Migration and sexual resocialisation: the case of Central and East Europeans in London

Introduction

Migration has been one of the most contentious and divisive social and political issues in Britain since the post-war government encouraged Commonwealth citizens to move to the UK to fill shortages in the labour market in the late 1940s. More recently, the arrival of hundreds of thousands of East Europeans following the accession of ten former communist states to the European Union in 2004/07 and the prospect of Britain accepting refugees fleeing war-torn Syria have stoked anti-immigrant feeling among the population, with the 2013 British Social Attitudes survey reporting that 77% of respondents felt current levels of immigration should be cut.[1] While explanations for anti-immigrant sentiment cannot be reduced to a single factor, it is noticeable that politicians and the media in the UK increasingly refer to the incompatibility of migrants' cultural values with those of the host society as justification for their exclusion, with gender and sexual norms often taken as the benchmark against which migrants' proximity to or distance from 'British values' is measured.[2] Yet, such explanations are often based on essentialist assumptions about gender and sexual norms as fixed and immutable. In this article, by contrast, we argue that immigrants' attitudes towards sex and sexuality can change as a result of the act of migration itself. Studying the impact of migration on sexual attitudes is also important in that – through their transnational and circulatory migration practices – migrants in Britain may export their more liberal beliefs back to their home countries, thereby potentially improving the legal situation for and lived experience of LGBT individuals in Eastern Europe.

While considerable research, including our own, has shown that migration to the UK has a significant impact on migrants' sexual behaviour and sexual identities, the influence of geographical mobility on such migrants' sexual attitudes remains under-researched.[3] While research does exist on sexual socialisation and on migrant resocialisation, there is little overlap between the two fields. Research on the former generally examines the sexual socialisation of young people living in their home societies[4], with research on the latter largely looking at the impact of mobility on socialisation into broader social roles[5] or on changes in political beliefs[6] or racial attitudes.[7] Building on research examining the influence of migration by Central and East Europeans on attitudes towards diversity more broadly[8] and complementing studies on the sexual resocialisation of migrants in Sweden, Ireland and the Netherlands, ours is the first broad-based analysis of the sexual attitudes of Central and East European migrants in the UK.[9]

The aim of this article is therefore to analyse the extent to which moving from one society to another influences migrants' sexual resocialisation – in particular, attitudes towards pre-marital sex and homosexuality. Following a brief explication of our methods, the article begins by discussing the factors shaping sexual socialisation and attitudes towards homosexuality in Central and Eastern Europe with the aim of setting out our respondents' social environment prior to migrating. We then examine the results of our quantitative data to highlight whether and to what extent reported sexual attitudes change as time since migration elapses, before shedding light on these data with deeper insights from our qualitative research, identifying the factors facilitating or limiting attitudinal change, and showing, with reference to theory, how the latter may have been influenced by the process of migration.

Methods

The quantitative and qualitative research on which this article is based is drawn from a larger project conducted in 2008-10 on the sexual attitudes and lifestyles of Central and East European migrants in London. A detailed description of the methodology for the larger project has been published[10] and a summary is set out below. The study was conducted with the approval of the Camden and Islington Community Research Ethics Committee (07/H0722/110). Eligible respondents were literate men and women aged eighteen years or over who self-identified as migrants from one of the ten Central and East European EU accession states.[11] The sample was recruited from community venues, two sexual health clinics in London and through the Internet.

The quantitative survey instrument was an electronic, anonymous, self-completed questionnaire available in twelve languages (ten Central and East European languages as well as English and Russian). Informed consent was sought using information sheets available in the twelve languages. A £5 high street voucher was offered as an incentive. A total of 3,137 people completed the survey (2,291 – the community sample; 358 – the clinic sample; and 488 – the Internet sample). Quantitative analysis was performed using STATA ME 13.0 (STATA Corp.,College Station, Texas, USA) and the reported statistical results are based throughout on Pearson chi-squared tests, as appropriate for comparing the means among categorical variables. All respondents who completed the survey were asked if they would participate in an exploratory, face-to-face, semi-structured, in-depth interview. In total forty in-depth interviews were conducted. Interview participants were offered a £15 high street voucher as an incentive. The interviews took place in a university office. Purposive sampling was employed for the interviews to ensure diversity in country of origin, age and time in the UK but the qualitative sample does not claim to be representative.

The interviews were conducted in English or one of the Central and East European languages depending on the preference of the interviewee. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim and then translated into English by bilingual interviewers, all of whom had either an MA or PhD in social science, with full adherence to participant confidentiality. Data management and analysis were facilitated by the use of the qualitative software Atlas.ti. The analysis used the framework approach, whereby the verbatim data is ordered and synthesised within a thematic matrix, which emerged from reviewing literature in the field and the interview data itself.[12] The interviews, informed by a topic guide, built on the questionnaire by exploring attitudes towards pre-marital sex, the likelihood of contracting HIV in their home country and the UK, homosexuality and abortion. Two of the four themes – pre-marital sex and homosexuality – are presented in this article. Pseudonyms have been used to protect participants' identities.

