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QUEER ENOUGH?
CONTESTED TERRAINS OF IDENTITY DEPLOYMENT IN THE CONTEXT
OF GAY AND LESBIAN PUBLIC ACTIVISM IN POLAND

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Aston University

Title: Queer enough? Contested terrains of identity deployment in the context of gay and lesbian public activism in Poland

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THESIS SUMMARY:

Gay and lesbian prides and marches are of crucial relevance to the way in which non-heterosexual lives are imagined internationally despite regional and national differences. Quite often, these events are connected not only with increased activist mobilisation, but also with great controversy, which is the case of Poland, where gay and lesbian marches have been attacked by right-wing protesters and cancelled by right-wing city authorities on a number of occasions. Overall, the scholars analysing these events have largely focused on the macro-context of the marches, paying less attention to the movement actors behind these events. The contribution of this thesis lies not only in filling a gap when it comes to research on sexual minorities in Eastern Europe/Poland, but also in its focus on micro-level movement processes and engagement with theories of collective identity and citizenship. Furthermore, this thesis challenges the inscription of Eastern European/Polish movements into the narrative of victimhood and delayed development when compared to LGBT movements in the Global North.

This thesis is grounded in qualitative research including participant observation of public activist events as well as forty semi-structured interviews with the key organisers of gay and lesbian marches in Warsaw, Poznan and Krakow between 2001 and 2007, and five of these interviews were further accompanied by photo-elicitation (self-directed photography) methods. Starting from the processes whereby from 2001 onwards, marches, pride parades and demonstrations became the most visible and contested activity of the Polish lesbian and gay movement, this thesis examines how the activists redefined the meanings of citizenship in the post-transformation context, by incorporating the theme of sexual minorities' rights. Using Bernstein's (1997, 2002, 2005, 2008) concept of identity deployment, I show how and when movement actors use identity tactically, depending on their goals. Specifically, in the context of movement-media interactions, I examine the ways in which the activists use marches to challenge the negative representations of sexual minorities in Poland. I also broaden Bernstein's framework to include the discussion of emotion work as relevant to public LGBT activism in Poland. Later, I discuss how the emotions of protests allowed the activists to inscribe their efforts into the "revolutionary" narrative of the Polish Solidarity movement and by extension, the frame of citizenship. Finally, this thesis engages with the dilemmas of identity deployment strategies, and seeks to problematise the dichotomy between identity-based gay and lesbian assimilationist strategies and the anti-identity queer politics.

Keywords: public activism, sexual citizenship, identity deployment, Polish LGBT movement, emotions of protest

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AWS Akcja Wyborcza Solidarnosc [Electoral Action Solidarity]

CAQDAS Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis

EU European Union

ILGA International Lesbian and Gay Association

ILGCN International Lesbian and Gay Culture Network

ILGO Irish Lesbian and Gay Organisation

KPH Kampania Przeciw Homofobii [Campaign Against Homophobia]

LGBT Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual/transgender

LGBTIQ Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual/transgender, intersexual and queer

PAP Polska Agencja Prasowa [Polish Press Agency]

ZOMO Zmotoryzowane Oddziały Milicji Obywatelskiej [Citizen Police Prevention Squads]

CHAPTER I

Introduction

On the first of May 2001, some of the inhabitants of Warsaw witnessed quite an unusual and previously unknown public spectacle. At midday, a group comprised mostly of young people holding banners and a couple of rainbow flags gathered in the city centre by the monument of King Zygmunt, a popular meeting place. Under police protection, they set out to march in the direction of the Old Town, to the tune of “YMCA” by the Village People. The first Equality Pride in Warsaw was reported in the news on that day as just one of the events taking place in the capital on the occasion of Labour Day, even if slightly more exotic than for instance the picnic of the local Scouts association. The activists, who succeeded in organising the first public gay and lesbian pride, 12 years after the official emergence of the Polish gay and lesbian¹ movement, could hardly have know that in the coming years these

¹ Throughout this thesis, various terms are used to refer to describe the type of public activism research participants engaged in. These terms include: “lesbian and gay”/“gay and lesbian”, “sexual minorities”, “non-heterosexual” and “LGBT”. Overall, the use of these terms follows two guiding principles: activists’ choices as well as scholarly preferences. The use of “non-heterosexual” is linked to the deployment of this term in academic literature. The activists frequently used the term “sexual minorities” (both during the interviews and in the materials produced by their respective organisations) when discussing their engagement with the media, which is why I rely on this term when discussing issues of representation and talk about “challenging prevailing representations of sexual minorities”. Furthermore, “gay and lesbian” (overall, more often than “lesbian and gay”) and LGBT were being used interchangeably both by the activists and scholars discussing activism in Poland or more broadly, Eastern Europe (see for instance Basiuk et al. 2002, Ferens et al. 2006, Kuhar and Takacs 2007). It has to be noted that the use of these terms (i.e. “gay and lesbian” or LGBT), both by scholars and activists, can be quite inconsistent and at times anachronistic. For instance, Gorska (2006) locates the beginning of “the history of Polish LGBT movement” in the early 1840s, which is a very problematic assumption. On a related note, when referring to mobilisation occurring in the 1990s (discussed in Chapter 2) and the early activity of the Association of Lambda Groups, both Adamska (1998) and Kurpios (2004) employ the term “LGBT”. However, as I was able to gather on the basis of archival materials collected at Lambda Warszawa, the activists of the Association of Lambda Group themselves did not actually use the term “LGBT” at all but preferred “gay and lesbian”. At the same time, as I discuss in Chapter 7, the term “LGBT” was seen as potentially more advanced and more inclusive than merely “gay and lesbian”. Chapter 7 also includes a discussion of the various conflicting ways in which the term “queer” was used in addition to the above mentioned terms. Thus, what might initially seem as an inconsistent approach towards the use of terms such as “lesbian and gay”, LGBT etc. in this thesis is actually a reflection of the complex and quite confusing ways in which these terms are being deployed in scholarly and activist contexts.

events would become one of the central themes for the movement. They probably had not even imagined that soon the marches would spread to cities outside of the capital; gathering thousands of participants and causing heated controversy as high up as the parliament.

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the processes whereby from 2001 onwards, marches, pride parades and demonstrations have become the most visible and contested activity of the Polish lesbian and gay movement. On the basis of interviews with the key organisers of gay and lesbian marches in Warsaw, Poznan and Krakow between 2001 and 2007, this thesis examines the meanings attributed to public activism,² focusing on issues related to collective identity and in particular identity deployment (Bernstein 1997). Furthermore, it explores how the activists are using the marches (as well as the protests³ around the marches and their bans) to construct and control the frame of representation of sexual minorities in Poland. It must be noted that this project has stemmed from my political commitments; as between 2001 and 2005 I was involved in the activities of the local branch of Campaign Against Homophobia in Krakow. Thus, issues related to reflexivity and power in the researcher-researched relationship, are also followed up in Chapter 4.

Throughout this thesis, I understand a demonstration to be a:

Collective gathering in a public space whose aim is to exert political, social, and/or cultural influence on authorities, public opinion and participants through the disciplined and peaceful expression of an opinion or demand (Casquete 2006:47).

As Casquete adds, these public places in which demonstrations are staged usually combine both “high visibility and symbolic salience” (Casquete 2006:47). I treat the

² For the purposes of this thesis, I understand public activism as the entirety of mobilisation connected with gay and lesbian marches.

³ In this thesis, the term “protests” refers to the activities of the right-wing opponents; however, I do remain aware of the use of “protest” in order to signify any social movement activity.

marches as a “site in which symbols and identity are forged, negotiated, and contested” (Cohen-Cruz 1998:1). I also argue that in Poland these sites have become crucial for challenging existing representations of sexual minorities, claiming citizenship rights as well as acting out intra-movement debates related to strategies and ideological approaches. As the authors of a toolkit for activists in Central Eastern Europe organising prides argue:

Pride events not only bring LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender] people together to form a public identity and to build a visible community in a difficult social context, but they also allow individuals to express this identity and provide hope for people who are still living in fear. Thus pride events – the “coming out” by the community as a whole – are essential for the development and well-being both of the community and its individual members (ILGA [International Lesbian and Gay Association]-Europe 2006).

Lesbian and gay marches and pride parades⁴ in Poland stem from the tradition of demonstrations which celebrate the Stonewall rebellion as a historical moment of political resistance which started the contemporary movement for LGBT rights (D’Emilio 2000). On the night of 27th June 1969, the police raided the Stonewall Inn bar in New York in one of the routine violent raids of gay bars. This time, however, those present at the bar fought the police back (Cruikshank 1992). A month later, on 27th July 1969, about 500 people walked in the first Pride parade to the Stonewall Inn. The lesbians, gay men and transsexuals were joined by members of the anti-war movement, leftists, feminists as well as supporters of the civil rights movement (Kates and Russel 2001). As will be explained later, most of the Prides in Western countries seem to have taken the road of depolitisation by turning into

⁴ In the context of Polish lesbian and gay activism, the difference between marches and prides is merely nominal. On a practical level, there are very few differences between public events occurring in different cities, however, as I show in the section on public activism, in Warsaw the organisers use the name of Warsaw Pride or Equality Pride, while the activists in Krakow chose to call the yearly event the March for Tolerance and in Poznan the event is called the March of Equality.

grand carnivalesque celebrations of differences (Kates and Russel 2001). In contrast, in Eastern Europe, the annual Pride events have become a litmus test for the strength of the local LGBT communities world-wide as well as for the degree of the tolerance of the societies they take place in (Kajinic 2003):

The growing strength and confidence of the LGBT movement in Central and Eastern Europe has been accompanied by increasing attempts to assert the right to freedom of assembly and expression through the holding of Pride or Equality marches. These attempts have been met with considerable hostility (ILGA-Europe 2006).

As authors of the report on organising prides in Central and Eastern Europe point out, within the past couple of years, prides were banned or attacked in a number of places: Riga (2005, 2006), Chisinau (2005-2007), Moscow (2006, 2007) and Bucharest (2005), Warsaw (2004, 2005) and Poznan (2005) (ILGA-Europe 2006, ILGA-Europe 2007). Furthermore, local and national politicians have used the alleged danger of public disorder as a reason for banning marches, after themselves having used language likely to encourage extremist opposition from activists of faith-based or ultra right-wing organisations.

At the same time, when it comes to research on sexual politics in (Central) Eastern Europe, scholars in Western Europe and in the US themselves admit the scarcity of material on gay and lesbian movements outside the United States and Western Europe (Taylor et al. 2002). Furthermore, if research does take place, the most common narratives selected by scholars of the Polish (and more broadly, Eastern European) LGBT movement seem to be those of violence, religious and political oppression and limited choice (see for instance Graff 2006, O'Dwyer and Schwartz 2007, Selinger 2008). Though I do not deny that such narratives are important or wish to belittle the issues facing LGBT communities in these countries, in this thesis I am interested in focusing on organised expressions of

agency and on public activism (McDonald 2002). With such a focus, I attempt to dispel the notion that belonging to a sexual minority in Poland/Eastern Europe means to live a life clouded by homophobic violence and to be a passive pawn in the hands of right-wing politicians (Selinger 2008). Thus, the contribution of this thesis lies not only in filling a gap in terms of region-specific research, but also in its focus on micro-level movement processes and engagement with theories of collective identity and citizenship. The next section provides an outline of the organisation of the thesis.

Organisation of the thesis

To begin with, in Chapter 2, I chronicle the development of the Polish LGBT movement, situating it against the backdrop of transformative political events, that is, the downfall of the communist regime and Poland's accession into the European Union. I pay particular attention to the role of the Catholic Church in the debates related to the presence of sexual minorities in public spaces. I also provide an overview of the gay and lesbian public activist events which took place in Warsaw, Krakow and Poznan between 2001 and 2007, as they are the focus of my research enquiry. Chapter 3 outlines the conceptual tools that are relevant for the exploration of the meanings of gay and lesbian public activism in Poland. These tools draw from social movements scholarship, specifically the notion of collective identity. I build on these fundamental concepts to introduce the key organising concept of this thesis, that is, the model of identity deployment as proposed by Bernstein (1997, 2002, 2005 and 2008). Within that model, I first concentrate on identity for empowerment, that is, the feeling that action is feasible. I propose to broaden that element of Bernstein's framework with a theoretical discussion of the role of emotion work in public activism. Later on I focus on identity deployment strategies,

i.e. the strategy of either suppressing (identity for education) or emphasising differences from the mainstream (identity for critique). I also examine potential tensions between these two approaches in the context of dilemmas between identity politics and anti-identity queer activism. Finally, I bring in the notion of sexual citizenship, as a useful tool in the discussion of the significance of gay and lesbian marches for the movement. Chapter 4 maps out the research journey and focuses on key issues in data collection and analysis. I detail my approach to collecting data, which included a combination of semi-structured interviews, together with photo-elicitation interviews, participant observation and the use of secondary sources. I comment on the practicalities and challenges connected with the use of these methods. I also reflect on the relevance of my positionality as a former activist connected with the research participants and problematise the notion of undertaking research as an “insider.” Finally, I touch on the question of power in the relationship between the researcher and the research participants, with a particular emphasis on the post-fieldwork period and data analysis.

Chapters 5 to 7 constitute the core of the thesis and are based on fieldwork findings, with the concept of identity deployment as a connecting thread. Chapter 5 focuses on identity for education where the activists confront the negative representations of the movement by stressing non-controversial activities and suppressing differences from the mainstream. I pay attention to relevant aspects of movement-media interactions and analyse the ways in which the activists engage with usually biased and hostile representations of LGBT marches. Chapter 6 engages with identity for empowerment, where I discuss the significance of the prides and marches for emotional culture of the movement, with an emphasis on related bans and protests. I look at the ways in which emotions generated in the

context of banned marches were crucial in enabling mobilisation despite a lack of support from local authorities and unfavourable political circumstances. In addition, I look at the ways in which the emotions of protests allowed the activists to inscribe their efforts into the “revolutionary” narrative of the Polish Solidarity movement and by extension, the frame of citizenship. Chapter 7 deals with the tensions of identity deployment strategies discussed in the previous two analytical chapters, that is, tensions between tactics suppressing or downplaying a difference from the mainstream. To start with, I explore the ways in which the use of identity for education was based on constructing “normal citizens” through gay and lesbian marches. I then comment on the dilemmas connected with these normalising strategies, linking this discussion with my previous analysis of emotion work in the context of public activism. Later on, I endeavour to explain the contradictory statements provided by the research participants, that is, why despite a commitment to identity for education strategies, a number of movement actors expressed an affinity with identity for critique tactics which emphasise differences from the mainstream and in particular queer politics.

To conclude, Chapter 8 engages with the findings of this thesis and focuses on its contributions, implications and possible limitations. I revisit the central themes – that is, issues of visibility, citizenship and emotions as well as emergent key dilemmas - that have arisen in the context of an investigation into the meanings of public activism. I outline my theoretical contributions in terms of Bernstein’s framework, that is, a broader scope of the identity deployment framework which incorporates a discussion of emotions. I also demonstrate the ways in which this thesis focuses on the activists’ agency and their efforts to obtain full (sexual) citizenship and thus challenges the idea that Polish gay and lesbian marches are an

inadequate copy of similar Western repertoires. Finally, I suggest ways of expanding on the conclusions of this thesis with regards to future scholarly research.

CHAPTER 2

Setting the scene: Historical and political background to Polish gay and lesbian public activism

As Bernstein puts it, external factors related to the political context have a significant impact on the collective “we” of movement actors (Bernstein 2008:279). She adds that the relationship of the activists to the political issues at stake is crucial for understanding processes of identity deployment. Thus, this chapter lays down a foundation for my later discussions about research participants’ strategies and dilemmas in the context of public activism. Accordingly, I contextualise the period of public gay and lesbian activism under consideration in this thesis (2001-2007) and provide information on Poland’s political system. I situate my discussion against two particularly relevant historical moments that is, the process of post-communist transition and the accession to the EU. I focus on the ways in which these transformative political events were relevant to issues connected with (homo)sexuality, and pay particular attention to the position of the Catholic Church in these debates. Finally, I provide a short historical overview of the Polish LGBT movement, starting with its beginnings in the 1980s, through the first wave of activism in the 1990s, followed by an overview of public gay and lesbian activism from the first successful Pride in Warsaw to the beginning of the stabilisation of marches nationwide.

