale nie mogę wrócić i zapuścić włosy i nosić sukienki... Nie byłbym w stanie tego znieść.” (Piotr)

p. 48

“Za każdym razem jak szłam ulicą z przyjacielem, wszyscy od razu widzieli i zanim dotarłam do domu, mama już by usłyszała od wszystkich sąsiadów, że Natalia jest z chłopakiem i kiedy będzie ślub. Wszyscy wiedzą wszystko o wszystkich. I nie ma tak, że im powiem, że on woli chłopaków, a ja wolę dziewczyny. No więc na pewno jest łatwiej w Krakowie, jest ta anonimowość, jak miniesz kogoś na ulicy, to pewnie go już nigdy nie zobaczysz.” (Natalia)

“Mam nadzieję, że to się w końcu zmieni, że będziemy się otwierać na innych, na inne opinie, na... na to, że to co myślimy może niekoniecznie jest najlepsze, że można żyć w inny, lepszy sposób, że można żyć bardziej otwarcie[...] I myślę, że jest lepiej gdzie indziej, jeśli chodzi o tą otwartość... tolerancję, że tak to określe, w stosunku do opinii innych ludzi... O LGBTQ, ale też w kwestiach zdrowotnych, jeśli chodzi o ekologię... Że może da się oddychać... I pod względami jaki religia ma wpływ na życie codzienne, jak ludzie traktują innych ludzi[...] Wydaje mi się, że jest [szansa dla Polski], aczkolwiek wymagałoby to wiele pracy w stosunku od Polaków, od innych ludzi cierpliwości, bo nie zrobimy tego sami.” (Wiktoria)

p. 49

“Myślę, że rząd uważa, że wszyscy tutaj są białymi hetero-katolickimi mężczyznami.[...] Przede wszystkim katolickimi, bo przecież nie ma innej mniejszości religijnej w Polsce ani innej religii w Polsce, bo wszyscy są w stu procentach Chrześcijanami... Wiadomo.... Niezależnie od opinii dziecka, które jest chrzczone.” (Wiktoria)

“Mamy takiego księdza, który powiedział dopiero co powiedział, że LGBT to jest uczenie dzieci masturbacji. Tak powiedział. I to powiedział w tym tygodniu w niedzielę, mój brat mi powiedział. No i potem dziwisz się, że się spotyka takie różne takie opinie... przerażające” (Natalia)

“Ale Kościół... on kontroluje społeczeństwo. Na kazaniach mówią: to jest złe, to jest złe, to jest złe. I ma większy autorytet poza miastami, więc zwłaszcza tam może przekazywać te swoje... prawdy... propagandy o homopropagandzie. Więc tak, byłoby łatwiej bez tego, bo on jednak ma duży wpływ na światopogląd sporej części społeczeństwa.” (Marcin)

p. 50

“Jak ja chodziłam do kościoła, jak jeszcze, powiedzmy, nie byłam świadoma swojej seksualności czy czegokolwiek... Po prostu lubiłam kolor czarny... I przyszłam na Mszę[...] i dwie panie zobaczyły, że mam czarne ciuchy, więc trzeba zamiast słuchać księdza przez całą mszę, dyskutować, że *Satanistka* za nami siedzi ... Więc może i o ile księża są w różnych typach i potrafią być otwarci lub potrafią być zamknięci, to wydaje mi się że to całe środowisko dookoła-kościelne, ludzie którzy tam przychodzą, ludzie, którzy są tak

wykształceni a nie inaczej[...] są jak najbardziej nieotwarceni nawet, na mniejsze rzeczy, powiedzmy, przewinienia, kolor włosów, co dopiero kolor skóry czy seksualność... Znaczy, nie mówiąc o tym, że teoretycznie każda inna seksualność niż hetero jest oczywiście traktowana jak problem psychiczny.” (Wiktoria)

p. 51

“Moja mama płakała, jak jej powiedziałam, że jestem ateistką. Pytała się, gdzie popełniła błąd. Tak samo mówiła z moją chorobą psychiczną. Było tak przykro tego słuchać, więc nie chcę jej powiedzieć o mojej orientacji. Myślę, że tata zrozumiałby lepiej, chyba się nawet trochę domyśla.” (Natalia)

“‘Bóg, honor, ojczyzna.’ Jakby ciężko w ogóle polemizować ze stopniem istotności religii w tym kraju. Zwłaszcza, że robi się dużo praw, dużo zmian, robi się na modłę tego co Kościół katolicki nakazuje... No, jest to potwornie istotne[...] To jest taka mafia, przynajmniej w Polsce.” (Sara)