The quantitative sample consisted of 1443 men (46%) and 1694 women (54%).[13] They included representatives from all ten Central and East European accession states. The participants were relatively young: the majority (70%) were aged below thirty-one. They were quite recent arrivals: 69% had lived in the UK for up to four years; the maximum stay was twelve years. They were relatively well educated: 34% had a university degree and only 9% reported having incomplete high school or less. In order to increase our sample of men who have sex with men, a harder-to-reach population at higher risk of sexual ill health, we extended our survey methodology to include the internet. However, in the community sample of 2291 respondents, 40% are heterosexual men and 43% heterosexual women, 15% are not sexually active and the remainder (2%) are homosexual (men who have sex with men / women who have sex with women). Full details of our sample and the methods that we used to recruit respondents from the LGB community are reported in a separate methods paper.[14]

The qualitative sample consisted of twenty-one men and nineteen women, including representatives from all ten Central and East European accession states; 32 were heterosexual and 8 were gay, lesbian or bisexual. The participants were again relatively young (only four were over the age of thirty-five) and were again relatively recent arrivals (the majority (n=21) had lived in the UK for up to four years but with a solid representation of those that had been in the UK for longer). They were well educated (more so than the quantitative sample): eighteen of the forty interviewees had a university degree and the rest had completed at least secondary education.

Limitations

Any exploratory empirical investigation of a new population phenomenon necessarily has limitations. Our research, responding to rapid and important population changes, is no different. Our data is not representative either in aggregation or by sub-group. Indeed, because of the nature of the sample that we were targeting, the survey sample itself could not be representative, as there was no register of Central and East European migrants from which to draw random samples. Instead, we based our sampling approach on an innovative community mapping methodology aimed at accessing Central and East European migrants in London.[15]

The quantitative analysis of these survey data allows us to identify and test the statistical significance of important patterns, associating attitudes and behaviours with socio-economic and demographic characteristics among these individuals. In turn, the qualitative work enabled us to interrogate some of those patterns and to explore possible mechanisms of explanation but without seeking to explain causation or correlation. The qualitative data provides an indication of what the beliefs or attitudes of some of the population might be but does not by any means show how widespread those beliefs might be; only representative surveys can achieve this. Nevertheless, the qualitative data provide a very rich context for the beliefs and attitudes observed in the interviews, which one would not be able to uncover in a structured survey.

It is important to note that Central and East European migrants in the UK are generally young and well-educated. As research shows that homophobic attitudes are negatively correlated to education and positively correlated to age, the changes reported by our (young and well-educated) respondents are unlikely to apply to Central and East Europeans more generally.[16] Moreover, it must be stressed that London is a very specific context in which to conduct research on attitudes towards homosexuality in that LGBT people are perhaps more visible in the UK's capital than anywhere else in the country. Given that we argue below that visibility and personal contact have a significant effect on attitudes, any changes reported among migrants in London will not necessarily be recorded to the same degree elsewhere in Britain.

Furthermore, because we were particularly interested in sampling from the LGB population, our community survey proved unsuitable for this and we therefore extended our survey into the online community in order to access these harder-to-reach population groups. Notwithstanding these limitations, however, our survey represented important exploratory work and provides, through both the quantitative and qualitative arm of the study, important lessons to

inform the planning of future, more representative, survey work in this area as well as providing important and policy relevant insights into the substantive questions.

Sexual socialisation in Central and Eastern Europe

When examining sexual socialisation – understood here as 'the process by which knowledge, attitudes and values about sexuality are acquired' – it is important to emphasise that these processes and outcomes are culturally and historically contingent.[17] What might be considered customary behaviour or a perfectly acceptable social attitude in one society or one period of history may be looked upon with amusement, lack of understanding or revulsion in another. As Ahmadi reminds us, 'sexuality is constituted differently within different socio-cultural contexts, and to be a sexual being has totally different signification in different cultures and epochs.[18] Sexual socialisation, like all forms of socialisation, is a complex process 'that occurs gradually over many years and involves co-ordinating input from several sources'.[19] In the academic literature, an individual's parents and peer group are usually identified as the primary agents of sexual socialisation, although various influences, including religion, the media, education, medicine, ethnicity and political ideology, all play a part.[20]

In view of the cultural contingency of sexual norms, providing a comprehensive analysis of sexual socialisation in Central and Eastern Europe would require a detailed examination of each of the ten former communist accession states in turn, which is beyond the scope of this article. While recognising differences between individual societies and also between the (former) Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe, we have identified certain trends that have broader applicability across the region as a whole.

During the Cold War there was a common perception in the West that communist societies were sexually repressed, that there was 'no sex in the Soviet Union,' with the situation little better elsewhere in the communist bloc.[21] In this period the UK underwent a sexual revolution and challenged traditional norms on sex and sexuality, with social attitudes towards pre-marital sex and homosexuality gradually liberalising, explicit representations of sex becoming more widespread on stage and screen, and pornography gradually normalising. In the USSR there was little public discussion of sex (and little private discussion for that matter), no sex education and no pornography; references to sex in film, art and literature were not tolerated.[22] While women were emancipated in the public sphere in terms of equal labour force participation, equal political rights, access to abortion and the right to divorce, communist societies remained highly patriarchal in the private sphere. Women continued to be responsible for housework and child-

care, with their role as mothers officially presented as 'the highest form of service to one's people and state'.[23] Prior to Gorbachev, few unmarried couples in the USSR lived together and officials insisted that people refrain from sex before marriage.[24] The situation was much the same across Central and Eastern Europe. In Romania, for example, it was considered shameful for 'an unmarried woman to get pregnant, for unmarried men and women to live together as a couple and for a girl to have sex before marriage'.[25] At the same time, 'the nude body disappeared from paintings, décolletage from TV, and love scenes from movies'.[26] It was not until the mid-to-late 1980s, with the release of *Seksmisja* (Sex Mission, 1984) in Poland and *Malenkaya Vera* (Little Vera, 1988) in the Soviet Union, that nudity and sex scenes began to be portrayed more explicitly on the big screen.