Short overview of the political system

In 1989, Poland became the first of the Eastern European countries to topple its Communist regime, transitioning from a socialist country to a presidential democracy (Grabowska 2006). The fall of communism has been connected with a number of radical economic reforms and structural changes (Pankow and Ziolkowski 2001). The transition process has also meant the creation of free media,

as prior to 1989, the media industry – radio, television, newspapers and magazines – in Poland was owned and operated by the state and very tightly controlled (Jakubowicz 1991). The first free democratic elections were held in 1990, where the former anti-communist opposition activists, most of whom could be labelled as conservative and right-wing received the majority of the votes. In 1993 there was quite a drastic change, as the representatives of the former communist government, now members of left-wing parties, came into power (Marody and Mandes 2006). This continues the trend in every parliamentary election, with the Polish electorate voting against the current government, then choosing the left in 1993 and 2001, and the right in 1997 and 2005 (Grabowska 2006). Negotiations between the European Union [EU] and Poland commenced in 1997. In a nationwide referendum in 2003, Polish voters approved EU membership, which came into force in 2004 (Anderson 2006). At the same time, the process of transition has meant not only immense political and economic changes, but also a transformation of social values and dominant ideologies (Kurczewska 1999).

The transition from state socialism to liberal democracy in the countries of Eastern Europe since 1989 has been accompanied by fundamental shifts in the material conditions of society as well as daily life (Kligman 1996). Duffy points to two major developments; first of all, the introduction of new values associated with the free market; secondly, a retrenchment to traditional patriarchal attitudes about gender roles in society (Duffy 2000). Other research confirms that former communist countries in general demonstrate strong negative attitudes toward homosexuality and also to sexual permissiveness (Inglehart and Baker 2000,

Stulhofer and Sandfort 2005, Andersen and Fetner 2008).⁵ Einhorn and Sever also point to a widespread revival of nationalist and traditionalist ideologies in the post-transition period, which will be discussed in more detail later (Einhorn and Sever 2003).

Throughout the communist period debates regarding sexuality in Eastern Europe, including Poland, were largely silenced. Homosexuality, was thus seen as a dangerous sign of individualism, especially in view of the fact that communist regimes sought to de-individualise members of society (Stulhofer and Sandfort 2005). The only areas where homosexuality did appear were research in criminology and psychiatry, with homosexuality treated as a social pathology and deviation (Kurpios 2004). At the same time, what makes the background of Polish gay and lesbian activism quite special is the legislative situation of sexual minorities. Compared with other former communist countries, Polish law has been relatively progressive. As Stanley notes, while the traditional Polish law criminalised homosexual behaviour, the secularisation of the law in the eighteenth century opened up the possibility of a different approach, namely decriminalisation of homosexual acts, which Poland took in its 1932 Criminal Code (Stanley 2005). Furthermore, after the Second World War, Poland did not follow the strategy of the Soviet Union which re-criminalised homosexuality in 1934. As Torra points out, at the beginning of the Cold War, all countries in the Eastern Bloc except Poland had laws prohibiting male homosexuality⁶ (Torra 1998).

⁵ However, opposite tendencies should not be overlooked. Recently, in two former "Eastern Bloc" countries, Slovenia (2005) and the Czech Republic (2006), a law on registered same-sex partnership was passed, while Hungary and Croatia adopted unregistered same-sex cohabitation (in 1996 and 2003, respectively). Still, cross-national surveys suggest that negative attitudes towards homosexuality are more prevalent in the "new" Europe (Stulhofer and Sandfort 2005).

⁶ As Hauer et al. point out, except in Russia, these laws did not mention female homosexuality (Hauer et al. 1984).

State-Church separation in Poland: Theory vs. practice

Polish society had historically been dominated by the existence of an extremely powerful Catholic Church.⁷ To start with, in the nineteenth century it was perceived as the major if not the only legally existing opposition to the foreign powers occupying partitioned Poland⁸ (Mach 1990). As numerous authors admit, it is impossible to understand the transition process, as well as current political and socio-economic dynamics in Poland without discerning the power and role of the Church in Polish society (Hauser et al. 1993, Graham and Regulska 1997, Eberts 1998, Borowik 2002, Einhorn and Sever 2003). As Hauser et al. argue, the Catholic Church in Poland plays a role different from that in any other former communist European country and point out that:

Polish homogeneity, so dramatically different from other post-communist countries, expresses itself not just in language and to a great degree in ethnicity but also in the language and ideals connected with religion (Hauser et al. 1993:264).

This argument is also supported by the conclusions of Inglehart's *World Value Survey* in the 1990s (Inglehart et al. 1998). This survey shows that Poland is predominantly influenced by traditional authority, and places an emphasis on the importance of religion, much more than the other ex-communist countries. Stulhofer and Sandfort, who write about transition-related issues in post-communist Europe and Russia, claim that in the 1990s at least two elements, apart from the collapse of the communist rule came together to create favourable conditions for an explosion of religiosity. One element was the psychological costs of the process of economic transformation and the resulting social disorientation as well as the

⁷According to the information from the latest Statistical Yearbook of the Church with data relative to December 31st, 2004, the Catholics comprised 95.8% of the Polish population (based on the information from <http://www.episkopat.pl/?a=kosciol>).

⁸Partition of Poland between Russia, Austria and Prussia took place between 1795 and 1918 (see Davies 2005 for a comprehensive overview of Polish history).

decline in the standards of living (Stulhofer and Sandfort 2005). The second element was a revival of national identities, with the historic “national religion” constituting a core ingredient of national identity (Tishkov 1996:24). Post-communist Europe, including Poland, experienced a rapid increase in church attendance, and the authors argue that rising religiosity as well as the social impact of the Church as the ultimate moral authority reinforced conservative standpoints and policy initiatives (Stulhofer and Sandfort 2005).

Eberts adds that during the times of communism, for the majority of Poles, the Catholic Church had been a “bastion of freedom and a source of protection” from the atheist regime (Eberts 1998:817). As an institution, the Catholic Church enjoyed huge prestige and influence within society, especially after the appointment of John Paul II as Pope in 1978 (Rae 2007). The Church also provided an infrastructure for the resistance to the communist regime and drew support from the West, often through Catholic organisations (Zubrzycki 2001). Furthermore, in Poland the influence of the Catholic Church on the political life and societal attitudes towards broadly understood “moral issues” only increased after 1989 (Chimiak 2003). Having performed the roles of the de facto official opposition as well as the mediator between the communist government and Solidarity,⁹ the Church entered the post-communist period as a heavily politicised and powerful institution as well as the highest moral authority (Einhorn and Sever 2003).

Early in the transition period, the Catholic Church set about a policy aimed at institutionalising its position within the society. It has aimed to ensure that its positions on “morality issues” such as religious education and abortion, among

⁹The Polish Solidarity movement was established as an independent labour union in Poland in 1980 and soon changed into a broad umbrella organisation attracting a wide range of political and social groups united in opposition to the communist regime (Osa 2003).

others, become firmly entrenched in the new democracy (Eberts 1998). These efforts were hugely successful. In 1992 the Catholic religion was introduced as part of the obligatory school curriculum (Mach 2000).¹⁰ Moreover, the Catholic Church was a main partner in the debate and the conflict over the Polish abortion law. Through lobbying, its authorities managed to ensure that the anti-abortion law introduced in 1993 remains one of the strictest in Europe (Kramer 2005). The ban on abortion in 1993 was an outcome of a three-year vigorous campaign by social groups connected with the Catholic Church (Nowicka 1994).¹¹ The above-mentioned processes have led to a practical abolition of the separation of Church and state, guaranteed by the Polish constitution. As Graczyk points out:

Within Polish politics an arrangement has been created, namely, it is the Church that defines the space of democratic debate. The Church has also set the limits of democratic discussions: one can debate everything, with a couple of exceptions. For instance, anybody who would postulate the liberalisation of anti-abortion law would be treated as trying to commit political suicide¹² (Graczyk 2004:29).

At the moment, the predominance of the Catholic Church in Poland, influences all areas of public life, extending from the media through to education to politics (Mach 2000). For instance, Korbonski points to the political power of the

¹⁰During the Communist period religious education took place outside of the school system. At the moment, after the introduction of religious education into public schools, pupils should have a choice of classes in ethics or any legally registered religions. Practically this choice is extremely rare, especially in smaller towns and only classes in Catholicism are available. Furthermore, even though religious education is financed by public means, the religious education tutors are responsible to the local archbishop and the Ministry of Education has no control over the content of the curriculum (Dzierzgowska 2007).

¹¹According to the law abortion is legal in the following cases only: when pregnancy constitutes a threat to the life or to the health of the pregnant woman, there is irreversible damage of the embryo or the pregnancy is a result of an illegal act (Nowicka 1994). While according to the official statistics, the number of legal abortions fell drastically to 150 per year, the scale of illegal abortions may have reached from 80,000 to 200,000 a year (Nowicka 2000).

¹²Likewise, taking up gay and lesbian rights on the agenda is definitely a political "kiss of death." For instance, Senator Maria Szyszkowska who between 2002 and 2004 was actively campaigning for the introduction of the same-sex partnership bill was openly ridiculed as "a witch" and effectively had her political career ruined (Gorska 2006).

nationalist-Catholic Radio Maryja [Radio Station Mary]¹³ a radio station founded in 1991 and financially supported by the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, with an estimated number of 2 million listeners daily. Korbonski claims that Radio Station Mary started to act as a powerful pressure group early on, adding

There is no doubt that that the 'Radio Station Mary Family' or as some call it 'Community', estimated to number some five million listeners, was responsible for the near defeat of the constitutional referendum in May 1997 and for the victory of AWS¹⁴ in the September 1997 elections (Korbonski 2000:131).

Similarly, Maryniak argues that the right-wing media have proved very influential in bringing to power the right wing politicians connected with the League of Polish Families and Law and Justice during the autumn 2005 governmental and presidential elections (Maryniak 2006). As I demonstrate in later parts of this chapter, the representatives of these two parties have been instrumental in protests against public gay and lesbian activist events.

Furthermore, according to the rules of the main Polish licence-granting body, the TV and radio stations are legally bound by a "duty to respect the religious beliefs of the audience, and in particular the Christian system of beliefs" (Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji 1992:13). In addition, programme services of public radio and television should "serve to strengthen the family ties [and] contribute to combating social pathologies" (Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji 1992:15). In the context of Catholic teachings, which construct family as equivalent to heterosexual marriage and strongly disapprove of homosexuality (Catholic Church 1994) these rules are clearly based on homophobic principles. The print media are

¹³ The convention that I follow in this thesis when it comes to proper names in Polish is the following: I first introduce the term in Polish, accompanied by the translation into English in square brackets and later I only use the English translation.

¹⁴ Akcja Wyborcza Solidarnosc – Electoral Action Solidarity, a conservative, far right party with roots in the 1980s opposition movement.

not regulated by this act, however, they are bound by the code of the National Board of Media Ethics which stipulates the duty of the journalists to “promote the national tradition and culture; religious attitudes and beliefs”¹⁵ which again is synonymous with Catholicism in a country such as Poland which has historically been under the dominance of a strong Catholic Church (Borowik 2002).

As I show later, the dominance of the Catholic Church, as well as its strong connections with representatives of politics and media has been crucial to the strategic decisions of gay and lesbian activists. Overall, the opposition from the Church has also been instrumental in setting the tone of discussion on the topic of sexual minorities, both with regards to discourse, but also politics and policy. The catechism of the Catholic Church defines homosexuality as “moral disorder” and calls upon homosexual persons to live in chastity:

Tradition, based on the Bible, presents homosexuality as a serious depravation and always proclaims that homosexual acts by their very inner nature are non-ordered. They contradict the natural law; they exclude the gift of [giving] life from the sexual act. They are not the result of true complementariness, both emotional and sexual. Under no circumstance should they be approved. ... Such people do not choose their homosexual condition; for most of them it is a difficult experience. ... Homosexual people should be pure and not engage in homosexual acts (Catholic Church 1994: 532).

On the one hand, the Church argues that gays and lesbians “must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided” (Selinger 2008:25). On the other hand, the Christian mask of compassion underlying this argument (i.e. “love the sinner, hate the sin” attitude) disguises the open disapproval of homosexuality (Mizielinska 2001:286). Reports of organisations representing sexual minorities in Poland invariably point to

¹⁵On the basis of information from the website of the National Board of Media Ethics <http://www.radaetykimiow.pl/dko.html>.

the homophobic attitudes that gays and lesbians encounter when in contact with the clergy, as well as numerous instances of hate speech in the media and politics, fuelled by church teachings (Klischczynski and Dudala 2001, Glowinska and Marzec 2003, Abramowicz 2007). Moreover, Catholic authorities have spoken openly with regards to the gay and lesbian marches and were quite vocal, for the most part, in their condemnation of the events (Abramowicz 2007). As will be demonstrated in the later parts of this thesis, not only did the Church authorities argue that gay and lesbian marches clashed with Catholic principles, but they also alleged that the activists were prone to exhibiting aggressive behaviour. Consequently, instead of condemning the violent attacks on the marches, the clergy accused the gay and lesbian activists of deliberate provocation. For instance, Necek, spokesman of the Krakow Archdiocese, speaking publicly about the 2007 March for Tolerance claimed that while homosexuals in Poland enjoy full citizen rights:

Marches of “equality” [quotation marks appear in original] which are organised once in a while in Krakow and in other cities have an inherent element of provocation. Despite what the organisers claim, these events do not work towards achieving tolerance at all, but their purpose is to cause unnecessary conflicts ... Quite often radical homosexual organisations through public and ostentatious demonstrations of their lifestyle not only attempt to make up for their personal failures but also intend to humiliate the society (Necek 2008).

Kochanowski argues that Polish heteronormativity and homophobia are strongly grounded in the Catholic tradition, according to which expressions of sexuality can only take place within a formal marriage between a man and a woman. The strong prevalence of the “traditional”, Catholic world-view in the public sphere means that any attempt to address the prevailing heteronormativity of Polish culture will most probably be read as aggressive and provocative (Kochanowski 2004).

The impact of Poland's European Union accession on gay and lesbian activism

Even more importantly, the period under discussion in this thesis (that is, 2001-2007) has overlapped with the European Union accession process. Thiele claims that during the pre-accession period, after almost 15 years of independence, a certain national attitude, a Polish "exceptionalism", was slowly emerging. Within that framework, politicians negotiating Poland's entry into the EU were not only dedicated to attaining (Western) European values. Importantly, they acted as defenders of national values which they believed to be under threat from the pressures of Europeanisation. Thus, the conservative right perceived Poland's EU entry as an opportunity to reintroduce Catholic-Christian values to the predominantly secular societies of Western Europe, with Poland profiling itself as the new religious-conservative power in the EU (Thiele 2003).

The Church was the main actor in the debate on European integration, where initially the EU with its liberal legislation was presented by the Church as decadent, or even, according to some prominent members of the Church hierarchy, as the epitome of the culture of death¹⁶ (Mach 2000). These fears were at least to a certain extent associated with the proposals of the then ruling party, Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej [Alliance of the Democratic Left]. During its electoral campaign in 2000, the left-wing party made some promises concerning controversial social issues, such as the liberalisation of the anti-abortion law as well as the introduction of same-sex

¹⁶ "Culture of death" is a term coined by John Paul II, referring to a society which tolerates or espouses practices such as embryonic stem cell research, abortion, euthanasia, contraception or capital punishment. According to the late Pope, these practices violate the sacredness of human life, which should be preserved at all stages from conception through to natural death. By extension, societies which tolerate homosexuality and for instance provide legal benefits such as civil partnership to same-sex couples etc. are also subscribing to values of "culture of death." This is because through engaging in homosexual acts individuals act according to ethics which "impose the primacy of personal choice and economic profit, while despising the primacy of life" (Stefan 2008:70).

partnership laws, hoping for the support of the more liberal part of the population. However, once the Alliance of the Democratic Left became the ruling party, it withdrew from all its earlier promises. The government was negotiating with the Church so as to gain wider support for the EU enlargement and guarantee a victory in the 2003 pre-accession referendum (Szcuka 2004). Specifically, the Church offered to back the accession process on the condition that there would be no changes in the Polish law regarding the rights of same-sex couples (Gawlicz and Starnawski 2004). What is even more interesting is that the issue of the legalisation of same-sex partnerships, after all, was not part of the European Union's pre-accession requirements but depended on the country's individual solutions (Gawlicz 2005).