“Powiedzmy, że podczas Chrztu Polski to jeszcze miało sens, ale potem to niekoniecznie. Znaczy tak, religia pomogła Polakom przez trudne czasy.. dadadadadadada[...] Więc ja rozumiem, że ludzie mają przywiązanie, aczkolwiek ludzie, którzy powinni naprawdę wyznawać słowa Chrystusa, który mówił, aby *kochać* innego człowieka... bynajmniej się do tego nie przestrzegają i dążą tak naprawdę tylko do swojego interesu prywatnego[...] A teraz nawet nie możemy mieć sklepów otwartych w niedzielę, co jest bezpośrednim wpływem religii na konsumpcjonizm.” (Wiktoria)

p. 52

“Mam dużo problemów z Kościołem, ale no nie mogę z tym jak traktują kobiety. Widać, że to instytucja prowadzona przez facetów. Kobiety które pracują na plebani są po prostu służącymi tych księży, zarabiają jakieś grosze. Kobiecte zakony cały czas siedzą w miejscu. I te wszystkie seksistowskie komentarze, zwłaszcza o organach rozrodczych kobiet, nie mogę tego znieść. Nasz ksiądz raz powiedział, że poczęcie się dzieje ot tak, od razu. Bóg sprawia. I ja takie, nie, to jest proces. A on mówi: to twoja filozofia, ty możesz mieć sobie taką filozofię,

ale twoja filozofia jest błędna[...] I ja takie, czy on kiedyś widział książkę do biologii? Jakaś porażka. I to było podczas religii, w szkole.” (Natalia)

p. 53

“Większość ludzi, którzy są do wyboru, są tacy sami[...] To tylko wybieranie najmniejszego zła. To nie jest kwestia taka że zagłosuję na kogoś, bo on zmieni powiedzmy cos, wniesie cos sensownego, tylko zagłosuję tak, że może niekoniecznie wszyscy będziemy tego głośno żałować” (Wiktoria)

p. 54

“Moi przyjaciele mają otwarte poglądy, ale nie słuchają wiadomości, więc ich to nie obchodzi, to polityka, jest nudne, więc nie będą głosować. Ale ja zaczęłam czytać wiadomości i jestem przerażona, co się dzieje w Polsce, więc jasne, że będę głosować.” (Natalia)

“Przeważnie albo mówią tam pierdoły albo jakieś propagandowe bzdury albo jak już mówią cos ciekawego, to i tak się dowiem, bo pracuję za barem.” (Sara)

“[Czy czytasz lub oglądasz wiadomości?] Nie, nie, nie, nie, nie. W życiu. Są przepełnione takimi, ym, czysto specyficznymi poglądami prawicowymi gdzie jakkolwiek przekaz... nieuznawania ich wartości jest traktowany jako... bycie zdrajcą przeciwko narodowi, społeczeństwu, Bogu, kulturze i wszelkiemu... innemu stworzeniu na niebie i na ziemi. Eee, i dlatego że są to wiadomości zwykle niesprawdzone, cechowane czysto po to żeby politycznie pokazywać swoje poglądy.” (Wiktoria)

“Jak byłam u tego dziadka to właśnie sobie puściłam telewizję, żeby ona szła w tle... To było rozwalające tam masz jeden kanał i drugi kanał, TVP1 i TVP2, i to jest zupełnie co innego... Ja się naprawdę nie dziwię, że niektórzy ludzie mają takie poglądy jeśli masz tylko Kościół, albo tylko ten kanał, który mówi ci takie rzeczy[...] Wszystko tylko o aborcji, chronieniu życia, i anti-LGBT, bo teraz jest ta karta, więc cały czas o tym gadają[...] I to jest tak oderwane od rzeczywistości, to co oni pokazują. To jest najbardziej przerażające. Czytasz inne wiadomości i one mówią zupełnie co innego.” (Natalia)

p. 55

“[Czy myślisz, że Unia ma jakiś wpływ na sytuację LGBT w Polsce?] Boże, jak ja bym chciała, żeby miała. Tak bardzo. Ja się po prostu modłę, żeby Unia cos zrobiła. Niektórzy mówią Polska to wyspa, ale moim zdaniem... Boże, proszę, żeby cos zrobiła.” (Natalia)

“Rosja też należy do Europy, więc to tak... porównując do Zachodu, to takie trochę bagienko tutaj mamy. Co do takiej Rosji, to niestety jednak chyba będziemy się do tego zbliżać.... Chociaż mam nadzieję, że może Unia albo społeczeństwo się odezwie jakoś. Sporo osób też jest allies, czyli może.... Może cos z tym zrobią. Ale na razie jesteśmy tak pomiędzy bardzo źle i bardzo dobrze. Tak średnio. W sumie nic się nie działo przez długi, długi czas. Teraz jest głośno, bo, o nie, chcieli wprowadzić jakieś prawa. Które nie zabierają innym praw, tylko dają dodatkowe prawa innym. I to się nie podoba społeczeństwu.” (Marcin)