The collapse of state socialism in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 and in the USSR in 1991 triggered unparalleled social, economic and political upheaval and this had a huge impact on issues of gender and sexuality. In rejecting the communist past, nationalist-populist political elites in many post-communist states harked back to the golden age of the inter-war period and what they saw – not always accurately, it must be said – as its traditional values and norms. As this period was held up as the opposite of the 'abnormal' communist experience, 'traditional' was equated with 'normal', with traditional gender and sexual roles seen as 'an important aspect of the nostalgia for 'normality''.[27] In the context of a challenging present and unknown future, any form of 'cultural diversity seems threatening' and anything unfamiliar is seen as a threat to stability; there was therefore a tendency among individuals disoriented by the massive social changes set in train by the collapse of communism to 'cling to traditional gender roles and sexual norms, and emphasise absolute rules and familiar norms in an attempt to maximise predictability in an uncertain world'.[28]

The retraditionalisation of gender and sexual norms was strengthened by a marked increase in religiosity in many states across the region, as people tried to deal with the psychological toll that the increase in unemployment, poverty, social inequality and mortality triggered by the collapse of communism took on them.[29] The most recent European Values Survey demonstrated that religiosity (measured as a percentage of respondents identifying themselves as religious) was significantly higher in Poland (88.4%), Romania (82.9%) and Lithuania (85.1%) – the source countries of the three largest groups of respondents in our study – than in the UK (48.3).[30] In many states in the region the Church acquired significant influence as the nation's highest moral arbiter and used its new-found political power to propagate a highly conservative social agenda; nowhere was this more evident than in the field of gender and sexuality. The Catholic Churches of Central Europe, Orthodox Churches of South-East and Eastern Europe and Lu-

theran Churches of Estonia and Latvia all condemned pre-marital sex, abortion, homosexuality (see below) and sex education.[31]

At the same time, however, men and women in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe were also exposed to many of the elements of the sexual revolution that the communist regimes had kept out for forty years. Most states repealed communist-era laws banning pornography, the commercialisation of sex proliferated and there was an increase in sexual permissiveness. According to Widmer, Treas and Newcomb, attitudes in Central and Eastern Europe towards teenage sexual activity (which can be seen as a proxy for pre-marital sex) had largely converged with those of the West by the late 1990s, although later research identified differences within the region, with Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia more liberal on issues of sexual freedom than other societies in Central and Eastern Europe.[32] While there was therefore some convergence of opinion between East and West regarding sexual permissiveness, attitudes towards homosexuality in most post-communist countries remained negative well into the new millennium, as we shall see below.

Attitudes towards homosexuality in Central and Eastern Europe

While the legal situation for lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) individuals in Central and Eastern Europe has improved markedly since the collapse of communism, social attitudes towards homosexuality in the region are still largely conservative.[33] Intolerance towards homosexuality does not have a single cause but is the cumulative effect of various social influences. In the following section we will analyse a number of factors, some of which generally apply to all societies and others specifically to post-communist Central and Eastern Europe. Before we examine the influence of religion, nationalism and political manipulation, we will start by analysing the legacy of communism, which continued to be felt long after the revolutions of 1989 and the fall of the USSR.

Initially the Soviet Union adopted a rather *laissez-faire* attitude towards same-sex desire after the October Revolution, repealing the tsarist laws of 1832 banning male homosexuality and refraining from introducing equivalent articles in the first Soviet Russian Criminal Code of 1922.[34] While recognising sexual desire, Bolshevik intellectuals nevertheless insisted on the 'wholesale subordination of sexuality to the proletariat's class interests … for the sake of the Soviet state and Communist Party'[35]; and in a society in which all citizens were expected to put the collective interest above individual desire, homosexuality was soon reconceived to be abnormal, deviant and – in that it could not pro-

duce children – contrary to the public good.[36] Male homosexuality was thus recriminalised in 1933 and remained a criminal offence until the end of the Soviet period.

The legal situation in the rest of communist Eastern Europe differed from state to state: the Poles had never criminalised homosexuality; in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, the German Democratic Republic and Yugoslavia, it was decriminalised during the communist period; and in Romania and Albania it remained illegal beyond the collapse of state socialism. Even in states in which it was legal, however, homosexuality was considered by the communist regime to be decadent, and homosexuals were seen as a potential threat to the communist system. In Poland, for example, the Security Services maintained surveillance of and kept files on some 11,000 men.[37] Communist regimes were hostile to sexuality in general – both homosexual and heterosexual – because they sought 'to ensure absolute control over the personality' by attempting 'to deindividualise it' and 'to destroy its independence and emotional world'.[38] State-sanctioned homophobia, which was never publicly challenged, therefore shaped the opinions of generations of citizens, who were used to being told what to believe by the communist regime.

When state socialism collapsed in 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe and in 1991 in the USSR, Marxism-Leninism was discredited and the certainties of communism were swept away. The political vacuum that emerged was quickly filled in many states by nationalism, which politicians sold to the electorate as a response to the universalism and artificial cosmopolitanism associated with the communist system. The increase in nationalism in the region after 1989 had a negative impact on attitudes to homosexuality, as well shall see below.[39]

While academics largely agree that the nation is a social construct, the general understanding of the nation outside of academia is that it is a natural phenomenon, a community based on shared descent, united by norms and values and a common history stretching back hundreds if not thousands of years. As it is widely assumed that the nation is reproduced biologically, gays and lesbians are seen as a threat to the future of the nation, as they do not – it is also assumed – produce children.[40] This view was taken to extremes by former Polish President Kaczynski, who argued that if homosexuality 'were to be promoted on a grand scale, the human race would disappear.'[41] As gay and lesbian sex does not produce children and is thus purely for pleasure, it is seen as decadent and selfish – very un-national characteristics. Moreover, the ethnic continuity of the nation is maintained by means of the patriarchal family and its heteronormative and patriarchal conceptions of masculinity and femininity, with woman playing the role of mother and homemaker and men acting as defenders and decision-makers. As a result, the stereotype of the effeminate gay man and masculine lesbian confuses the clearly defined public and private roles of men and women central

to many ethno-national discourses.[42] As a result, homosexuality and nationality in some parts of Central and Eastern Europe are seen as mutually exclusive.