Finally, the winners of the 2005 elections, that is, the representatives of the ultra-conservative Law and Justice and the League of Polish Families, brought the Catholic Church even closer into the political arena, openly stating that their goal was to create an "administration for believers" (Rae 2007:230). A number of tactical decisions on the part of the right-wing politicians seemed to support that statement. To start with, Lech Kaczynski, representative of the right-wing party Prawo i Sprawiedliwosc [Law and Justice], now president of Poland, began his presidential campaign by producing a widely-publicised leaflet entitled "Catholic Poland in Christian Europe," where he elaborated on his desire to build a Catholic Poland, based on strong moral principles (Prawo i Sprawiedliwosc 2005). The leaflet listed two previous bans of Warsaw Pride (in 2004 and 2005) among his successes in the fight against "demoralisation." Kazimierz Ujazdowski, representative of Law and Justice, when appointed as the minister of culture, openly called for "no tolerance for homosexuals and deviants," adding "Let's not mistake

the brutal propaganda of homosexual attitudes with calls for tolerance. For them our rule will indeed mean a dark night” (quoted in Kowalczyk 2006, unpublished manuscript). Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, appointed by Law and Justice as the Prime Minister, in one of the first interviews after winning the elections advocated introducing a bill that would prohibit homosexual teachers from teaching in public schools (Abramowicz 2007).¹⁷ As will be discussed later, the bans of the marches in Poznan and Warsaw were further examples of these tactical decisions. As noted previously, the period under consideration closes with the 2007 March in Poznan, which coincides with the changeover in Polish government. Even though the winner, Platforma Obywatelska [Citizens’ Platform] is less on the far-right spectrum, nevertheless, it has made a close political alliance with the hierarchy of the Polish Catholic Church, which has already had a number of political consequences, such as attempts to ban in vitro procedures (Rae 2008). At the same time, before discussing the issues related to the bans of the marches and the marches themselves, a more general overview of the historical background of the movement is needed.

History of Polish LGBT movement

Movement beginnings

In Poland, like in most of the other countries of the Central-Eastern European region, up until 1989, gay and lesbian life took place in small circles of friends (Flam 2001). Despite a lack of formal inclusion of homosexuality in the criminal code, state ideology in the People’s Republic of Poland taught that “homosexuality was a symptom of ‘Western depravity’ and did not fit socialist morality” (Selinger

¹⁷ Legally, the introduction of such a bill would be against the Polish constitution and Polish Labour Code.

2008:22). Furthermore, as Fisher argues, Polish society was not affected by the civil rights or sexual liberation movements of the 60s and 70s; instead it was engaged in an ongoing struggle against the restrictions imposed by the communist state (Fisher 2007).

Various authors locate the beginning of the presence of homosexual issues in public discourse in Poland at the beginning of 1980s, pointing to the article of Barbara Pietkiewicz published in 1981 in the weekly magazine *Polityka* [Politics], entitled "Gorzki fiolet" [Bitter Purple]. In the article, Pietkiewicz described the attitudes of Poles towards homosexuality and provided a glimpse of the Warsaw gay scene (Wiech 2005). When discussing the possible beginning of the emergence of the gay and lesbian movement, Kurpios (2004) mentions Akcja Hiacynt [Action Hyacinth] as a crucial event for the mobilisation. On the 15th November 1985, at the order of the minister of internal affairs Czeslaw Kiszczak, Polish state security officers initiated an action of gathering files with information on homosexual men. The data was gathered between 1985-1987; in total 11,000 men were registered as homosexuals in so called "pink archives" (Kurpios 2004). In 1987, a group of gay men and women in Warsaw, angered by the infringement of their citizen rights by the state, tried to register in court the Warszawski Ruch Homoseksualny [Warsaw Homosexual Movement], but were denied registration twice (Kurpios 2004).¹⁸ Activists of the Warsaw Homosexual Movement concentrated most of their efforts on networking, both in Poland and abroad, especially in Austria and Germany (Gorska 2006). These networks would later form a foundation for the establishment of gay and lesbian groups after the political transition in 1989 (Kurpios 2004).

¹⁸According to the Polish law, all non-governmental organisations have to be formally registered (based on the information from www.ngo.pl).

Overall, the support of these international networks, in particular of the umbrella organisation, the International Lesbian and Gay Association has played an important role in the emergence and development of the first gay and lesbian organisations in the former Eastern bloc, including Poland.¹⁹ The ILGA's support for activists and groups in these countries actually went back to 1982 when its Vienna-based member Homosexuelle Initiative HOSI-Wien [Homosexual Initiative HOSI-Vienna] started the Eastern Europe Information Pool on behalf of the ILGA. The organisation reached out to activists in these countries, facilitated information exchange, supported activities such as the production and circulation of gay *samizdat*²⁰ newsletters, and put together annual activity and news reports. It published the first book on the situation of lesbians and gays in Eastern Europe (Hauer et al. 1984) and helped organise the first ILGA sub-regional conferences for Eastern and Southern Europe which took place in Budapest in 1987 and Warsaw in 1988 (ILGA-Europe 2001). The creation of an officially recognised and legal gay and lesbian movement in Poland and other countries of the region was only possible after 1989, when after the fall of the communist regime non-governmental organisations could freely register and gays and lesbians had a chance to emerge as new social actors (Flam 2001).

“Institutionalisation without mobilisation”: The Polish gay and lesbian movement in the 1990s

Flam describes the situation of sexual minorities in the 1990s as “institutionalisation without mobilisation”, with an emphasis on community building with the appearance of rather short-lived support and self-help groups as well as some commercial venues (Flam 2001:13). The first gay and lesbian organisation in

¹⁹ On the basis of the information from http://www.ilga-europe.org/europe/about_us/our_history.

²⁰ Samizdat refers to self-published materials circulated underground to evade state censorship.

Poland, Stowarzyszenie Grup Lambda [The Association of Lambda Groups] was registered in 1990, and according to its statute, it aimed at “increasing tolerance towards homosexuality, creating positive consciousness of homosexual men and women, propagating safer sex and cooperating with public institutions regarding HIV/AIDS prevention” (Adamska 1998:26). The organisation concentrated on community-based activities, that is, on providing counselling and legal activities, support groups and organising cultural events.²¹ For the most part, the activists of The Association of Lambda Groups were against public activism, claiming that increased visibility might be harmful to homosexual persons by attracting unwanted attention and fuelling violence (Adamska 1998).

While the Association of Lambda Groups represented the “mainstream” voice of the LGBT community, there were nevertheless two attempts in the 1990s to organise a gay and lesbian themed rally.²² In 1995, the local, short-lived, Warsaw group Ruch Gejow i Lesbijek [Movement of Gays and Lesbians] attempted to hold a rally in the courtyard of the Warsaw University in connection with the anniversary of the Stonewall Riots.²³ They were refused permission ostensibly because of a rule stating that at least half of the participants of the rally would have to be university students (Derewonko 1995). When a repeat attempt was made during the 1998 Gay Pride Days, the organisers were once again not granted permission. This time, the rationale behind the refusal was the reluctance of the local authorities to organise an event that would disturb people living in the vicinity of the Old Town (Slubowski

²¹ Information based on the website www.lambda.org.pl/warszawa.

²² Because of the legal issues involved, rallies are logistically an easy form of demonstration to organise, as they do not require permission from the transport authorities, which is the case for marches.

²³ From 1995 onwards, gay and lesbian activists in Warsaw organised cultural events – such as concerts, drag queen shows - at the end of June, called Gay Pride Days. These events were not really open to the general public and while journalists were sometimes allowed to attend, they did not have permission to take photographs. At the same time, Gay Pride Days, despite their name, were not connected in any way whatsoever with later Warsaw gay pride events.

1998). Most of the local branches of the Association of Lambda Groups ended their activity in 1997,²⁴ while some of the activists connected with the Warsaw branch created Lambda Warszawa [Lambda Warsaw] in 1997, which was the only formal gay and lesbian organisation in existence between 1997 and 2001. In 2000, Lambda Warsaw was hosting an international conference of the International Gay and Lesbian Cultural Network (ILGCN),²⁵ during which the Polish branch of the organisation, ILGCN-Poland, was created.²⁶ A year later, it was the representatives of ILGCN-Poland who organised the first successful gay pride event in Warsaw, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

In 2001, a group of activists in Warsaw created the national organisation Kampania Przeciw Homofobii [Campaign Against Homophobia], the first in Poland that would focus on gay and lesbian visibility (Gruszczynska 2007). Campaign Against Homophobia, created in September 2001, was the first one that defined itself as social-political and among its main goals the following were cited:

Public discussion on gay and lesbian issues and increased social representation for all sexual minorities, as well as, most importantly, political lobbying that would lead to introducing the concept of same-sex partnerships.²⁷

The activists connected with Campaign Against Homophobia were instrumental in initiating a discussion about the presence of gays and lesbians in public spaces, most notably through the photography project “Niech nas zobacza” [“Let Them See Us”]. The project consisted of an exhibition of 30 photographs of ordinary looking same-sex couples (15 lesbians and 15 gay men), holding hands. The exhibition

²⁴ This was due mostly to personal conflicts between members of the local branches and the Warsaw branch (Adamska 1998).

²⁵ The International Lesbian and Gay Cultural Network was created at the International Lesbian and Gay Association world conference in Paris in 1992 to promote international LGBT culture and exchange across borders (based on the information from <http://www.ilgcn.tupilak.se/>).

²⁶ Based on the information from <http://www.szymonniemiec.pl/polish/biopol/biospol.html>

²⁷ On the basis of the information from http://www.kph.org.pl/images/stories/dokumenty/statut_kph.pdf

opened in four galleries (Krakow, Warsaw, Gdansk and Sosnowiec) around the country and was followed by a nation-wide billboard campaign. The project was dubbed as a promotional campaign of “depravations and deviations” and raised a heated discussion about the right of gays and lesbians to appear in the public spaces (Warkocki 2004:99). Warkocki argues that “Let Them See Us” was a spark that started a fire. Until then, he writes,

Homosexuals functioned in collective consciousness a bit like extra-terrestrials: they exist somewhere, someone claims to have seen them, or even talked to them, supposedly they have green antennae. [Thanks to the campaign] Poles were confronted with the fact that some of them actually were homosexual (Warkocki 2004:101).

“Let Them See Us” was a crucial moment for the presence of gays and lesbians in the public sphere, hailed as a symbol of the “second emancipatory wave” (Leszkowicz 2004:86). This description clearly delineated a new focus of the movement, and a departure from the style of organising in the 1990s, where the activists were rather reluctant to politicise homosexuality or engage in visibility actions. It is against this background that the prides – which signalled an even greater breakthrough in terms of the public visibility of gays and lesbians in Poland - need to be situated. Accordingly, the remainder of this chapter will provide detailed information on the prides and marches between 2001-2007.

Chronology of the marches

In terms of the organisation of this section, I begin by looking at the beginning of the prides, that is, the period between 2001 and 2003, when they only took place in Warsaw. Then I go on to describe in detail the events during “the troubled years” 2004 and 2005, that is, when the marches spread to Poznan and Krakow, and were increasingly banned and attacked. Finally, in the remainder of the text I discuss the marches that took place between 2006-2007, when all the events were legal and

were on the way to slowly gaining public acceptance. This overview of marches is consistent with the main time frame of this thesis; that is, 2001-2007 and closes with the Poznan March in 2007, where this event coincides with the early elections in the autumn of 2007 and the demise of the radical right-wing. Furthermore, 2007 is also a significant cut-off point because from 2008 onwards, the prides started spreading to other cities as well, for instance in 2008 the first pride event took place in Katowice.²⁸

Starting out: Warsaw Pride, 2001-2003

The first successful LGBT Pride Parade in Poland occurred in May 2001 in Warsaw. The Equality Pride²⁹ was organised by representatives of the Polish branch of ILGCN. The Pride organisers, in their official statement, called upon the Polish president to respect minority rights in Poland and reminded him that these rights are being constantly violated (Gorska 2006). According to Graff, the first Equality Pride “allowed Warsaw’s lesbians and gays to assess their forces” (Graff 2006:437). Prides in 2002 and 2003 in Warsaw gathered increasing numbers of participants from all over the country, including representatives of organisations in cities like Krakow or Poznan, with the total number of attendants 2000 and 3500 respectively (Gorska 2006). The first three events followed a similar pattern in which the marchers, some carrying banners and rainbow flags, would first gather in a central location, protected by the local police. The event would begin with the organisers issuing an official statement addressed at the politicians, where the statement focused on a concrete problem, such as homophobic violence or the same-sex partnership bill. Afterwards, the organisers would play the Village People song

²⁸ For more information, see <http://www.kphslask.yoyo.pl/?q=node/82>

²⁹ In 2005 the event was re-named “Warsaw Pride” and so throughout this thesis, references to Equality Pride indicate the 2001-2004 time frame, and Warsaw Pride refers to 2005-2007 events.

“YMCA”, thus giving a signal for the Pride to begin. On their way to the destination, the marchers were chanting slogans such as “we want tolerance”, “yes for equality”. Occasionally, the pride would be interrupted by right-wing activists, shouting [back] “do it at home”, “faggots, go home” (Gorska 2006). At the same time, it has to be noted that in comparison with events taking place nationally after 2004, there were much fewer protests and the right-wing did not resort to physical violence, as would be the case in the coming years, starting with the Krakow March for Tolerance in 2004.

Troubled years: 2004-2005

Events in 2004

The Krakow March for Tolerance in May 2004 in many ways turned out to be a landmark event with regards to public lesbian and gay activism. Kubica, who analyses the actors involved in the Krakow March for Tolerance in 2004, sees the anxieties connected with Poland’s entrance into the EU as at least partly responsible for the heated opposition against the event from the local government, city council, university authorities, local right-wing and Catholic organisations who tried to convince Krakow’s mayor to block the march on grounds of public depravity (Kubica 2006). The March for Tolerance was the only public event planned during the four-day festival of gay and lesbian art and culture *Kultura dla Tolerancji* [Culture for Tolerance],³⁰ organised by members of the Krakow branch of Campaign Against Homophobia (Kubica 2006). Three weeks before the planned date of the march, local right-wing politicians - representatives of ultra-Catholic *Liga Polskich Rodzin* [League of Polish Families] together with the right-wing Citizens’ Platform initiated an anti-march campaign, trying to convince the Mayor

³⁰ Apart from the March for Tolerance, the organisers prepared a number of lesbian and gay-themed events: movie screenings, concerts, workshops and talks (based on the information from www.tolerancja.gej.net).

of Krakow to block the event on grounds of public depravity. The main issue at stake was fear of the alleged clash between the March for Tolerance and the participants of the procession to commemorate a local Catholic saint, St. Stanislaw (Kula 2004).³¹ As the journalist alleged, people leaving Wawel Cathedral after the St. Stanislaw's service would bump into participants of the March for Tolerance and "could even be handed leaflets on gay and lesbian rights" (Kula 2004:1). Following the intensive campaign against the march, which will be discussed in further detail later, the organisers decided to move the date of the event to Friday 7th May 2004. Nevertheless, this decision did very little to appease the outrage of the right-wing organisations and religious authorities.

About 1500 marchers participated in the March for Tolerance on 7th May 2004. At the foot of Wawel Castle, before they were able to reach the final destination of the march, the participants were stopped by an illegal demonstration³² comprised of local politicians of the League of Polish Families, members of the ultra right-wing organisation Młodzież Wszechpolska [All-Polish Youth], as well as skinheads and football hooligans³³ (Kula and Pelowski 2004). They threw eggs and stones at the marchers, shouting "Gas the gays", "We will not give Wawel Castle away", "Deviants and perverts" (Kozak 2004). As the police were unsuccessful in

³¹ The implications of that allegation will be discussed in more detail later. Originally, the March for Tolerance organisers wanted the event to take place on Saturday, 8th May 2004. However, they were advised by the local council authorities not to do so, as there was a major sporting event planned for that day and there would not be enough police officers to secure the march. The council officers suggested organising the event on 9th May instead, that is, a Sunday. As St Stanislaw's holiday is a local Catholic event, and not a national holiday, it is quite probable that the council officers simply did not realise there would be a procession going in the area of the city centre on that day.

³² According to Polish law, freedom of assembly is guaranteed by the constitution but gatherings in public spaces, larger than a group of 14 persons, need to be registered with the city council three days before the planned date of the demonstration. The right-wing opponents of the March for Tolerance submitted the application to register their demonstration too late, only one day before the planned date (Pelowski and Kula 2004, electronic source).

³³ The active involvement of football hooligans in protests against gay and lesbian marches needs to be located in the context of strong political links between football hooligan groups and far-right wing political groups (Piotrowski 2006). As Sahaj adds, football hooligans in Poland get involved in social disputes including those not related to sport and frequently take their actions outside of football stadiums (Sahaj 2009).

dispersing the crowd, following the advice of the head police officer, the organisers decided to formally end the demonstration. At that point, some participants (about 100) of the illegal counter-demonstration decided to run after the march participants and organisers who were heading towards Market Square and were quite easily recognisable because of the flags and banners. Once the counter-demonstrators reached Market Square, they started demolishing the beer gardens. They also continued chasing after the March for Tolerance participants who tried to find a hiding place in the nearby cafes and stores. In order to disperse the riots the police fired shots into the air.