“Na przykład chociażby to, że jest swobodny ruch między państwami. Dużo osób wyjeżdża i będąc za granicą widzi, co jest tam normalne, co jest akceptowane i potem przyjeżdżają z tą postawą, i chcą więcej. Po drugie, są te wszystkie europejskie trybunały, do których można się odwołać i ktoś tam to robi, i ludzie o tym słyszą” (Tomek)

p. 56

“Kilka...naście lat temu trudno było znaleźć w Polsce kogoś, kto nie byłby w ogóle biały, tak? W tym momencie turyści coraz bardziej chętniej przyjeżdżają do Polski, więc to zaczyna już.. powoli coraz bardziej normą, tak, już nie wszyscy jesteśmy tacy sami... Przykładowo, moja babcia jak zobaczyła pierwszy raz w swoim życiu osobę o... ciemniejszym kolorze skóry, stwierdziła, że to diabeł, i uciekła....Ponieważ jej nikt nigdy nie powiedział, że ktoś taki w ogóle istnieje, tak. Przez całe jej życie. Więc mówię, wydaje mi się, że coraz więcej ludzi... za swoimi własnymi poglądami, pomysłami, przyjeżdża i się nimi wymienia, więc naprawdę coraz więcej zostaje. Jesteśmy coraz bardziej wyedukowani, jesteśmy coraz bardziej otwarci [...] Byliśmy przez długi czas na swoim, czyli tak naprawdę kisimy się w tym co uważają ludzie od, nie wiem, pięćdziesięciu lat, tak?... A tak to zawsze wpuszczamy odrobinę świeżego powietrza.” (Wiktoria)

“Unia Europejska w kontekście Polski to jest takie... taki twór, w którym niby jesteśmy, ale... jesteśmy tym murem między wschodem a zachodem, nananana, i tak jakby, Unia sobie, a my sobie, jak dadzą pieniążki, to to będzie fajnie, ale jak będą chcieli narzucić nam jakieś

standardy, które nie do końca będą nam odpowiadać, to będziemy je ignorować, aż zagrożą, że dostaniemy karę, a potem się wyciszy, ... i tak no nie wiem, czy ta Unia w ogóle funkcjonuje” (Sara)

p. 57

“To też ma związek z historią, jak tam był komunizm i tak dalej, te wszystkie kraje, Jugosławia i tak dalej, te wszystkie kraje są jednak trochę biedniejsze... I nie tylko chodzi o pieniądze, ale jakieś takie... doświadczenia cywilizacyjne.” (Marcin)

“Słyszałem, że Rydzyk chce startować do Parlamentu. Bo obecnie nie jesteśmy wystarczająco konserwatywni. Ale to dobrze. Polacy będą na niego głosować I potem jak będzie próbował przepuścić jakiś katolicki postulat, ludzie wybrani z innych krajów go zniszczą. To jest dobra rzecz z tym Parlamentem Europejskim, mają głównie lewicowe poglądy.” (Marcin)

p. 58

“No na pewno czuję się bardziej Europejką niż Polką... Polska mnie trochę nie do końca, brutalnie mówiąc, obchodzi. A czuję się bardziej Europejką bo to jest powiedzmy ten obszar, który jest mi znany. Nie na zasadzie państwa, tylko wiem że jak pojedę... do Niemiec, albo pojedę na Chorwację, albo pojedę gdziekolwiek w obrębie Europy, to jakby trafiam to podobnej kultury, do podobnego stylu życia, do podobnego klimatu, no, do wszystkiego podobnego. A więc jakbym sobie pojechała gdzieś do Azji albo do Ameryki to wszystko jest zupełnie inne. Więc pod tym względem no, czuję się tą Europejką.” (Sara)

“Ja bym się bardziej czuła Europejką, jakbyśmy mieli bardziej równe prawa. Dla mnie w ogóle by państwa mogły nie istnieć i mogłaby tylko Europa. I dla mnie to jest pod takim względem, żeby mieć więcej równości, ale też nie jestem patriotką, mam taki, whatever. No, więc tak, czuję się bardziej Europejką niż Polką. I mnie też nie obchodzi, czy Unia będzie ingerować bo no dobrze, prawidłowo, nie? Wreszcie ktoś inteligentny się za to weźmie.” (Natalia)

“Ludzie nie mówią o sobie. O takich... takich prywatnych, powiedzmy, tematach, wiesz?[...] Ludzie nie lubią wyrażać uczuć, są bardzo zimni i... eee jest pewne słowo po hiszpańsku, *insípido*... nie że bez smaku, ale... nijacy. Przede wszystkim w Europie Północnej i Zachodniej. Ale na przykład Ukraińcy są trochę bardziej... ekspresyjni niż Polacy. Ale Polacy są bardziej niż Niemcy. Nie wiem, ma to sens? I oczywiście jest o wiele inaczej na Bałkanach i w Hiszpanii.” (Gabriel)