As discussed above, the collapse of communism prompted a marked increase in religiosity in many states across the region and social science research confirms that strength of religious belief is the strongest predictor of negative attitudes to homosexuality, although differences among individual religions have been identified.[43] In general, it was found that 'the more often that their subjects went to church, the more hostile those subjects were towards homosexuality'.[44] Religion, often intertwined with nationalism, could be seen as replacing Marxism-Leninism in providing much-needed answers about the past, present and future. As such, politicians in many Central and East European states sought to legitimise their claims to power by aligning themselves with the local churches and adopting their position on a number of social issues, including LGB rights. In Central and Eastern Europe the position of the main branches of the Christian faith towards homosexuality is negative. Reflecting the position of many nationalists, the Catholic Church condemns homosexuality because homosexual sex is not procreative. Recognising the close interrelationship between religion and nationalism in the region, attitudes towards homosexuality in certain states should be understood as being conditioned not by religion *per se* (although the impact of religion should not be underestimated) but rather by religious discourses in national identity narratives, constructed to legitimise a particular understanding of political community. This helps explain high levels of homophobia in states in which religiosity is low, such as Latvia.[45]

Finally, homophobic discourse has been used instrumentally by politicians in Central and Eastern Europe to discredit opponents and shore up support among nationalist and conservative voters, a sizeable proportion of the electorate in many Central and East European states.[46] It is the supposed alien-ness of homosexuality and its association with Western values that proved particularly useful to politicians, allowing them to construct gays and lesbians as disloyal enemies of the state and reinforcing the idea that homosexuality is a foreign import. Of course, this strategy is not restricted to Eastern Europe but has also been used effectively in non-European contexts, such as Asia and Africa.[47] In seeking to discredit those who favoured closer ties with the EU, for example, politicians used homosexuality as a means to divide the political field into 'friends' and 'enemies', the latter encompassing not just those pushing specifically for LGB rights but – given the association of homosexuality with foreignness – also any politicians supporting Western-style reforms.[48] The cumulative effect of these various factors, as Figure 1 demonstrates, was that by the

early post-Enlargement period support for same-sex marriage (as a proxy for support for LGB equality) was below the EU average in all but one of the Central and East European states.

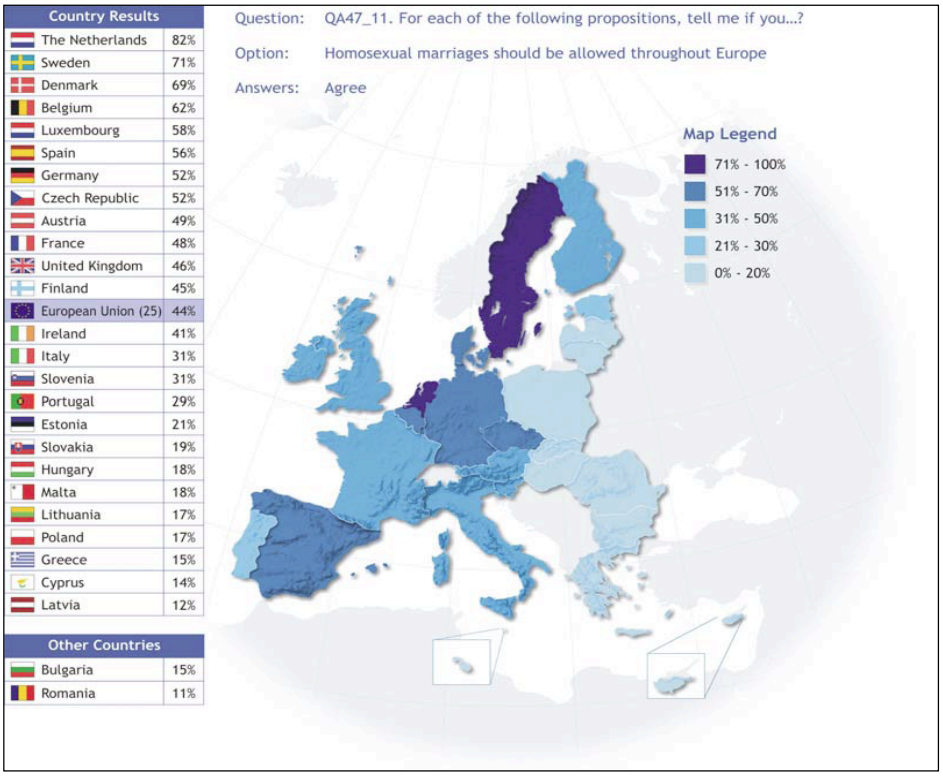

Fig. 1: Attitudes of EU citizens towards same-sex marriage

Source: Eurobarometer 66 (2006), p. 41

The aim of the brief exposition of sexual socialisation in Central and Eastern Europe was to present our respondents' social environment prior to migrating. However, sexual socialisation should not be understood as a teleological process, which is complete by the time individuals reach adulthood. Even if not geographically mobile, individuals move 'through a sequence of statuses corresponding to different stages in the life cycle … with consequent demands for new kinds of behavior'.[49] This is particularly the case if an individual moves from one society to another. To demonstrate the extent to which sexual resocialisation can occur under such circumstances, the following sections present the results of our quantitative and qualitative research to show how the attitudes of Central and East Europeans towards pre-marital sex and homosexuality changed after migrating to London. To measure any change quantitatively, we examined attitudes according to the length of time respondents had spent in the UK, while to understand the qualitative meanings our respondents attached to sexuality and to reflect on the reasons for any perceived temporal changes, we discussed a range of related issues in our in-depth interviews.