Over a month after the march in Krakow, Lech Kaczynski, the mayor of Warsaw, cancelled the Warsaw Pride in June 2004 mentioning security reasons. His security concerns were mostly based on the fact that the politicians of the League of Polish Families together with the All-Polish Youth announced that they would organise a counter-demonstration at the same time and the same place as the planned Warsaw Pride (PAP 2005a). Kaczynski was referring explicitly to the events during the Krakow March for Tolerance, and the possibility of a similar clash taking place in Warsaw between the pride and the anti-demonstration as a reason for the cancellation (Kubica 2006). Furthermore, he was also anxious to “protect the morality” of Warsaw citizens, as the pride would be taking place a day after the Corpus Christi holiday, a major national and Catholic holiday which includes a ceremonial procession (Krzyzaniak-Gumowska 2004). As numerous appeals against the ban did not work, instead of the parade, representatives of ILGCN-Poland held a rally in protest against the ban, with about 1,000 participants present (PAP 2005b). Following these events, three major Polish gay and lesbian organisations, that is, ILGCN Poland, Lambda Warsaw and Campaign Against

Homophobia decided to create a new structure for the organisation of the Equality Days – Fundacja Rownosci [Equality Foundation],³⁴ in order to consolidate their strength and hopefully prevent similar bans in the future.

In November 2004, as a reaction to the attack on the March for Tolerance in Krakow and the ban of Warsaw Pride, the first March of Equality was held in Poznan. The event was organised by a coalition formed from local feminist (Konsola), green (Zieloni 2004 [The Greens 2004]) and gay and lesbian organisations (Lambda Poznan). It took place despite the protests of right-wing parties and Church authorities claiming that the march would be “promoting homosexuality which is a serious disease” (Kowalczyk 2005:42). The main slogans of the march were “Different but equal” and “Everybody belongs to some minority”. On the day of the march the participants only managed to cross the street, before they were attacked by a group of right-wing protesters who threw eggs and lemons, and shouted “Gay trash, get your hands away from the children”, “Lesbians and faggots are ideal citizens of the European Union”, “Healthy Poles are not like that”. The police turned the participants back to the starting point and informed that their safety could not be guaranteed should the march be continued (Kowalczyk 2005).

Events in 2005

In Krakow, the organisers of the 2005 March for Tolerance decided to cancel the event because of the death of Pope John Paul II three weeks before the planned date of the demonstration, citing as reasons the wish to respect the atmosphere of mourning in the city which traditionally had strong links with the late Pope.³⁵

³⁴ Based on the information from the website www.paradarownosci.pl.

³⁵ Based on the information from the Culture for Tolerance festival organisers' website. Full implications and circumstances of that decision will be discussed in Chapter 7.

In May 2005, the Mayor of Warsaw, Lech Kaczynski, banned the Warsaw Pride for the second time, claiming that the parade would interfere with the unveiling of a statue to Stanislaw Grot-Rowecki, the leader of the Polish underground during the Nazi occupation of Warsaw in the Second World War. Kaczynski also added that he was “for tolerance, but against propagating gay orientation” (Baczkowski 2005, electronic source). The organisers, representatives of the Equality Foundation, tried using every legal resource possible to undo the decision of the Mayor, which violated the freedom of assembly guaranteed by the Polish constitution,³⁶ but were not successful. On the 12th June 2005, about 3,000 demonstrators defied the ban, thus resorting to civil disobedience. The presence of then vice-Prime Minister Izabela Jaruga-Nowacka as well as European Members of Parliament from the German Green Party, Claudia Roth and Volker Beck, made it possible for the participants to march through the streets of Warsaw, enjoying police protection from right-wing Pride opponents, who were throwing eggs and bottles and trying to block the streets (Baczkowski 2005). The following week, however, the Mayor issued permission for the radical right-wing All-Polish Youth to hold a “Normality Parade” to “remedy the bad image of Poland that Equality Parade” might have caused (Wiktor 2005). Graff claims that these decisions were not accidents, but well-planned elements of Kaczynski’s presidential campaign (Graff 2006; for more detailed information regarding the 2005 elections in Poland, see Millard 2006, 2007). Graff adds that candidates’ attitudes towards sexual minorities became one of the key themes of the presidential election and served as a litmus test for their views on modern democracy, Poland’s Westernisation, freedom of speech and traditional values (Graff 2006). Law and Justice, the conservative

³⁶ Article 57 of the Polish Constitution reads: “The freedom of peaceful assembly and participation in such assemblies shall be ensured to everyone.” (*Constitution of the Republic of Poland* chapter II 1997).

party that won the 2005 elections, owed its popularity to its image of strength and decisiveness, as well as its promise of a “moral revolution” which was to consist of “cleansing” the state of post-communist corruption, reducing the rate of violent crime and taking a tougher course with the EU (Graff 2006:437).

The second Poznan March of Equality was one of the events planned for the second series of the Days of Equality in Poznan in November 2005. Despite the fact that the organisers had complied with all the legal requirements, on 15th November 2005 the Poznan Mayor refused to issue a permit for the march, arguing that the event would cause “significant danger to public morality and property” (Graff 2006:438). A day before the planned date of the march, after all legal attempts to undo the Mayor’s decision had failed, the Poznan March organisers took the decision to follow through with the demonstration, since the ban violated the freedom to assembly guaranteed by the Polish constitution. On 19th November 2005, the police brutally broke up the peaceful demonstration and arrested 68 participants out of about 200³⁷ (Kowalczyk 2006). The events in Poznan sparked a huge wave of protests against the attack on democratic principles in Poland and a discussion on the freedom of assembly and sexual minorities’ rights (Kowalczyk 2006). The ban of the Poznan March of Equality was declared illegal in December 2005 by the Regional Administrative Court (Tomaszewicz 2006).

Both the ban of the Warsaw Pride and the March of Equality were brought to international attention in January 2006, when the European Parliament produced a resolution, expressing:

³⁷ The arrests were made on the charges of refusing to leave an illegal gathering despite repeated police warnings (Przybylska 2005, electronic source).

[an] especially strong concern about a climate of intolerance in Poland against the LGBT community and calls on the Polish authorities to stop hate speech and incitement to discrimination and violence, notably against minorities.³⁸

While the resolution caused considerable controversy and general disagreement between Polish parliamentarians, nevertheless, the international attention might have been a contributing factor thanks to which in the following years none of the public gay and lesbian events were banned. While there were still attacks and public protests, these events were slowly raising fewer controversies, as will be discussed in the next section.

2006-2007: The Marches go on

Krakow March for Tolerance

Shortly after the representatives of Campaign Against Homophobia and the newly created Culture for Tolerance Foundation announced their plans to organise the March for Tolerance on 28th April 2006, Krakow church authorities openly criticised the event as “a dangerous promotion of homosexual lifestyle”, arguing that it would be unethical to approve “the behaviour of persons taking part in so called equality parades” (Jalowiec 2006). There were also strong protests on the part of the local politicians, in particular, representatives of the League of Polish Families and the All-Polish Youth, who were concerned about the fact that the march would end on Market Square, in the proximity of the St. Mary Church. As a preventative measure, the right-wing groups attempted to gain permission for the March of Tradition and Culture, an event that would involve marching 12 hours per day (on the actual day of the March for Tolerance) in the vicinity of the city centre. They also demanded that no other centrally located demonstrations should take

³⁸On the basis of the information from www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=MOTION&reference=B6-2006-0043&language=EN

place within that period of time. While their application for the March of Tradition and Culture had been accepted, their wish to block other demonstrations had not been granted (PAP 2006). Finally, once the date of the March for Tolerance was officially announced, the All-Polish Youth decided to start the March of Tradition and Culture at Market Square (initially the end point for the March for Tolerance) and head towards the participants in the gay and lesbian demonstration. Finally, the right-wing groups joined the local branch of Chrzescijanskie Stowarzyszenie Kultury im. Piotra Skargi [Piotr Skarga Association of Christian Culture] in a poster campaign, as a result of which the city centre was plastered with posters urging to “Stop promotion of deviation” and asking whether “Krakow [should be] Pope’s city or a city that promotes deviations” (Dubrowska and Romanowski 2008).

On 28th April 2006, the day that both marches were scheduled, the All-Polish Youth members were initially waiting at Market Square for the participants of the March for Tolerance to arrive. However, they soon realised that the organisers of the gay and lesbian march changed their route to avoid a clash and headed towards the Wawel Dragon by the Vistula River instead (which was where the 2004 March for Tolerance should have ended). Following that realisation, the All-Polish Youth quickly dissolved the official March of Tradition and Culture. They ran after the March of Tolerance participants in order to prevent them from reaching their planned destination, hurling eggs and stones in their direction. Despite the heavy presence of the police, two people ended up with minor injuries (Amnesty International 2006).

A similar clash between the March for Tolerance and March of Tradition and Culture occurred during in April 2007 (Jalowiec and Romanowski 2007). Namely, two days before the planned start of the festival (and four days before the

march itself) representatives of the Krakow branch of the All-Polish Youth announced during a press conference that they would do everything in order to prevent the March for Tolerance from going ahead. They also divulged their plans to organise a counter-march on the same day and added that the participants of the counter-march would block the March for Tolerance from reaching its final destination, Market Square, by the use of “peaceful methods”, such as sitting down in large groups on the pavement (PAP 2007b). Once again, both the Piotr Skarga Association of Christian Culture and the All-Polish Youth plastered the city with posters calling to “stop promotion of deviation”. On top of that, the night before the marches, five members of the All-Polish Youth were stopped by the police in the city centre as they attempted to (illegally) distribute posters with hardcore pornographic images, including representations of bestiality, in order to protest against the march (Romanowski 2007). On the day that both demonstrations took place, the organisers of the March for Tolerance attempted to enter Market Square, where about 300 participants of the March of Tradition and Culture were blocking access to the final destination. For about half an hour, the two marches were separated by a police cordon. Once it became obvious that the March of Tradition and Culture participants showed no signs of willingness to let the gay and lesbian march through, the March for Tolerance organisers decided to end the demonstration, releasing hundreds of colourful balloons into the air.

Warsaw Pride

Two court decisions in September 2005 and January 2006 ruled that the ban of the 2005 Warsaw Pride was unconstitutional, and so in June 2006 the Warsaw Pride, organised by the Equality Foundation proceeded legally (O’Dwyer and Schwartz 2007). The organisers, thanks to intensive lobbying and organisational efforts,

received strong international support and the event was well attended by international guests, mostly from Germany, Sweden and Holland. The event, however, was not without controversies. For instance, shortly before the event Wierzejski, a representative of the League of Polish Families suggested that police batons might be the best way of dealing with Pride participants (Graff 2006). He was also encouraging violence towards the LGBT activists, arguing that “if the deviants start to demonstrate, we should beat them up with baseball bats” (Amnesty International 2006:4). Commenting on the fact that the Pride would have quite a strong presence of international politicians, he added “they are not serious politicians, they are gays. If they get a proper beating, they won’t come again. After all, by definition, gays are cowards” (Amnesty International 2006:6).

With 10,000 participants, music, and a strong international presence, despite some of the problems mentioned above, a largely positive atmosphere prevailed. During the pride, the participants of the counterdemonstration, organised by the nationalist *Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski*³⁹ [National Rebirth of Poland] and *Oboz Narodowo-Radykalny*⁴⁰ [Radical Nationalist Camp] were throwing eggs and stones, and subsequently, 14 people among them were arrested (Dubrawska et al. 2006).

At the beginning of May 2007, Polish lesbian and gay organisations were celebrating an important legal victory in the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, which stated clearly that the ban of the Warsaw Pride in 2005 violated the constitutional right of assembly (Lempicka 2007). The Pride in 2007 took place

³⁹ *Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski* [National Rebirth of Poland] is a far-right, nationalist organisation, established in 1981. The group’s ideology is characterised by the rejection of Poland’s post-transformation path of liberal democracy as well as strong anti-European Union sentiments (see <http://www.nop.org.pl/?o=ruch>). Its activists frequently appear at demonstrations against gay and lesbian marches, carrying banners with the slogan “Stop faggotry”.

⁴⁰ *Oboz Narodowo-Radykalny* [Radical Nationalist Camp] is a nationalist organisation which aims to promote patriotic values among young people (see <http://www.onr.com.pl/>). However, on at least one occasion its activists were formally charged with promoting totalitarian ideologies such as fascism and Nazism (Zbikowska 2008).

without major disturbances, even though just before the Pride, the organisers received e-mails with threats, stating that, “if the parade takes place, there will be casualties, blood, fire and destruction” (PAP 2007c). The organisers did not let that deter them, claiming that similar threats had also appeared before previous prides (PAP 2007c). Altogether about 4,000 participants gathered on 7th June 2007, united under the slogan “love thy neighbour” (Dubrawska 2007). According to the organisers, this slogan was meant to remind the majority that human rights are universal and applicable to sexual minorities as well. Participants of the counter-demonstration, organised by the All-Polish Youth accompanied the pride along the way, with banners saying “homosexuals are a danger to the world”, “be happy, not gay”, “there is a cure for pederasty”. They also attempted to stop the pride by lying down on the street so that the marchers could not pass through. The different sides were separated by a cordon of the police, with a police helicopter hovering above (PAP 2007c).

Poznan March of Equality

The third March of Equality in Poznan in November 2006 took place without major disturbances, despite initial protests from city authorities regarding the choice of the organisers as to the starting place, i.e. Mickiewicz Square (Przybylska and Szostak 2006). While the square is connected with the memory of the victims of the 1956 Poznan Uprising,⁴¹ according to the organisers, the starting point was chosen as a symbol of freedom fighters and was connected with the overall theme of the March of Equality in 2006, that is “in solidarity⁴² against discrimination” (Minalto 2006).

⁴¹ The Poznan 1956 (also called the Poznan Uprising or Poznan June) protests were mass protests of workers demanding better conditions, addressed at the communist government of the People's Republic of Poland (on the basis of information from the website commemorating the 50th anniversary of these events <http://www.poznancyk.com/czerwiec.html>).

⁴² As will be discussed in Chapter 6, this slogan was also related to the 25th anniversary of the Solidarity movement.

On the day of the march, members of the organisation representing 1956 veterans gathered with representatives of the All-Polish Youth in order to protect the crosses from alleged danger of profanation. They were joined by the National Rebirth of Poland, whose members were distributing leaflets against the march calling to “stop promotion of deviations”. For the majority of the march, the 500 participants were largely undisturbed and walked peacefully, however, when they neared the final destination, that is, the Plac Wolności [Freedom Square], they discovered that access to their destination point was blocked by the All-Polish Youth and National Rebirth of Poland, who placed themselves on a plaque commemorating the Wielkopolska uprising of 1918-1919⁴³ and were chanting “We will not give Poznań away”. The march participants had to wait for about 15 minutes for the police to enable them to access the head of the square during which they kept chanting “Make space for democracy”. Finally the police made it possible for the head of the march to advance to its final destination (Przybylska and Szostak 2006).

The following year, the March of Equality organisers decided to keep the same starting place for the event. This decision raised similar controversies, on the part of the veterans’ organisations and the local politicians from right-wing parties (that is, Law and Justice as well as Citizens’ Platform). Representatives of the organising committee countered these protests, claiming that Mickiewicz Square “belongs to all Poznań inhabitants” (Przybylska 2007). On the day of the march, representatives of the local right-wing and the veterans’ organisations appeared at Mickiewicz Square in order to protect the crosses commemorating the 1956 uprising from the alleged threat of profanation by the marchers, just as they had done the previous year. Nevertheless, during the actual event, for the first time,

⁴³ Wielkopolska Uprising was a military insurrection of Poles against Germany. For more information, see <http://www.powstanie Wielkopolskie.pl/index.php?menu=historia>

there were no major incidents, apart from a small group of football hooligans shouting insults at the march participants. The March of Equality participants, protected by the police followed the same route as in 2006, chanting, “there is no democracy without demonstrations”, “all different, all equal”⁴⁴ and “everybody has a right to demonstrate”. For the first time in three years, the marchers reached their destination point, Freedom Square in the city centre without any disturbances.

Conclusion

This chapter has contextualised public gay and lesbian activism in Poland against the backdrop of social and cultural transformations in the post-transition period. I looked at the ways in which political transformation enabled the creation of the movement and the creation of new knowledges. In particular, I focused on the ways in which the religious and the national “conspired” together to create a highly homophobic environment. Furthermore, I have examined the growth of public resistance to the increasing visibility of gay and lesbians alongside the emergence of nationalist and xenophobic feelings connected to Poland’s entrance into the European Union in 2004, as well as the rise of right-wing political forces.