Sexual resocialisation: attitudes towards pre-marital sex

To gain an initial insight into our respondents' views on sexuality, we asked them to explain who or what was responsible for their sexual socialisation. In our quantitative survey, we asked respondents how they learnt about sex and offered them a range of choices, including family, school, church, friends, medical professionals, the media and their first partner. The majority of respondents indicated that they learnt from friends (61%) and the media (52%), while substantial minorities also indicated school (44%), the family (39%) and from their first sexual partner (25%). Very few respondents stated that they learnt about sex from the church (3%) or from the medical profession (9%). In the qualitative study, it became clear that while school was a commonly cited agent of sexual socialisation, it was principally the biological aspects of sexual reproduction that were discussed with teachers, rather than any normative debates about sexuality. Moreover, given the focus on biological reproduction, homosexuality was not mentioned at all.

While mothers and fathers may have been expected to complement the knowledge imparted at school, the majority of our respondents reported never having discussed sex with their parents and, in our in-depth interviews, only one learnt about sex from an older sibling. For many families, sex was a taboo subject. Instead, as the survey data suggests, most respondents were responsible for their own sexual socialisation, gleaning information from the Internet, television, newspapers, books and films, including pornography, and in related ways, from friends. The lack of any proper face-to-face discussion about different aspects of sex and sexuality, beyond the biological, meant that the traditional views of the Church and nationalist politicians, for example, were unlikely to be countered by parents or teachers. Moreover, there was a complete silence around the issue of homosexuality.

At the same time, however, the propagation of conservative views on sex and sexuality by nationalist-populist politicians and the Church following the collapse of state socialism had to compete with the infiltration of many of the elements of the Western sexual revolution. The retraditionalisation of gender roles and attitudes towards homosexuality was thus accompanied by a certain relaxation of the rigid sexual mores of the communist period. In response to the statement 'I personally find it unacceptable for a man and a woman to have sexual relations before marriage', therefore, the results of our quantitative analysis, as expected, showed that migration to the UK had no significant effect on our respondents' normative beliefs about sex before marriage, i.e. whether it was generally acceptable or unacceptable.[50] In our survey, 82% of our respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the above statement, a figure which is not affected by the length of time spent in the UK.[51] This figure was close to that reported by the Brit-

ish Social Attitudes survey for 2010, according to which only 11% of respondents said pre-marital sex was always or mostly wrong.[52] The attitudes of Central and East Europeans – at least younger people – towards sex before marriage were thus already close to those held by the British prior to moving to London.

However, the analysis of our qualitative data revealed differences between Central and East Europeans and the British in the *perceived meaning* assigned to sex before marriage in London and in the respondents' home countries. What our interviews suggested was that, while there was little social stigma attached to pre-marital sex *per se*, sex outside of marriage was acceptable if it led to a serious relationship. In Poland, Lithuania and Romania – the source countries of the three largest groups of respondents in our study – marriage rates remain higher than in the UK[53] and there remains considerable social pressure to marry – particularly among women. As Bianca (Romanian woman, 29, heterosexual) commented: 'Well, in Romania, unless you're married by a certain age … oooh!'.

Whether the aim was to marry or to settle down, having sex for the first time with a new partner was considered to signal the start of a serious relationship. As Kaija (Estonian woman, 32, heterosexual) commented: 'It seemed to me that permanent relationships kind of started with sex, so before that there wasn't much of a relationship … it defined the beginning of the relationship.' Purely recreational sex was something that some of our respondents – both men and women – had problems with. As Bartosz (Polish man, 35, homosexual) admitted: 'I'm still having difficulties to accept the term 'having fun'. … If it's sex, we would like something more. If we go for sex, we start to think about person in bigger terms.'

However, in London sex came to be seen as being decoupled from love and not necessarily a stepping-stone to a serious relationship. Indeed, the British were generally perceived as being less interested in serious relationships due, in part, to the fact that there was less social pressure to marry – especially on women. As Liisu (Estonian woman, 25, heterosexual) remarked: 'I think that over here people don't try so desperately to get away from home and get married and have a child. Here it's more like people … have many partners, especially women, women and men compared to Estonia, but they don't really look for relationships so much.'

The disconnect between sex and a relationship in London was such that cheating on a partner is not necessarily considered to be morally reprehensible. Roman (Polish man, 25, homosexual) admitted: 'I told her [a UK colleague] that I cheated on Steve and she said: 'But it was only sex. It was sex and nothing more.' And this was the first time in my life when I learned the difference between sex and relationship.'

While the general acceptability of pre-marital sex was therefore not affected by time spent in London given that a degree of convergence of opinion had occurred prior to our respondents having moved to the UK, the meaning attached to sex outside of marriage did change for some of our respondents in that sex was not necessarily seen as a stepping stone to a serious relationship but could rather be a means of 'just having fun'.