At the same time, I want to stress that while in this thesis I analyse the meaning of events of the second wave of emancipation it is not the aim of this thesis to examine the reasons behind the shift (i.e. entry into the public sphere) associated with that phase. First and foremost, these reasons have been aptly documented and analysed by other scholars, who point to such turning points as the public debate in Poland’s most influential daily newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* on issues of the rights of gays and lesbians (Sypniewski and Warkocki 2004); the prominence of issues related to rights of sexual minorities, mostly in a highly negative light, in the pre-

⁴⁴ The slogan referred to the “All different, all equal” campaign organised in 2006-2007 by the Council of Europe, see <http://alldifferent-allequal.info/>

accession campaign (O'Dwyer and Schwartz 2007) as well as the increased influence of the right-wing ideology which culminated in the 2005 victory of nationalist, ultra-right-wing candidates in governmental and presidential elections (Graff 2006). Nevertheless, while the macro-context of public activist events has been analysed extensively (see for instance O'Dwyer and Schwartz 2007, Tronquist-Plewa and Malgrem 2007, Selinger 2008), analysis on the micro-level has not drawn comparable attention. This is where my thesis makes a contribution, as I focus specifically on the meanings that the activists attribute to public activism. It also has to be added that I do not argue that in the period under analysis (2001-2007) public activist events were the sole activity of the movement, far from it as the activists were busy working on educational and awareness-raising campaigns, lobbying, publishing reports, providing support groups, workshops and meetings.⁴⁵ At the same time, during that period, public activist events have become one of the most prominent symbols of the movement activities as they provoked intense discussion on issues of gay and lesbian rights. Having set the scene for analysing the meaning of public gay and lesbian activism, in the next chapter I outline the theoretical approach of this study.

⁴⁵ See for instance the websites of Campaign Against Homophobia - www.kampania.org.pl and Lambda Warsaw - www.lambda.org.pl.

CHAPTER 3

Literature review

As Munt and Donnell put it, “prides and protest marches by self-identified groups who are temporarily bonded by ties of perceived disenfranchisement” have been a long-term feature of civil society (Munt and Donnell 2007:100). Together with civil disobedience actions, strikes and petitions, demonstrations are the major protest form that social movements can rely on in order to make their claims known to the wider public (Casquete 2006). Demonstrations organised by sexual minorities are a particular manifestation of that protest form, as these events have grown to be a vital part of the West European/Global North LGBT movements (Holzhacker 2007). Importantly, apart from being a tool through which the activists direct their claims at external targets, the tactical repertoires used by social movements have an internal movement-building function (McAdam et al. 2001). As Clemens argues, writing in the context of the rise of political interest groups in the USA, “organisational forms may be a source of shared identity” (Clemens 1997:50). Consequently, in this chapter I provide a theoretical framework that will enable me to analyse the gay and lesbian marches as a site of creating/contesting collective identity.

To start with, as I situate my theoretical framework within the broadly understood social movement scholarship, I provide a brief overview of relevant theoretical perspectives, that is, resource mobilisation, political opportunity theory and new social movement theory. Within that framework, I then go on to define the key theoretical concept of this thesis, that is, collective identity, with an emphasis on the model of identity deployment as proposed by Bernstein (1997, 2002, 2005 and 2008). I also examine the way in which expressions of identity are deployed strategically, focusing on the movement-media interactions and literature dealing

with representations of gay and lesbian activism. Moreover, I propose to broaden Bernstein's framework by incorporating a discussion of the relevance of emotion work in the context of public activism, which I will later argue was a crucial element of the meaning-making processes of public activism. Furthermore, I touch upon key concerns of identity movements and explore the tensions between assimilationist (i.e. identity-based) and more radical approaches as represented by groups based on principles of anti-identity queer politics. This dilemma takes on special significance in the context of public activism, where the movement has to decide if it should stress difference or similarity to the mainstream society through performances in the public space. Finally, I introduce the concept of sexual citizenship, looking at the ways in which citizenship in Poland has been defined in almost solely heteronormative terms. I then move on to discuss issues surrounding visibility and enacting sexual citizenship in public spaces, this way providing a theoretical framework for later discussion of key movement concerns.

Social movement theories

For the most part, the theoretical framework of this thesis is inscribed within social movements⁴⁶ research that addresses questions of collective identity: as “incentive for movement participation, as a goal of movement participation, as a process of meaning construction, and as a source of normative guidelines” (Shriver et al. 2000:44). Despite much heterogeneity, theories of collective identity emphasise the socially “constructed” aspects of identity, for instance, ways in which “gender, ethnic, and racial identities, grievances, ideology, and local cultures are negotiated, defined, and produced by movement activists” (Gotham 1999:334; for overviews

⁴⁶ In this thesis I mostly rely on Della Porta and Diani's definition of social movements as “informal networks, based on shared beliefs and solidarity, which mobilise around conflictual issues, through the frequent use of various forms of protest” (Della Porta and Diani 1999:16).

see Johnston et al. 1994, Buechler 1995). The concept of collective identity stems from the developments in the social movements theory, in particular the new social movements theory (Castells 1997). At the same time, that theory, together with the concept of collective identity, emerged as a critique of previous dominant approaches, that is, resource mobilisation and political opportunity model. While an extensive overview of the entirety of the social movement scholarship is beyond the scope of this chapter, the next section will briefly discuss its major developments, in order to provide a solid theoretical framework for introducing the concept of collective identity in the context of public gay and lesbian activism in Poland.

Resource mobilisation

Research on the movements of the 1960s and 1970s questioned the earlier assumptions of classical collective behaviour theory, that is, the notion that participants were irrational and marginal and that their actions were evidence of social breakdown (Jenkins 1983). The resource mobilisation approach (Zald and McCarthy 1988) portrays activists as rational actors who consciously decide to organise and mobilise on the basis of available resources (Della Porta and Diani 1999). As Wilkening puts it, the crucial insight of the resource mobilisation perspective is that if a social movement organisation faces a resource deficit, no amount of deprivation will be sufficient to translate grievances into social mobilisation (Wilkening 2005). A key element is that, resource mobilisation theorists view grievances as secondary (Jenkins 1983). The resource mobilisation theory further assumes that grievances exist in any political system at any given time (Turner and Killian 1972). Thus, this theoretical approach examines:

The variety of resources that must be mobilised, the linkages of social movements to other groups, the dependence of movements upon external support for success and the tactics used by authorities to control or incorporate movements (McCarthy and Zald 1977:133).

In terms of the potential deficiencies of the resource mobilisation model, Mayer points out that its theorists overlook the cultural and political context in which the activists operate and so tend to assume that “if the group is well organised, it can get its share” (Mayer 1991:94). This way, the resource mobilisation framework produces a fictitious individual which operates in an ahistorical society, removed from its cultural influence (Buechler 1993). Furthermore, Engel adds that despite the insights made by resource mobilisation scholars into the internal dynamics of social movement organisations, the theory has left gaps in understanding exactly why individuals participate or how the political context affects mobilisation (Engel 2001). The latter gap was addressed by the political opportunity model, which will be discussed in the next section.

Political opportunity model

As McAdam et al. remark, researchers working within the political opportunity model come guided by the same underlying conviction – that social movements are “shaped by the broader set of political constraints and opportunities unique to the national context in which they are embedded” (McAdam et al. 1996:3). Furthermore, the primary point of the model is that activists do not decide on goals and strategies without taking into consideration the external political circumstances (Meyer and Minkoff 2004). In Tarrow’s understanding of the political opportunity model, activist protest is triggered when shifts in political opportunities and constraints occur. These changes, in turn, motivate social actors who do not have access to sufficient resources on their own (Tarrow 1994). He adds that the following elements are crucial for the development of a social movement: “changing opportunity, meaningful access to power and influential allies,

significant splits in the ruling alignment or cleavages among elites” (Tarrow 1994:18).

While the political opportunity model has made a lasting impact on the social movement scholarship, it has also drawn significant amounts of criticism, mostly for ignoring the role of cultural processes in mobilisation (see Bevington and Dixon 2005 for an overview of this critique). Moreover, the political opportunity model has been challenged in the context of gay and lesbian activism. For instance, Gould, claims that the radical AIDS activism in the 1980s in the USA emerged “despite of and partially because of, tightly constricted political opportunities” and names these constricted opportunities as the lack of response to the AIDS epidemic by the right-wing government in the USA in the 1980s (Gould 2001:148). Poletta and Amenta confirm that militant AIDS activism emerged at a time where lesbians and gay men lacked access to political power and influential allies and confronted increasingly repressive legislation (Poletta and Amenta 2001).

New social movements paradigm

The new social movements theory was developed to address gaps in dominant resource mobilisation and political process models, both of which only paid limited attention to issues of culture and identity (Shefner 1995). On the macro level, the paradigm focuses on the links between the growth of contemporary social movements and the economic structure, together with the function of culture in such movements. On the micro level, the theory addresses the significance of issues of identity for social movements (Pichardo 1997).

Among the movements typically studied by new social movements researchers are the “urban social struggles, the environmental or ecology movements, women’s and gay liberation, the peace movement, and cultural revolt

linked primarily to student and youth activism” (Boggs 1986:39–40). The central claim of the paradigm is that new social movements are a product of the shift of Western societies to a post-industrial economy. Within that framework, contemporary movements are considered to be fundamentally different in character from movements of the industrial period, which had a working-class base (Olofsson 1988). These differences are assumed to appear in the ideology, goals, tactics and structure (Pichardo 1997). The new social movements theory views movements such as the peace, environmental or youth groups as historically new forms of collective action stemming from the large-scale changes of modernisation (Bernstein 2005). Mayer and Roth add that in attempting to pinpoint the novelty and defining characteristics of new social movements some authors point to the fact that these movements focus on lifestyles, cultural politics and identities (Mayer and Roth 1995). Offe states that new social movements differ from more traditional ones by placing an emphasis on values of autonomy and identity, and they also have a tendency to be egalitarian and non-hierarchical (Offe 1985). Furthermore, in contrast to the old social movements, which presupposed a solidly working-class base and ideology, the new social movements are assumed to attract a predominantly middle class base (Buechler 1995). After all, contemporary movements, such as the wide-scale student protests in Europe in the 1960s were inadequately explained by the theoretical models that associated the working class with revolutionary protest (Olofsson 1988).

However, as identified by some scholars, there are many limitations to the paradigm discussed in the previous section (Bagguley 1992, Calhoun 1994). Tarrow points out that the apparent novelty of some of the new social movements can be deceiving, because they have often have grown out of pre-existing organisations

with long histories (Tarrow 1991). Moreover, as Pichardo remarks, the problem with that framework is that too many exceptions from the model are cited (Pichardo 1997). The new social movements are theorised to adopt open, democratic, non-hierarchical structures, yet there are many organisations that are not so characterised. For instance, groups such as the National Organisation of Women or various environmental groups such as Greenpeace employ more traditional centralised, hierarchical forms of organisation (Shaiko 1993). Furthermore, as Pichardo points out, the new social movements are claimed to reject institutional politics, yet many regularly act as consultants to governmental bodies or use tactics such as lobbying or court cases (Pichardo 1997).

Furthermore, the critique of the paradigm also addresses LGBT movements and for instance Adam argues that, "new social movement theory offers only partial applicability to gay and lesbian mobilisation" (Adam 1995:178). After all, many gay and lesbian movements do remain fully engaged with the state, for instance by seeking permission from local authorities to organise a march, as will be discussed later. In addition, Adam adds that gay and lesbian movements do not concentrate exclusively on identity issues (this issue will be discussed in the following section) but address virtually every sphere of life, including the workplace and labour unions, street violence, housing and domestic relationships, delivery of health and social services, organised religion, and cultural representations in mass media and education (Adam 1995).

Collective identity as a social movement concept

At the same time, despite the critique of the new social movements theory, its central premise - the concept of collective identity - is of significant importance to this thesis. First of all, the work of scholars dealing with collective identity can help

explain why a person would want to engage in collective action when there are no instrumental rewards or, when in the words of resource mobilisation scholars they could easily “free-ride”. As Bernstein claims, resource mobilisation and political process theorists have largely neglected the study of identity movements with their seemingly “non-political,” cultural goals (Bernstein 1997:535). The concept of collective identity can also be helpful in answering the question of why some groups would mobilise despite the lack of political openness, as was the case of gay and lesbian public activism in Poland in the aftermath of the 2005 elections and the victory of the right-wing, as shown in the introduction.

The lesbian and gay movement has been described as the “quintessential identity movement” distinguished from other movements by its emphasis on the diversity of gay identities, as well as its focus on deconstructing identity categories altogether (Bernstein 1997:532). Polletta and Jasper define collective identity as “an individual’s cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution” (Polletta and Jasper 2001:285). Other scholars add that collective identity is a “shared sense of ‘we-ness” (Hunt and Benford 2004:440), and “common cause, threat, or fate” (Snow 2001:2214), derived from group membership to a particular social category. Thus, among the manifold uses of the concept of collective identity, the most common denominator is the shared sense of “we-ness”. Furthermore, an important component of collective identity is the creation and sustenance of an oppositional consciousness. Collective identity not only “defines who ‘us’ is but also acknowledges some injustice done to ‘us’ and attributes it to structural causes” (Kaminski and Taylor 2008:49). Polletta and Jasper emphasise that, “collective identities are expressed in a group’s cultural

materials—names, narratives, symbols, verbal styles, rituals, clothing, and so on” (Polletta and Jasper 2001:284). As Kaminski and Taylor add:

when these rituals, symbols, and patterns of interaction foment a sense of injustice and critique the dominant social order, they constitute an oppositional culture. Social movements emerge from and are sustained by these oppositional cultures (Kaminski and Taylor 2008:49).

Much of the existing literature on collective identity and social movements highlights the construction of identity during the course of collective action (Einwohner 2008, see also Taylor and Whittier 1992, 1995). On a related note, Polletta and Jasper claim that movement identities can become associated with specific tactical styles:

The answer to “who are we?” need not be a quality or noun; ‘we are people who do these sorts of things in this particular way’ can be equally compelling.”...Activists may identify primarily with style of protest, or degree of moderation or radicalism (Polletta and Jasper 2001:293).

This thesis seeks to build on this claim by exploring marches in Poland as sites where a gay oppositional collective identity is created.⁴⁷ Consequently, I rely on the work of scholars who recognise that versions of movement identity are formed in multiple sites (e.g., at protests or through media work) and places (Holland et al. 2008).

Identity deployment

While I understand collective identity as a “shared definition of a group that derives from members’ common interests, and solidarity” (Taylor and Whittier 1995:172), I focus in particular on Bernstein’s concept of identity deployment, as it captures the processes that elucidate how activists strategically deploy their identities for political change (Bernstein 1997). Bernstein offers three analytically distinct

⁴⁷ However, see Chapter 7 for a discussion of challenges and tensions inherent in the project of creating such a collective identity.

dimensions of identity deployment strategies, that is, identity for empowerment, identity as goal, and identity as strategy, with two sub-categories - identity for critique and identity for education (Bernstein 1997). Bernstein identifies “identity for empowerment” to mean the creation of collective identity and the belief that political action is a realistic possibility (Bernstein 1997:536). She adds that collective identity understood in these terms is a prerequisite for the mobilisation of a constituency as well as collective action. Secondly, identity can be a goal of activism, either achieving acceptance for a previously stigmatised identity (Calhoun 1994) or deconstructing identity categories such as “man,” “woman,” “gay,” “straight”, as was the case of radical queer activists, whose tactics will be discussed in more detail later (Gamson 1995). Finally, Bernstein argues that:

Identities are deployed strategically as a form of collective action to change institutions; to transform mainstream culture, its categories, and values, and perhaps by extension its policies and structures; to transform participants; or simply to educate legislators or the public (Bernstein 2005:62).

Bernstein identifies two identity deployment strategies, identity for critique and identity for education, where the first strategy involves confronting the identity and values of the dominant culture (Bernstein 1997). An example of the use of this strategy would be the confrontational, in-your-face actions of groups such as ACT UP [AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power], which for instance consisted of staging public “die-ins” (simulated deaths) in front of government buildings, in order to protest the lack of an adequate response to the AIDS epidemic (Gallagher and Bull 1996). The second strategy within Bernstein’s framework is referred to as “identity for education”, and as Bernstein suggests “movements pursuing this strategy either challenge the dominant culture’s perception of them or attempt to use their identity to gain legitimacy by emphasising non-controversial activities” (Bernstein

1997:537). For example, lesbian and gay organisations deploying this strategy strive to challenge negative stereotypes about lesbians and gay men, such as having large numbers of sexual partners a year or struggling with uncontrollable sexual urges (Herman 1994). The strategy of identity for education stresses the similarities with the majority, minimising the differences that set apart members of a minority group and usually steers away from problematising the norms of a dominant culture, such as heteronormativity (Bernstein 1997).