Sexual resocialisation: attitudes towards homosexuality

While a degree of convergence regarding attitudes towards pre-marital sex was evident prior to post-Enlargement migration, the same could not be said of attitudes towards homosexuality. Given that social attitudes in most Central and East European societies are more conservative than in the UK, we asked our research subjects to respond to the statement: 'I personally find it unacceptable for two adults of the same sex to have sexual relations'. What our statistical analysis showed was that the longer our respondents have been in London (see Figure 2), the less intolerant they became towards homosexuality.[54] While the change was more pronounced for women than men, the attitudes of both genders did become more tolerant over time. The graph is suggestive of a structural break in attitudes after two years in the UK and the data supports this. Specifically, 38.3% of (non-LGB) respondents who had been in the UK less than 2 years reported finding same-sex sexual relations unacceptable, compared with only 28.7% among those in the UK for more than two years (p-value = 0.00). Placing this in context, the British Social Attitudes Survey (2012) reports intolerance rates for comparable age groups to be less than 20%, and lower still for more highly educated groups.[55] We therefore find evidence that tolerance towards homosexuality increases over time but does not fully converge with that of the British population. One possible explanation for this relates to religion. In these data we observe both that those practising religion are likely to be less tolerant and that those who have been in the UK longer are more likely to be religiously active than those recently arrived. Though only suggestive, this is consistent with the thesis that religiosity attenuates the positive effects that the duration of stay in the UK has on tolerance.

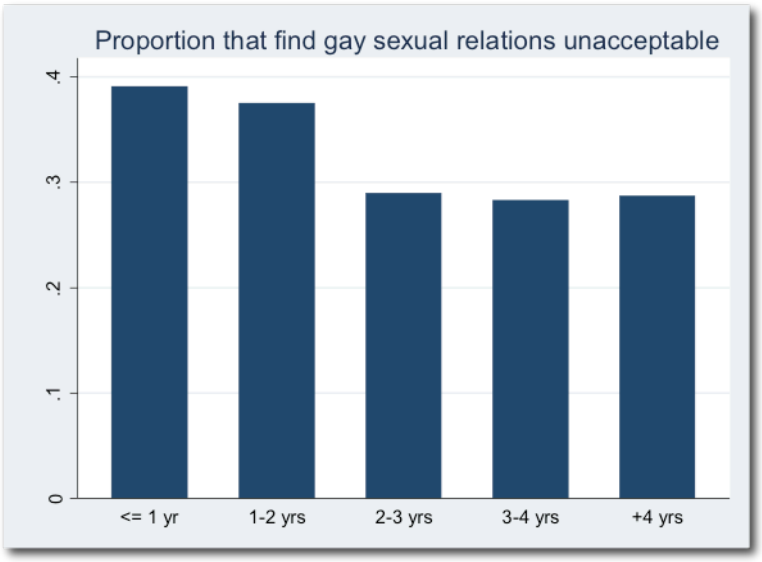

Fig. 2: Percentage of respondents agreeing that homosexuality is unacceptable

While the statistical evidence was encouraging, it was unable to show *why* the migrants became more tolerant and *how* the process of migration itself may have influenced their attitudes. To address these issues, we carried out 40 in-depth interviews to examine how attitudes towards homosexuality may have been shaped by the migratory experience. In this following section we analyse the results of these interviews against the background of the larger cross-sectional quantitative study.

The first factor which emerged from the interviews was that extrication from mechanisms of social control – especially religion, media and politics – in their home countries meant that our respondents were less likely to be exposed to the homophobic discourse of priests, newspapers and politicians, although circular migration practices and diaspora membership meant that the influence of these discourses was not entirely negated. Nevertheless, the respondents were less exposed to homophobic rhetoric from their countries' social and political elites and were now living in a society in which homosexuality, while not viewed in universally positive terms, was nevertheless more accepted. As Laima (Latvian woman, 25, heterosexual) commented: 'I think in my country people still have problems accepting it [homosexuality] and, of course, here it's totally normal.'

The perception of homosexuality as 'normal' in the UK can be attributed in part to the greater visibility gays and lesbians enjoy in the public sphere compared with most Central and East European states. As Piret (Estonian woman, 23, heterosexual) confirmed, 'I think when I was in Estonia it [homosexuality] wasn't so open. I just wasn't used to it because you didn't see it.' In all societies, even socially more liberal ones, 'most people feel that sexuality belongs to

the private space of the home' and as a result 'most public spaces are coded to be heterosexual'.[56] While heterosexuals are able to express their sexuality in public and 'transcend the so-called public-private dichotomy', gays and lesbians have historically been expected to remain invisible by performing traditional masculine and feminine behaviour and/or keeping to their own spaces, such as gay and lesbian bars and clubs.[57] This invisibility can perpetuate negative stereotypes and prevent LGB people from 'assuming their rightful place within society's economic, social, and political organizations'.[58] For gays and lesbians to subvert this public-private dichotomy and also resist the pressure to assimilate into heteronormative behaviour requires them to be *visibly* gay and lesbian by exhibiting non-heteronormative behaviour and appearance and/or participating in specifically LGB events, such as Pride marches. As Kahlina points out, 'Pride Marches, as the backbone of a sexual politics of visibility, have immensely contributed to increased visibility and different, non-stigmatising representation of sexual minorities, thus improving the overall social position of sexual minorities'.[59] Of course, this is the ideal outcome. LGB visibility can also be interpreted as a provocation by religious and nationalist individuals, and Pride marches across the world are still regularly attacked. In the UK gays and lesbians are less likely to face verbal or physical abuse than in many Central and East European societies and, as a result, their greater visibility can have the positive effect on the broader population described above.[60] As Jarek (Polish man, 25, heterosexual) commented: 'I don't know if you know that Brighton is the English capital of gay men. I wasn't aware of this when I moved there. But, in general, I must say that this even helped because I was very negative [towards gay men] and now I'm indifferent.'

A factor that had an even greater positive impact on our respondents' attitudes towards homosexuality was personal contact with LGB people. Means of lessening feelings of animosity between groups have been the subject of considerable research by psychologists. One of the most influential approaches is Allport's Contact Hypothesis.[61] Allport argued that intergroup contact, under certain conditions, is the most effective means of reducing prejudice towards out-groups. The main idea behind this approach is that, if members of the in-group engage with members of the out-group, the former are more likely to see the latter as individual human beings, with the same fears and desires as themselves, rather than perceiving the out-group as an undifferentiated mass, while the interactions will also provide 'new information that may challenge stereotypes held toward that out-group'.[62]

While most research using the Contact Hypothesis has examined relations between different ethnic or racial groups, Herek and Capitanio have shown that heterosexuals who report interpersonal contact with gay men and lesbians have a more positive attitude than those without such contact, with the prejudice falling more sharply if the individ-

ual knew two or more gay men or lesbians.[63] Overall, Herek and Glunt demonstrated that 'interpersonal contact predicted attitudes toward gay men better than did any other demographic or social psychological variable', including gender, race, age, education, geographic residence, marital status, number of children, religion and political ideology.[64]

While critics have argued that the effect of intergroup interaction is limited, as prejudiced people tend to avoid intergroup contact, this can work in homosexuals' favour, as – unlike ethnic or racial groups (the focus of most research using this approach) – it is not always evident that the colleague, neighbour or friend with whom one has contact is indeed gay or lesbian. This allows for prolonged contact and greater interaction – one of Alport's key conditions for success.[65] This was confirmed by Jarek (Polish man, 25, heterosexual): 'I had a few friends and I didn't know that they were gay. And I learnt this too late, when he was my friend already. So I decided 'OK'. […] I would have reacted to it some years ago but here it's normal and I had to get used to it. This was effective in a way.'

While the research by Herek and Capitanio showed that inter-personal contact with one gay man or lesbian would reduce prejudice towards sexual minorities in general, our qualitative research found this not always to be the case, at least not across the gender divide. As Snezhana (Bulgarian woman, 20, heterosexual) admitted: 'I haven't had many contacts with gay women. To be honest I prefer gay men. … I get along well with them. The gay women I have seen mostly look sullen.' Her experience confirms the contact hypothesis – that contact with gay men resulted in positive attitudes towards gay men in general and her lack of contact with lesbians resulted in her maintaining less positive attitudes towards lesbians in general – and demonstrates that sexual minorities cannot be thought of a single group and that positive attitudes towards gay men do not automatically translate into positive attitudes towards lesbians as well.

Limits to liberalisation of attitudes towards homosexuality

While the results of both the quantitative analysis and the examination of the qualitative data examined thus far demonstrate a liberalisation of attitudes towards homosexuality among our respondents following migration to London, there were nevertheless a number of factors limiting their acceptance of sexual minorities.

As the academic literature suggests, gays and lesbians are more likely to be accepted by heterosexuals if they conform to traditional gender norms in terms of appearance and behaviour.[66] Among our respondents, it was the failure of women to adhere to traditional feminine gender norms that prompted a negative reaction, even from those who

expressed general acceptance of homosexuality. As Jarek (Polish man, 25, heterosexual) commented: 'I saw two lesbians in Brighton who reminded me more of men than women and this was repulsive.' The blurring of the lines between the male and female genders was evaluated negatively – even by Liisu (Estonian woman, 25, heterosexual), who was tempted to engage in lesbianism: 'I have nothing against them [homosexuals]. I wouldn't even mind trying a girl myself but what I don't like especially about women, I don't like that they try to behave like a man. This kind of hairy woman.'

This stance could be explained by the post-communist traditionalisation of gender norms in Central and Eastern Europe, into which our respondents had been socialised and which they applied to all men and women, regardless of sexual orientation. As Janos (Hungarian man, 28, heterosexual) confirmed: 'For me a woman should be feminine and a man should be manly, that's it.' Even one of our gay respondents, Bartosz (Polish man, 35, homosexual) disliked the way gay men in London 'exaggerate their gayness'. As he commented: 'We behave like men, we don't behave like queens. In our society we had to pretend to be straight so we come here and this is the way we are.' This highlights a second possible explanation for this more limited view of LGB acceptance. As discussed above, gays and lesbians are often expected to be invisible in public. Improved attitudes towards gay men and lesbians in *private* may not translate into support for *public* visibility. Even respondents who expressed tolerant attitudes towards gays and lesbians did not always support public manifestations of homosexuality. As Liisu (Estonian woman, 25, heterosexual) commented: 'I don't understand why they need to have a gay parade, because heterosexual people do not have a parade, so why do you need to advertise?' Tolerance of homosexuals as individuals did not therefore always translate into support for equal sexual citizenship.