An important contribution of Bernstein's identity deployment framework is that she views the formation of a collective identity as a movement resource that can be strategically deployed to achieve group objectives. This way, she establishes a theoretical connection between what has generally been viewed as competing approaches to understanding social movements (Chambers 2006). As discussed earlier, while resource mobilisation and political opportunity scholars were reluctant to discuss collective identity at all, new social movement theorists viewed it almost solely in cultural terms. Bernstein engages with the new social movements framework, and at the same time, she also suggests that it is important to take into account the political context when examining how activists articulate and construct their collective identity. She argues that the broadly understood political context as well as the extent of the opposition will influence the types of identities deployed, that is, whether the activists will choose to emphasise the similarities or differences from mainstream society (Bernstein 1997). Thus Bernstein's approach constitutes a useful tool to analyse the ideological tensions with regards to collective identity construction that surface in the context of gay and lesbian public activism in Poland.

Bernstein argues that the use of her model of identity deployment can also be extended beyond the cases of the Western sexual minorities' movement

(Bernstein 2005). Nevertheless, when it comes to her discussion on gay and lesbian activism outside of the global North, she assumes a hierarchical model whereby these movements “emulate the identities deployed and tactics used in other countries ... [by] adopting ‘Western’ gay identities at the expense of local ways of organising same-sex erotic behaviour” (Bernstein 2005:66). This suggests that gay and lesbian public activism in Poland fits into the dichotomy of the firm modern/traditional, Western/non-Western divisions. By extension, within that model, Polish marches could be interpreted as an inadequate version of Prides in the West. This assumption is highly problematic and thus an important contribution of my thesis is to question the assumption that the LGBT movement ideologies and identities travel from a “more developed” global North to a non-Western periphery (Currier 2007). Similarly, in her analysis of the development of gay culture in Poland, Baer points out that this top-down model of diffusion of gay identity is based on a chronological, coherent narration of the USA’s LGBT movement (Baer 2005). To begin with, this linear narrative can be said to be rather simplistic, as homosexual identity formation in the West and the development of the movement’s ideological perspective was “complex and disjointed [and] hardly straightforward” (Nash 2005:119). Moreover, such narrative denies the diversity of non-heterosexual cultures in the West and suggests that there is one monolithic Western gay identity, whereas actually there exist “multiple forms of gay in different localities” (Jackson 1999:362). Consequently, whilst using most of Bernstein’s framework, this thesis rejects this particular aspect of identity deployment, i.e. her approach towards the creation of non-Western gay and lesbian identities.

The next sections will continue with the theme of identity deployment, focusing in more detail on its individual elements, i.e. identity for empowerment,

identity as a goal and identity as a strategy. To start with, I broaden the scope of Bernstein's framework by making theoretical connections between the notion of identity for empowerment and the role of emotions in protest. Later on, I draw on the notion of identity as a strategy in exploring movement-media interactions. Related to that, I also discuss the concept of visibility and its dilemmas in relation to gay and lesbian public activist events. Finally, I move on to discuss the final element of Bernstein's framework, identity as a goal, and concentrate on the tensions between affirming and deconstructing identity as they are played out in the context of public activism.

Emotion work in the context of collective identity

As noted earlier, Bernstein identifies "identity for empowerment" as one of elements of her identity deployment model, defining it to mean the creation of a sense of the movement's "we-ness", combined with a feeling that political action is possible (Bernstein 1997:536). While her model does not explicitly mention the relevance of emotions for that process to occur, Gould notes how emotion is bound up in identity construction (Gould 2001, 2002). In this section, I build on Bernstein's concept of "identity for empowerment" by discussing the role of emotions in mobilisation for public activism, especially in the unfavourable political context.

Recently, the study of social movements and collective action has focused on emotions as an important factor in the emergence, recruitment and sustenance of movement activity and culture (Hercus 1999, Goodwin et al. 2001, Gould 2001, 2002, Aminzade and McAdam 2002, Flam and King 2005, Brown and Pickerril 2009). Kemper, outlining his approach to emotions in social movements, claims that:

Social movements are awash in emotions. Anger, fear, envy, guilt, pity, shame, awe, passion and other feelings play a part either in the formation of social movements, in their relations with their targets who are either antagonists or possible collaborators, and in the lives of potential recruiters and members (Kemper 2001:59).

Britt and Heise go beyond just identifying that collective action might be connected with emotion work, and develop a model describing how social movements engage in identity politics based on their analysis of the gay rights movements (Britt and Heise 2000). They define identity politics as:

A form of emotion work needed to translate isolation, fear, and shame into anger, solidarity, pride, and action, in order to mobilise stigmatised groups. Social movements involved in identity politics deal with people who are initially ashamed, isolated, and perhaps depressed. The first task is to turn shame and depression into other emotions with higher activation in order to incite and motivate (Britt and Heise 2000:255).

Their model asserts that increasing levels of participation in social movement-related activities begins a process by which initial shame converts to fear, fear to anger, anger to pride. While their model makes an interesting theoretical contribution to the interplay between identity politics and emotion work, it seems to be overly simplistic and unidirectional, with a progression from negative to positive emotions. After all, this model might not be fully applicable to the case of Polish marches, where a number have been banned and/or attacked and where the activists could hardly be expected to generate solely positive emotions. In some cases, collective action is motivated more by intense emotions such as “anger, indignation, fear, compassion or a sense of obligation” rather than by political opportunity (Polletta and Amenta 2001:308). Therefore, in the next section I look at research that employs more complex models of emotions of protest.

Emotions of protest

Of particular relevance for my thesis is the research that points to public events such

as marches and demonstrations as sites where movement actors “do” emotion work that raises emotional capital for mobilisation efforts (Stryker et al. 2000:13).

According to Gould:

The intense emotional energy that is generated when people join together in pursuit of a common end—the joy, the solidarity, the feeling of being part of something that is larger than oneself—helps to explain why people engage in collective action even when they could easily take a “free ride”. Protests, strikes, sit-ins, and the like engage groups of people in sometimes dangerous and often risky, intense, dramatic and exhilarating activities. Additionally, the issues around which movement participants mobilise are usually highly emotionally charged (Gould 2001:155).

Similarly, in her discussion of the emotions generated through the activities of the women’s movement, such as demonstrations and marches, Taylor mentions the significant role of public protest, arguing that:

[it] evokes and channels women’s emotions, dramatises inequality and injustice, and emphasises the connection between women’s individual experiences and their disadvantaged status as a group (Taylor 1995:229-230).

On a related note, in her research on emotion work performed by feminist activists, Hercus (1999) focuses on intense and mostly pleasant emotions, such as joy and enthusiasm that the women experienced during demonstrations and rallies. The activists received an emotional boost from participating in these events, allowing them to sustain commitment to their cause even if the reactions of non-feminist outsiders were at times quite hostile. At the same time, Hercus goes beyond focusing only on the positive emotions that stem from participation in public activist events. She adds that through these events, women could channel emotions which could potentially be seen as “deviant”, such as anger (Hercus 1999:48). The concept of “emotional deviance” is grounded in the work of Hochschild, who argues that emotions and emotional displays are governed by “feeling rules,” which

indicate what constitutes appropriate feelings in a specific situation (Hochschild 1979). The existence of such rules implies the possibility of “emotional deviance”, that is inappropriate feelings that violate the emotion rules (Hercus 1999:36). The connection between the concept of “deviant emotions” and public activism is further strengthened by scholars looking at the mobilisation of anger in the context of radical AIDS activism, in particular ACT UP. To start with, the mobilisation of anger was already evident in the group’s self-definition, which included the phrase “a group united in anger and committed to direct action to end the AIDS crisis” (Reed 2005:203). Even more important was the expression of that political anger via radical actions in the public space. Gould notes that American culture (and, it has to be added, most Western/European cultures as well) has deemed anger a signifier of lost control, especially when it is articulated by systematically marginalised individuals (Gould 2004). In this light, the emotion culture of ACT UP activists, who were openly espousing anger and rage, probably seemed particularly threatening to the “mainstream” public.

Secondly, Gould argues that at the beginning of the epidemic, most members of the gay and lesbian community often expressed shame about gay male sexuality and its suspected role in the epidemic (Gould 2002). Thus, while Gould does not explicitly use the term “emotional deviance”, she points out that through their disruptive actions, ACT UP activists violated the “feeling rules” as set out both by the mainstream public as well as the non-radical part of the gay and lesbian community. At the same time, as noted earlier, Gould and others do stress the positive emotions that are produced in the course of collective action, and so in this thesis I take the approach that looks at public activist events as sites of emotion work, where the emotions under discussion range from positive (such as joy and

enthusiasm) to potentially negative and “deviant” (such as anger). Having focused extensively on identity for empowerment, I now turn to discuss issues related to yet another element of Bernstein’s framework, that is, identity as strategy. Specifically, I focus on identity for education and provide a theoretical background for analysing the ways in which movement activists seek to create and control their representations in public.

Communicating identity: movement-media interactions

Collective identities do not exist solely on the intra-movement level, they also are crucial for understanding the ways in which movements communicate with actors outside of the movement. Furthermore, the creation a collective identity, a feeling of “we-ness,” or an understanding of an “us” versus “them” or “the other” is crucial for the way social movement organisations create images of movement members (Taylor and Whittier 1992). This aspect of collective identity could prove particularly relevant in the context of Polish gay and lesbian marches. As Browne argues, although LGBT Prides are diverse across the world and even within countries, they have become significant in the contemporary international imaginings of non-heterosexual lives (Browne 2007). Therefore, this section of the literature review will provide a theoretical framework that is useful in exploring the ways in which activists used public activism to challenge pre-existing images of gays and lesbians in Poland as deviant and hyper-sexual. I use as my point of departure Bernstein’s concept of identity as a strategy, specifically, “identity for education”, which challenges the negative perceptions that the dominant culture has of sexual minorities. I also focus on the theoretical aspects of movement-media interactions in order to later analyse the efforts of the activists to control and construct the representation of the gay and lesbian movement in Poland. Kama,

writing about the crucial relevance of public representations for sexual minorities, notes that:

The role a public gay figure plays is related to a non-gay audience, where, the public gay figure is perceived to be an agent of and for social action and change. Each public gay man is perceived to be a sort of an ambassador of the gay community to the non-gay world...Therefore, anything they utter, the way they look, behave, and so on may be ascribed to all their peers ... The flawed portrayal of gay men by the media has concrete ramifications for other gay men who fear that their tactics of presentation of self may undermine other "normal" gay men (Kama 2002:205).

By gaining publicity in the mass media, minority groups can gain access to the venues of public policy formation and agenda-setting (Tereskinas 2002). Consequently, the question of how news stories are created, and in particular whose voices are included in these constructions, has become a critical issue for social movements (Barker-Plummer 2002). Furthermore, the public's perception of movement organisations and their members is vital to any movement's ability to achieve movement goals, among other things. With a negative public image, the ability of movement organisations to do even the most mundane of tasks becomes increasingly difficult (Schroer 2008).

As Fejes has suggested, the construction of gay and lesbian identity possibly relies more heavily on media representations than other identities because of the limited contact that most people have with openly gay individuals in their personal lives (Fejes 2001). On top of that, activists in general often have problems disseminating their interpretations of the collective identity of movement members (Koopmans 2004). In particular, when it comes to representations of public activism in the media, scholars point to the ubiquity of the "protest paradigm". Within that paradigm, news reports often depict protesters as a hindrance to society or as social deviants, focusing on economic costs and legality of actions, as opposed to the

underlying causes of protest (Gitlin 1980, McLeod and Hertog 1992). Most news coverage of protests ultimately frames these events as “police versus protesters” rather than a reflection of relevant social issues in need of public attention (Baylor 1996). Thus, when the media cover an event, reporters are selective in their focus; they “give priority to violent or bizarre aspects of a protest while paying little or no attention to those facets of a protest that are non-violent” (Tarrow 1994:126).

In the case of gay and lesbian marches in Poland, the problems with representation are magnified as sexual minorities remain a difficult topic of discussion and an extremely sensitive issue involving societal values, norms and sexuality, as discussed extensively throughout this thesis. Kowalczyk confirms that for the most part, the media in Poland portray the marches as a confrontation between the right-wing radical organisations and the marchers, not discriminating between the perpetrators of violence and the largely peaceful demonstration (Kowalczyk 2006). As Graff puts it, referring to this comparative tendency that is evident in the Polish media, the media need “simple stories, built around a visible contrast or a dramatic conflict”, where there are two groups that can be clearly juxtaposed (Graff 2003:17). Furthermore, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, the activists have to deal not only with representations produced by the media, but also the right-wing organisations and Catholic Church authorities. Thus, movement leaders need to strategise not only against individual opponents (and by extension, hostile media), but must do so within a “multi-organisational field of allied, competing, and oppositional movement organisations and authorities” (Poletta and Jasper 2001:294).

Currently there is very little research looking at images of the gay and lesbian movement in Poland produced by the right-wing/religious organisations (but

see Starnawski 2003 and Szczuka 2004 for an analysis of similar images in the context of the Polish feminist movement), and so in this section I draw on research that analyses the homophobic imagery of gay and lesbian public activism mostly in the context of the American Christian Right. I believe this theoretical framework is also relevant for understanding the meanings that the organisers of gay and lesbian marches attribute to images released by their opponents, as well as the ways in which the activists attempt to challenge these representations. Moreover, as I discuss later, a number of Polish right-wing and religious organisations have ideological and/or financial links with US fundamentalist organisations, such as Tradition, Family and Property or the American Family Association (Czarnecki 2007). These organisations have been instrumental in financing campaigns against gay and lesbian public activist events, such as for instance the campaign “Say no to homosexuality” organised by the Piotr Skarga Association of Christian Culture before the 2004 March for Tolerance in Krakow (Kubica 2006).

In her work, Herman analyses the images produced by the American Christian Right, in particular their use of images from gay prides, which they claim to be a “representative” image of the movement (Herman 1994, 1997). She focuses on the video “The Gay Agenda”, produced by the American Family Association, which draws from footage allegedly compiled at gay pride marches:

[the] film opens with sensationalist commentary informing the viewer that they are likely to be stunned and shocked by what they are about to see. Visually, the viewer sees shot after shot of half or wholly naked men, usually sporting some form of sadomasochistic paraphernalia. The men scream, stick their tongues out, push their naked bums in the camera lens and engage in sexual activity on the streets with each other ... penises are depicted graphically (Herman 1997:81).

Similarly, Oregon’s Citizen’s Alliance disseminated videos where shots of “menacing cross-dressers [were] juxtaposed with vulnerable looking children”

(Apostolidis 2001:81), which bears a resemblance to the campaigns of the nationalist organisation All-Polish Youth, discussed in Chapter 2. These campaigns focused on the need to ban gay and lesbian marches in Polish cities so as to protect the children from exposure to deviancy. These images are also instrumental in producing “moral panics” (Cohen 1980), as was the case of the Section 28 debate in the UK. That discussion often focused on the idea of a gay lobby’s “crusade” to make children read textbooks “promoting homosexuality”. If Section 28 was repealed, it was alleged, children would be “force-fed gay sex education” through the use of “gay sex packs” and “homosexual role playing” (Moran 2001:74). This construction of a homosexuality, which constantly requires new recruits, echoes the portrayal of lesbians and gays as predatory and unrestrained in their sexual behaviour (Rahman 2004).

In this context it is understandable why the notion of “identity for education”, i.e. strategic deployment of the movement identity to challenge existing negative representations, could be a useful organising principle for discussing the efforts of the gay and lesbian activists engaged in organising marches and prides in Poland. At the same time, it has to be noted that a number of scholars argue that there are severe limits to the degree in which actors can change the amount of visibility that is assigned to their messages (Kruse 2001). As Tarrow argues, a movement may be able to gain attention, but it lacks significant resources to outweigh the power of the media to shape perceptions (Tarrow 1994). First of all, members of the media act as gatekeepers in the sense that they control whether a movement’s members and issues get presented to the public. Secondly, even if a movement does manage to gain access to the mass media, members of the media control the ways in which the movements’ members and organisations are presented

(Schroer 2008). Because of these problems, many activists feel that the public image of the members of their movement is misunderstood or completely incorrect, thus affecting their ability to achieve movement goals (Gamson 1989).

Yet, this model of relationship between the movement and the media is rather one-dimensional, furthermore, it presents the activists as deprived of agency and so Oliver and Myers present a more dynamic model of media-movement interaction in which:

Experienced event organisers, police, and reporters are more like members of an improvisational troupe: the script is not fixed, but the players have worked together before, they follow general guidelines, and they can predict each other's actions (Oliver and Myers 1999:43).

This model introduces a possibility of discussing issues of power in the context of identity politics, and in particular the concept of visibility. The question of visibility has been crucial for minority groups, since visibility can aid these groups in translating their views and concerns into issues of public interest (Tereskinas 2002).