Finally, what may have changed as a result of migration to London was not necessarily our respondents' attitudes towards homosexuality but rather their awareness that public utterances of homophobic comments are less likely to pass without comment in the UK compared with their home country. While none of our respondents admitted to this themselves, Ewa (Polish woman, 28, heterosexual) claimed that this was the position of many of the Polish men that she knew in London: 'Most of the Polish guys that I know, they are against homosexuality. … Now when they are in England, they say 'OK, no problem' but they are still against it.' In other words, they learn to *perform* tolerance in the UK rather than *become tolerant*, a trend that has also been identified among indigenous British people in contexts of cultural diversity.[67]

Conclusion

In line with existing sociological research, our findings confirm that socialisation is an ongoing process, continually subject to transformation as the socialising agents and influences around us change. From an academic perspective, migration from one cultural context to another thus provides scholars with an excellent opportunity to observe the influence of a marked change in norms, values and structures on the way individuals experience and think about social issues, including sexuality. Our research builds on Ahmadi's purely qualitative research examining the impact of migration on individuals' own sense of sexuality and Röder's and Röder and Lubbers' purely quantitative analyses of European Social Survey datasets to identify cross-generation change in attitudes towards homosexuality among migrant populations by adopting a multi-method approach to generate original quantitative and qualitative data in a bid to identify changes in sexual attitudes among Central and East Europeans in London but also to understand why their attitudes change as a result of migration.

In examining the sexual resocialisation of Central and East European migrants in London, the analysis of our quantitative and qualitative data provides evidence that our respondents' attitudes towards pre-marital sex and homosexuality were indeed influenced by the process of moving from one socio-cultural context to another. The impact of migration on their attitudes towards pre-marital sex was mixed. There was no significant change over time in our respondents' general normative attitudes, i.e. whether pre-marital sex was acceptable or unacceptable, which can be explained by the fact that there was already a degree of sexual convergence prior to migration, with the result that the differences in the views of Central and East Europeans and British were minimal. Where the differences lay was in the perceived meaning attached to pre-marital sex in the two regions. Whereas in the post-communist countries, sex was often seen as the start of a serious relationship, our respondents felt that in the UK sex could be viewed as 'just having fun' and not necessarily seen as the first step towards a serious relationship.

More significant changes were recorded in our respondents' attitudes towards homosexuality, which liberalised over time for both men and, in particular, for women. From the data we presented, it could be concluded that the factors resulting in greater liberalisation of attitudes homosexuality among Central and East Europeans are: extrication from the mechanisms of social control, especially homophobic religious, media and political rhetoric; re-socialisation into new social norms regarding sex and sexuality; greater visibility of sexual diversity in London; and, in particular, interpersonal contacts with gays and lesbians.

While both the quantitative and qualitative data demonstrated a general liberalisation of attitudes towards homosexuality, this trend was qualified by a number of factors. Primarily, attitudes towards non-gender-conforming gays and lesbians remained negative, which could be explained with reference to the retraditionalisation of gender norms in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989/91. This could also be explained with reference to the public/private dichotomy. While our respondents who had interpersonal contacts with gays and lesbians were more likely to have more liberal attitudes towards other gays and lesbians, this did not necessarily translate into support for homosexuality in the public sphere, where sexual minorities are traditionally expected to remain invisible. Finally, our analysis demonstrated that some migrants learn not to adopt more tolerant attitudes towards gays and lesbians but to perform tolerance of gays and lesbians.

Despite these limitations, our research demonstrates that migration can have a positive impact on attitudes towards homosexuality not only among Central and East European migrants in London but – given the circular migratory patterns and transnational existence of many migrants as well as the 'transnational circulation of ideas' about issues such as sexuality[68] – also has the potential to improve attitudes among those who stayed behind.

Notes

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[12] J. Ritchie and E. Spencer, ''Qualitative Data Analysis for Applied Policy Research,'' in *Analyzing Qualitative Data*, eds A. Bryman and R.G. Burgess, 173_194 (London: Routledge, 1994).

[13] Other than where we report the results concerning attitudes to same-sex sexual relations, we include LGB and heterosexual respondents in all of our reported statistics. We note, however, that the exclusion of LGB respondents does not qualitatively change our results.

[14] A.R. Evans, G.J. Hart, R.C.M. Mole, C.H. Mercer, V. Parutis, C.J. Gerry, J. Imrie and F.M. Burns "Central and East European migrant men who have sex with men in London: a comparison of recruitment methods," *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 11 (2011).

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[16] A. Stulhofer and L. Rimac, "Determinants of Homonegativity in Europe," *Journal of Sex Research*, 46 (2009), 24-32. In our sample, we did find evidence of a gradient implying that among more educated there is more tolerance towards both pre-martial sex and homosexuality. We also identified an n-shaped relationship between age and attitudes towards pre-marital sex in that the young and old have the lowest approval ratings, while those in the

25-34 age group have the highest. However, this more than likely reflects the fact that this age group is the most educated. Similarly, we identified a u-shaped relationship between age and attitudes towards homosexuality in that the young and old have the lowest approval ratings, while those in the 25-34 age group have the highest. However, this more than likely reflects the this age group is the most educated.

[17] L.M. Ward, "Sexual socialisation of American youth," 348.

[18] N. Ahmadi, "Migration challenges views on sexuality," 685.

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[24] D. Shlapentonkii, "Lovemaking in the time of perestroika", 151.

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[39] For a detailed examination of the relationship between nationalism and homosexuality, see R.C.M. Mole, "Nationalism and homophobia in Central and Eastern Europe" in *EU Enlargement and Lesbian and Gay Politics: The Impact of Eastern Enlargement on Rights, Activism and Prejudice*, eds. K. Slootmaekers, H. Touquet and P. Vermeersch, 99-122 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

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