Visibility and its dilemmas

At the same time, visibility is not in itself an unproblematic concept. To start with, Clarkson criticises identity politics for its adherence to the belief that a lack of media visibility of a minority group reflects inequality, and therefore, these groups should strive towards greater power through enhanced visibility (Clarkson 2008). In his critique of the idea that visibility translates unproblematically into empowerment, Clarkson builds on the ideas of Phelan, who has argued that "if representational visibility equals power, then almost-naked young white women should be running Western culture" (Phelan 1993:10). Similarly, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, certain versions of non-heterosexual identity, such as the homosexual paedophile, are widespread in public imagination and images produced

by the media in Poland. However, this type of visibility is obviously far from empowering for the LGBT community.

Dilemmas of visibility, discussed in this section, are also salient within scholarly work focusing on Western gay prides and marches. As Marston adds, gay pride events in the West have become the most mass-mediated realisation of a gay and lesbian counterpublic, attracting coverage from newspapers, magazines, television and radio (Marston 2002). A common thread running through most of that research is the reflection that Western prides have undergone significant changes since their early manifestations in the 1970s. Researchers point out that these public events have been transformed from their origins as protest marches that engaged with legislation and formal politics into a commercialised tourist attraction (Markwell 2002, Hughes 2003). As Markwell argues, writing about the dilemmas of visibility in the context of prides in Australia:

The public visibility of this first parade is something that a number of participants identify as socially and politically significant, and much of the discourse associated with Mardi Gras reinforces their position. Nevertheless, it is naive to conflate public visibility with social progress; in fact, the high level of public visibility that Mardi Gras now enjoys may conceal systemic oppression, homophobia, and discrimination (Markwell 2002:83).

Furthermore, scholarly work on prides also signals that the changed nature of these events is reflected at the level of the LGBT movement as well as the wider gay and lesbian community. The process of normalisation of prides has led to controversies within the community, where some members argue that pride as a political tool in the fight for gay and lesbian rights (and a site of gay and lesbian subjectivities) has outlived its usefulness (Clarkson 2008). While Polish gay and lesbian marches have an obvious political component, similar concerns have been raised over the normalising strategies of the movement (Dunin 2004, Kulpa 2004, Majka 2009).

According to Mizielinska, the fact that the public activist events seem to create an image of a “normal” gay person is an understandable reaction to the portrayal of the activists as perverts and deviants by the right-wing. However, this normalising move is creating further exclusions (Mizielinska 2005). Furthermore, these controversies also signal a larger debate regarding the tensions between radical and assimilationist approaches in the context of gay and lesbian public activism, which will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 7. At the same time, it has to be remembered that for many LGBT people, attending their first pride event remains a significant rite of passage (Kates and Belk 2001).

This section has primarily concentrated on issues connected with “identity for education” as a strategy, where the aim is to package movement claims so as to downplay differences from the mainstream. While I have looked at some problematic aspects of adopting the tactics of visibility, the next section devotes more space to ideological debates occurring in the context of public gay and lesbian activism. I move on to introduce issues related to the final element of Bernstein’s framework, that is, identity as a goal. I start by discussing the concept of identity politics, connected with gaining acceptance for a previously stigmatised identity. Later on, I look at the tensions inherent in identity politics, locating that discussion within the framework of queer politics (Bernstein 2002).

Queer/identity dilemma

In this section I outline the debates that have come up in the context of strategic uses of collective identity where many groups have been “torn between asserting a clear identity and deconstructing it, revealing it to be unstable, fluid, and constructed” (Poletta and Jasper 2001:292). These are precisely the tensions I will

be exploring in this thesis by looking at public activism in Poland as a site where the debates between normalising and anti-normalising strategies are played out.

The classic debate over identity politics centres on whether members of a socially constructed group opt to embrace a fixed identity to gain political power or whether they reject the fixed identity because of the restrictive characteristics of such identities (Gamson 1995, Rimmerman 2008). These strategies rely on fixed notions of identity and aim to obtain recognition for that identity in the political sphere (Vaid 1995). From the mid 1970s, gay and lesbian-feminist communities adopted an “ethnic model” of identity and politics, which was committed “to establishing gay identity as a legitimate minority group...constructed as analogous to an ethnic minority – that is, as a distinct and identifiable population rather than a radical potentiality for all” (Jagose 1996:61). Being a distinct and identifiable population also meant being intelligible to those who did not identify as gay or lesbian (Seidman 1993). An important part of establishing a recognisable and distinct minority group was the development of a gay and lesbian community, along with gay and lesbian institutions, media and commercial venues (Wald 2000).

The identity-based politics has been the site of much contestation (Seidman 1993). The main form of critique has been the fact that it relies on establishing a stable gay and lesbian identity that would not be seen as threatening (Jagose 1996). According to Friedman and McAdam, collective identity involves “rules for behaviour that those who assume the identity can be expected to subscribe to” (Friedman and McAdam 1992:157). Rimmerman describes activists who embrace identity politics as assimilationists, who “typically embrace a rights-based perspective and work within the broader framework of liberal, pluralist democracy, fighting for a seat at the table” (Rimmerman 2002:3). According to Seidman,

identity politics movements create a new kind of nationalism, in that identity-based social movements serve to erect artificial boundaries and borders, and thus increase the potential for in-group/out-group assimilation and separatism (Seidman 1993). Furthermore, a strategic focus on gay and lesbian identity excludes differences based on other social hierarchies (e.g. race, class, gender, etc.), not to mention bisexual and transgender identities which have the potential to undermine the hetero/homo and male/female divisions (Heckert 2005). Advocating in the name of a lesbian/gay subject (and, by extension, the efforts of movement actors to construct collective identity) can be problematic as a way to challenge heteronormativity or systemic prejudices. As Bower argues, such a tactic usually sustains a hierarchy where the homosexual subject remains as different from and potentially less worthy of civil rights than the heterosexual subject (Bower 1997). Therefore, any activism in the name of those categories, such as gay and lesbian collective identity, is unlikely to alleviate inequality.

Queer activists are intent on challenging the very categories of identity that had formerly motivated activism (Bernstein 2005). Gamson, describing the anti-identity stance of queer-based activism, evokes the image of “pulling the rug out from under one’s own feet” and argues that the destabilisation of collective identity is the chief goal of collective action (Gamson 1995:397). As Berube and Escoffier explain, “[q]ueer is meant to be confrontational—opposed to gay assimilationists and straight oppressors while inclusive of people who have been marginalised by anyone in power” (Berube and Escoffier 1991:12). Thus, queer politics is geared more directly towards transgression of social norms and structures as well as opposition to state regulation of sexuality (Warner 1993). Furthermore, transgressive strategies such as “kiss-ins” (displays of same sex affection in

everyday spaces such as shopping centres, etc. accompanied by slogans such as “we’re here, we’re queer, we’re not going shopping”) and “die-ins” reconceptualised the seemingly neutral heterosexual spaces of the everyday as legitimate queer spaces (Watson 2005:73). Moreover, through re-appropriation of the word “queer” and its redefinition so that it referred to anything contradicting dominant cultural norms, queer activists endeavoured to form a “multiracial, multi-gendered movement of people with diverse sexualities” (Bernstein 2005:56). On a related note, Douglas Crimp, discussing the success of radical AIDS activists, such as members of queer-based ACT UP, claims that the only way for them to succeed in adverse political conditions was to form broad coalitions overlapping differences based on such factors as race, class and gender, and focusing instead on common goals (Crimp 1993:341). Similarly, Cohen adds that, “at the intersection of oppression and resistance lies the radical potential of queerness to challenge and bring together all those deemed marginal” (Cohen 2001:203). Importantly, these definitions stress the coalitional aspect of queer, which will later be relevant for my discussion of the ways in which the research participants engaged with the concept of “queerness” in the context of Polish public gay and lesbian activism.

At the same time, Green argues even as an individual gay or lesbian person will intellectually acknowledge the limitations of fixed homosexual identity:

it will do him [or her] no good to cite Butler when confronted with a pack of gay bashers, or a homophobic landlord or employer, and protest that his [or her] identity is multiple and unstable, in order to gain protection from the ensuing beating or discrimination (Green 2002:530).

Similarly, in his critique of queer theory, Kirch acknowledges that sexual identity labels can become limiting. However, without these very labels it is extremely difficult to find a common cause on the basis of which collective action against

prejudice and homophobia can be taken (Kirsch 2007). Furthermore, despite the promise of a transformative and all-inclusive model of activism of queer politics, although everyone is presumably included under the queer umbrella, the terms of inclusion seem “suspiciously white, male, and middle class” (Kaplan 1990:36, quoted in Rand 2004:289). Meeks, for example, brings up stories of women who were harassed, shouted at, or ignored at Queer meetings (Meeks 2001). Moreover, Bernstein advises that analysts of identity politics should not take the public claims made by identity-based movements uncritically (Bernstein 2005). She argues that when movements appear to rest on essentialist assumptions – which at face value could be applied to the manifestations of collective identity in the case of Polish marches - theorists must determine how activists themselves understand the sources of their identities. Furthermore, Bernstein stresses the need to examine whether that essentialism is strategic and what political and cultural factors it is influenced by. Thus, Bernstein’s framework will be a useful tool to analyse the tension between the desire to implement queer politics as an integral part of the public activism project and the reality in which the Polish movement operates.

Finally, Mizielinska points to the problems of “translating” the theory into the Polish context, arguing that, “queer theory is strongly rooted in a specific, mostly American context that has no right equivalent and precedents in Poland” (Mizielinska 2005:118). To start with, in the Anglo-American context the concept of “queer” has been associated with reclaiming the word and subverting its homophobic origins. This has not been the case in Poland, or in fact, in other non-English speaking countries (for instance, see Rosenberg 2008 for a discussion on the meanings of queer in the Swedish context). Secondly, Mizielinska expresses her concerns about applying the concept of “queer” to a movement which emerged in a

very different reality and a radically different socio-political context. Related to that, she points to the danger of adopting a narrative of a top-down transmission of ideas where concepts such as queer theory originate in the global North and travel to the non-Western periphery. Thus, while drawing on literature concerned with queer/identity dilemmas, this thesis will also problematise the concept of queer as relevant to the context of Polish gay and lesbian activism.

At the same time, theories of collective identity, on their own, might be insufficient to explain the ways in which gay and lesbian marches were a “new kind of public performance in accordance with changing criteria for legitimate use of the public sphere” (Greenberg 2005:325). After all, in their analysis of public protest in the post-transformation era in Poland, Ekiert and Kubik, argue that demands with regards to public space were mostly used to articulate religious or economic claims (Ekiert and Kubik 1998). As will be shown later, one of the key concerns of gay and lesbian activists was the notion of sexual citizenship with an emphasis on rights related to identity such as self-definition and self realisation (Richardson 1998). This way, I look at gay and lesbian marches in Poland and the activists’ efforts as an attempt at achieving incorporation within the polity or society as full members (also see Weeks 1998, McGhee 2004). Accordingly, the next section of this chapter focuses on the concept of (sexual) citizenship, which has become increasingly relevant to the ways in which gay and lesbian movements articulate their claims and understand their strategic decisions (Richardson 2000, Tereskinas 2002, Kuhar 2006).

Introducing the concept of sexual citizenship

The concept of (sexual) citizenship as a form of identity associated with public participation, inclusion and belonging (Tereskinas 2002) will allow me to consider

the significance of public activism for the gay and lesbian community in Poland during the period under consideration in this thesis. This theoretical framework will also be a useful tool to explore the ways in which via prides and marches, gay and lesbian activists respond to mainstream constructions of citizenship in Poland, which imply mandatory heterosexuality. Finally, it can also prove relevant in exploring the tensions inherent in the activists' attempts to construct more positive representations of sexual minorities in Poland through marches and prides.

According to Isin and Wood "citizenship can be described as both a set of practices (cultural, symbolic and economic) and a bundle of rights and duties (civil, political and social) that define an individual's membership in the polity (Isin and Wood 1999:4). As Kymlicka and Norman argue, one of the most significant models for analysing citizenship status remains that proposed by T. H. Marshall, who defines citizenship as "a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community, [where a]ll who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed" (Kymlicka and Norman 1995:285). The category of citizen has traditionally been portrayed as a universal and gender-neutral category. At the same time, as Richardson points out, this vision of an ostensibly genderless citizen conceals the fact that claims to citizenship status are strongly associated with "the institutionalisation of heterosexual as well as male privilege" (Richardson 1998:88).

As Johnson argues, writing about the ways in which the heteronormative aspects of citizenship are sustained:

Gays and lesbians can be excluded from the rights and entitlements which heterosexuals have and/or those rights and entitlements can be conceived of in ways that are more appropriate to conventional heterosexual relationships than same sex ones (Johnson 2002:320).

As mentioned in Chapter 2, due to losses suffered in World War II, Poland is one of the least ethnically diverse countries in Europe (Levinson 1998). In the absence of other minorities, sexual minorities have become “one part of the ‘other’ against which the nation is defined”, and so homosexuality is deemed to be “un-Polish” with gays and lesbians positioned outside the imagined national community (O’Dwyer and Schwartz 2006). As a number of scholars argue, the exclusionist and heteronormative model of Polish citizenship has become even more pronounced in the post-accession landscape (Graff 2006, O’Dwyer and Schwartz 2006, 2007). At the same time, Fuss stresses the importance of exploring the relationship between citizen status and sexual identity, asking, “What does it mean to be a citizen in a state which programmatically denies citizenship on the basis of sexual preference?” (Fuss 1989:112). Similarly, this thesis seeks to answer what it means to be an activist in a state which systematically denies gays and lesbians access to public space, as discussed earlier in Chapter 2.

Citizenship and public space

Definitions of citizenship are intrinsically related to conceptualisations of public space. A dominant construct of citizenship is “located in the public sphere and centred on the rights and responsibilities of individuals in relation to their fellow citizens and to the wider community” (Weeks 1998:36). However, there is a range of legal benefits as well as duties and privileges that regulate the private sphere and are “crystallised around a hegemonic model of heterosexual family life” (Donovan et al. 1999:693). This way, as Donovan et al. add, non-heterosexuals (together with a number of heterosexuals) are excluded from being able to fully participate in society (Donovan et al. 1999).

Furthermore, by determining what actions and behaviours are considered appropriate in public spaces and by excluding those who do not act in accordance, citizenship is constructed as a response to the "other" (Lister 1997). Those who do not fit the prevalent definitions of citizenship are more prone to be excluded from public spaces, especially if their actions are deemed inappropriate (Bell 1995). For sexual dissidents, entry into the public domain is very difficult and on numerous occasions, they are blatantly excluded by "prevailing senses of what expressions of sexuality are permissible in public spaces" (Bell 1995:140). The space of the centre is constructed as predominantly heterosexual, whereas lesbians and gays may only have at their disposal the space of a bar or their own private home, which is quite often synonymous with remaining in the closet (Valentine 1996). Nevertheless, participation in the public sphere is implicit in attaining full citizenship:

If people cannot be present in public spaces (streets, squares, parks, cinemas, churches, town halls) without feeling uncomfortable, victimised and basically "out of place", then it must be questionable whether or not these people can be regarded as citizens at all: or, at least, whether they will regard themselves as full citizens on an equal footing with other people who seem perfectly "at home" when moving about in public spaces (Painter and Philo 1995:115).

Similarly, Bell and Binnie cite "possession of the city's streets" and "one's comfort in asserting one's sexual identity in public spaces" as markers of sexual citizenship (Bell and Binnie 2000:88). Pride events thus create a temporary LGBT public and a visible presence of sexual otherness (Bell and Valentine 1995). The aim of such displays is to challenge the heteronormative status quo and various forms of social exclusion by manifestations of difference. Weeks argues that gay and lesbian movement actors, through their actions make "a claim to inclusion, to the acceptance of diversity, and a recognition of and respect for alternative ways of being, to a broadening of the definition of belonging" (Weeks 1998:37).

At the same time, citizenship – and by the same token, sexual citizenship – is an “exclusionary concept, never expanded to all members of any polity” (Isin and Wood 1999:20). According to McGhee, in the context of sexual citizenship, the fundamental predicament of activism is whether to demand equal rights for LGBT people through strategies which portray them as normal, good citizens who deserve respect because they conform to mainstream social norms. After all, this approach would still entail a political logic of minority rights based on heterosexual dominance (McGhee 2004). On a related note, Richardson argues that, “lesbians and gay men are granted the right to be tolerated as long as they stay within the boundaries of that tolerance” (Richardson 1998:90). According to Stychin, who addresses the focus of Western LGBT movements on legal accomplishments:

Lesbians and gays seeking rights may embrace the ideal of "respectability", a construction that then perpetuates a division between "good gays" and (disreputable) "bad queers". The latter are then excluded from the discourse of citizenship (Stychin 1998:20).

Thus, while the efforts of LGBT activists may lead to broadening the concept of citizenship to include “respectable” gay citizens, nevertheless, this strategy purely shifts the boundary of exclusion elsewhere. In its essence, this dilemma is quite similar to the one between ethnic identity and queer strategies (Gamson 1995). As discussed earlier, identity-based movements are quite often torn between adopting assimilationist versus more radical strategies. This dilemma takes on special significance in the context of public activism, where the movement has to decide whether to emphasise difference or similarities to the mainstream through public representations. As Takacs argues:

Political emancipation of LGBT people can be analysed by applying the concepts of sexual citizenship, emphasising the necessity to broaden the scope of modern citizenship to consider full participation opportunities of

social groups, including LGBT people, being formerly deprived of full community membership (Takacs 2005).

Thus, it is a relevant concept in which to explore the strategic decisions – as well as strategic dilemmas - of the Polish gay and lesbian movement with regards to public activism.

Conclusion

In most social movement literature, protest events have been analysed as “dependent variables” and as a resource which groups rely on to exert pressure on decision-makers, where the bulk of analysis focuses on their macro-contextual characteristics (Della Porta and Diani 1999). My approach constitutes a departure from that strand of protest research and concentrates instead on micro-level processes of collective identity; it also contributes to the scholarly writing concerned with the ways that emotions work in social movements. In this thesis I turn to social movement scholarship, which emphasises “meaning, identity, and cultural production in collective action” (Hercus 1999:35) and is well suited to examining the meanings of prides and marches in the context of Polish gay and lesbian public activism.

Throughout this chapter I situated my research in the context of social movements theories, focusing in particular on Bernstein’s concept of identity deployment. This concept focuses in particular on the “how” of public activism, that is, how movement activists come to believe that action is within their grasp. This element of Bernstein’s framework, i.e. identity for empowerment was supplemented by a discussion of the role of emotions in explaining how the activists come to mobilise and sustain their engagement in public activism despite the frequent unfavourable political context. Furthermore, I drew on Bernstein’s concept of

identity as strategy to discuss how activists create and control representations of the movement, using visibility tactics to challenge existing negative images of sexual minorities. Finally, in my overview of Bernstein's framework, I turned to the concept of identity as a goal in analysing how the activists deal with ideological dilemmas (in particular, the queer/identity dilemma) that arise in the context of gay and lesbian marches.

While to a large extent this thesis relies on theories of collective identity, I have broadened my theoretical framework by including the concept of sexual citizenship. I believe this framework is best suited to explaining the "why" of public activism; that is, providing the answers to why marches and pride parades became of crucial concern for the Polish gay and lesbian movement. Thus, even though Snow and McAdam argue that, "one could easily get the impression that identity is the key concept in social movement research today" (Snow and McAdam 2000:41) my contribution lies in combining the concept of identity deployment with sexual citizenship literature. I will rely on the theoretical framework outlined in this chapter in my later discussion on the meaning of gay and lesbian public activism in Poland. At the same time, before I turn to a more in-depth investigation of the research participants' narratives in Chapters 5-7, I now proceed to discuss issues of research design as pertinent to this thesis.

CHAPTER 4

Looking at gay and lesbian public activism

In this chapter, I outline my methodological orientation to this study, tracing the key points in the processes of data collection and analysis for my thesis, which examines the meanings of gay and lesbian public activism in Poland. I first discuss my multi-method approach, that is, a combination of semi-structured interviews, together with photo-elicitation interviews, participant observation and the use of secondary sources. I critically reflect on the research design, explaining the rationale behind my methodological choices as well as my approach to using each of them. I discuss the practicalities of applying these methods in the fieldwork situation, such as, for instance, dealing with the expectations of the research participants in the context of the interview situation or negotiating my status in the context of participant observation. I also focus on the challenges of implementing visual methods into the social movements research. I touch upon relevant issues that came up in the context of the data analysis process, such as for instance my decision to use computer aided qualitative software packages to facilitate coding and subsequent analysis. Later on, I bring up language-related issues, connected with the fact that there is a difference between the language in which I collected the data and in which I wrote the results up. I also discuss my use of free-writing as a tool which facilitated the construction of new meanings at every stage of data collection and analysis.

Furthermore, I demonstrate my concern with issues of reflexivity by problematising my insider status in the context of data collection and interpretation processes, as a former activist involved in a number of projects within the Polish LGBT movement. As I show throughout this chapter, I believe that my insider

status greatly facilitated my access as well as the data collection process; however, this “insiderness” also brought some significant challenges, which will be discussed in further detail in this section. Overall, I draw on scholarly debates concerned with the relative benefits/disadvantages of insider status in qualitative research. In particular, I want to challenge the claim that researchers with insider status are necessarily able to achieve a “truer” account. Thus, I focus on issues of power in the research relationship, throughout various stages of the project, with a particular emphasis on the post-fieldwork period. I pay particular attention to the ways in which my positionality had an impact on the processes of data interpretation.

Finally, it has to be noted that while the aim of this chapter is to trace key moments of the research trajectory and so I first outline the processes of data collection, followed by data analysis, nevertheless, in reality these processes overlapped and as I show later, analysis was a constant element throughout. At the same time, I have decided to adopt this structure for recounting the story of my research project, as it follows a well-established convention of telling “stories” of qualitative research (see for instance Warrington 1997, Schiellerupp 2008).

Choosing the methodological approach: overview

As Klandermans and Staggenborg argue in their overview of social movements methods, a researcher who sets out to study social movements is “faced with a range of methodological possibilities” (Klandermans and Staggenborg 2002:xii). This thesis adopts a qualitative methods approach as it is particularly suited to the task of looking at the processes of meaning-making with regards to gay and lesbian public activism in Poland. This is because the logic of qualitative research is concerned with in-depth understanding; it focuses on collecting data that is non-numerical, and emphasises narratives, discourses, researcher observation and the

perceptions of research participants, as well the co-constructed nature of research (Hesse-Biber 2006). Thus, I based my data collection strategy on a combination of the following methods: participant observation of marches and their organisation, semi-structured interviews including photo-elicitation interviews (a method involving photographs produced by the activists) and finally, secondary sources. These included newspaper sources, as well as materials related to the marches such as reports, leaflets and posters, produced both by the activists and the opponents (that is, right-wing and nationalist organisations actively opposing the marches, as discussed in Chapter 2). Overall, in my research design, I have followed the advice of Klandermans and Staggenborg who recommend using multiple methods in social movements research, as a way to enhance understanding by adding layers of information (Klandermans and Staggenborg 2002). Furthermore, using one type of data to validate or refine another, helps the researcher to “increase recognition and understanding of the diversity and complexity of experiences”, which has been my aim all throughout this research project (Wadsworth 2000:65). Finally, as Clark-Ibanez argues, the photo-elicitation interview method in combination with other qualitative methodologies such as interviews or participant observation can illuminate dynamics and insights not otherwise found through other methodological approaches (Clark-Ibanez 2004). The next section will pay particular attention to the processes of data collection in the context of the fieldwork situation.

Fieldwork processes

In order to understand the meanings of gay and lesbian public activism in Poland, I concentrated on pride parades and marches between 2001-2007 in Krakow, Poznan and Warsaw. During that time frame, starting from the first successful Equality

Pride in Warsaw in 2001, activists in these three cities organised events which raised enormous controversies and stirred up a public debate on gay and lesbian visibility, as discussed in Chapter 2. On the one hand, my choice of the November 2007 March of Equality as a cut-off point for the data collection process was dictated by the practicalities of conducting fieldwork abroad and the limited time frame of the PhD itself. On the other hand, following the completion of the fieldwork, it turned out that this time frame also reflects the fact that starting from 2008, gay and lesbian public events in Poland seem to be entering the road of normalisation (Graff 2009). In terms of the main data collection period, I devoted three and a half months to conducting the fieldwork; between the end of September 2007 and the beginning of January 2008 to carry out fieldwork in Krakow, Poznan (where my fieldwork coincided with the March of Equality in November) and Warsaw, spending about 4-5 weeks in each location. I also conducted a pilot project in April 2007 in Krakow during the March for Tolerance, which, as I explain later, was mainly devoted to updating my contacts database and testing the possibility of incorporating visual methods into my research design.

Sampling and recruitment decisions

In terms of sampling decisions, I decided to conduct interviews with activists who identified themselves and/or were identified by others as key organisers in any of the gay and lesbian marches (Warsaw Pride, March for Tolerance in Krakow and March of Equality in Poznan) between 2001-2007. The criteria I used to identify someone as a key organiser included a sustained, long-term contribution to the organising of the march (that is, involvement in most, if not all stages of planning and decision-making) as well as involvement in the movement-media interactions. As I was specifically interested in exploring the perspectives of activists who

shaped the visibility actions and were involved in decision-making as well as communicating these decisions to the media, from the outset I decided to exclude short-term volunteers. Therefore, I did not interview persons who had joined the organising team shortly before the event, for instance in the capacity of stewards etc.

I first established the preliminary list of research participants by using the media resources, that is, news releases related to the marches which named key organisers. This method of establishing a key informants list was supplemented by resources produced by lesbian and gay activists themselves (such as information leaflets, posters or news releases on lesbian and gay websites), snowball sampling and my personal connections to the activist community. Furthermore, I have found, both on the basis of my personal experience of activism and of fieldwork, that self-identification is not enough. Some activists, who were key actors in gay and lesbian public events, were reluctant to claim credit for their actions and argued that they did “what anybody in their position would have done” and thus, they were afraid they would not be able to contribute anything meaningful to my thesis, despite extensive involvement. I compiled the first version of the list in April 2007, before leaving for the pilot project during the March for Tolerance in Krakow in May 2007. I used my presence at the event to update my contact database as well as to indicate my plans to undertake academic research on the topic of Polish gay and lesbian public activism. From previous experience, I knew that occasions such as the Culture of Tolerance festival accompanying the March for Tolerance are good opportunities to meet activists from all over the country in one place. Thus, following the pilot project, I produced a revised list of research participants on the basis of which I started making tentative interview arrangements via e-mail, where I

would also explain what the purpose of my research was. Once I had arrived in Poland in September 2007, practical arrangements were made by e-mailing or calling the research participants to arrange a concrete date for an interview. I believe I was successful in reaching most of the key movement actors for the interviews, even though I had to modify my intended sample slightly. For example, during the preparatory period and the main fieldwork period I discovered that two research participants who had been involved in the Warsaw Pride had moved abroad. Furthermore, one organiser of the Poznan March of Equality declined my interview request, arguing that she did not feel she could contribute in a meaningful way, despite my reassurance that most probably this was not the case. After all, a number of research participants expressed similar sentiments in the course of the main interviews and worried about not saying anything useful or not being “the right person”, nevertheless, in the subsequent process of data analysis it turned out that they had actually made a relevant contribution to my understanding of the meanings of gay and lesbian public activism. Altogether, I approached 45 activists and conducted interviews with 40 of them, as one person declined to be interviewed and four other march organisers initially expressed an interest, but eventually dropped out.

Semi-structured interviews

Blee and Taylor point out the importance of semi-structured interviews in social movement research, noting that it is an essential means for gathering data regarding “the motives of people who participate in protests and the activities of social movement networks and organisations” (Blee and Taylor 2002:92). Thus, semi-structured interviews are particularly suited to the task of interpreting complex social events and processes (Klandermans and Staggenborg 2002), such as public

gay and lesbian activism. Before leaving for the main fieldwork period, I designed an interview guide (see Appendix 3), with questions clustered around the main themes I planned to explore. These included themes such as reactions to demonstration bans and/or attacks as well as issues of the emphasis put on public activism within the organisation. At the same time, while I relied on this guide during the interviews, the interaction during the actual interview determined the order in which I posed the questions. In the context of the interview situation, I would also initiate follow-up questions not included in the original guide. As previously mentioned, in the course of my fieldwork I was constantly engaged in a process of reflecting on emergent ideas, and so I modified the initial interview guide as my understanding evolved. An example of such modification consisted of including more questions related to issues around visibility and representation (these issues are taken up in Chapter 7), as in the course of the fieldwork it quickly became apparent that the issue had more saliency for the activists than I had originally assumed.

I conducted the interviews at a place which the research participants indicated as convenient. Thus, most interviews were conducted either at participants' own homes or in cafes. Using cafes was not always ideal from my point of view, as some were quite noisy, but sometimes they were the only available option that the research participants felt comfortable with. Unfortunately, while in Poland, I did not have access to any office space that might have offered a more neutral and quieter venue. In most cases, the research participants did not have access to office space themselves (for financial reasons). However, in Warsaw three interviews were conducted at the offices of Campaign Against Homophobia. I recorded all interviews on a digital dictaphone, upon gaining permission to record.

Initially, one person declined to be recorded and so at the start of the interview I began taking down notes in my notebook instead. As she saw me trying to note down what she was saying, that research participant changed her mind about being taped and consented to having the interview recorded. After each interview I took notes, which I later incorporated into my fieldwork diary. As soon as was possible, I downloaded the digital files onto a password protected laptop and also made backup copies. As I explain later, most of the transcription process took place after the main fieldwork phase was over. Altogether, as mentioned earlier, I conducted interviews with 40 research participants (16 men and 24 women), in Krakow (15), Poznan (14) and in Warsaw (11).⁴⁸ The interviews lasted between an hour and three hours, with the majority taking around ninety minutes.

Ethics of interviewing

In order to follow ethical procedures I introduced consent forms (see Appendix 1), which the research participants signed before the interview began. By signing the form, the participants would agree to the recording of the interview and my subsequent use of the data collected for the purposes of the PhD thesis and publications. I also explicitly informed them of the possibility to withdraw from the research project at any time and discussed the level of anonymity they wanted to maintain. This way I took the responsibility to:

Explain in appropriate detail, and in terms meaningful to the participants, what the research is about, who is undertaking and financing it, why it is being undertaken, and how it is to be disseminated and used (British Sociological Association 2002).

During the process of obtaining consent, I encountered some ethical dilemmas connected with guaranteeing anonymity for research participants. Fontana and Frey

⁴⁸ See Appendix 2, pages 272-274, for more detailed demographic information on research participants, including a breakdown according to gender, age, sexuality, ethnicity and ability status.

caution for “extreme care” in researching human beings, and enumerate ethical issues in interviewing as mainly related to “informed consent of the participants, right to privacy, and protection from harm” (Fontana and Frey 1994:371). Furthermore, my choice to employ photo-elicitation methods was connected with special ethical considerations as visual materials can make a significant amount of information available to public gaze and therefore raises questions about anonymity, confidentiality and invasion of privacy (Harrison 2002). These challenges will be discussed in more detail in the section devoted to photo-elicitation. These issues are heightened when research participants are recruited from a potentially vulnerable group, such as sexual minorities. Generally, LGBT research participants are portrayed in the literature as a potentially vulnerable group needing extra protection from harm and possible consequences of taking part in LGBT-themed research (Breitenbach 2004). For instance, in case of a breach of confidentiality, gay and lesbian research participants can risk sanctions such as loss of employment, housing or child custody (Platzer and James 1997).

However, in my case, virtually all of the research participants reacted to the suggestion of using a pseudonym with either laughter, or surprise, and asked me to use their real first names. Atkins remarks how in her research on body image among the LGBT community, where she also touched upon very sensitive issues, research participants objected to the use of “false” names for their interviews. As Atkins explains, these objections have to be understood in the context of LGBT culture, where “being out” is synonymous with pride and courage⁴⁹ (Atkins 1998:xxix). Therefore, all the names used in this thesis are real, even though this is not

⁴⁹ At the same time, “coming out” is not an unproblematic visibility strategy, as will be discussed in Chapter 7.

necessarily standard procedure. Furthermore, this decision was also consistent with the research participants' wishes (as well as mine) to stop inscribing Polish gay and lesbian activism into the narrative of victimhood. As I show throughout this thesis, even though at times the personal cost of engagement in public activism could be quite high, the research participants viewed that involvement as highly empowering and through their efforts, aimed at subverting the notion of gays and lesbians as solely victims of homophobia.

While issues salient to the processes of knowledge production will be discussed in further detail later, here I want to comment upon language-related issues that came up very early in the data collection process. From the beginning, I was aware that there would be a difference between the language in which the data would be collected and the language in which it would be written up (see also Birbili 1997 and Temple 1997 for an overview of translation-related issues in research which are outside the scope of this thesis). As this research involved the use of more than one language, I want to acknowledge the terms on which this thesis was produced, and comment on translation-related issues, problems and decisions involved in the different stages of the research process (Temple 1997). Therefore, throughout this chapter I refer to these issues as and when they arose in the context of data collection and interpretation. The overwhelming majority of the interviews were conducted in Polish, where both the researcher and the research participant were native speakers of Polish. Two cases were different, however. One interview was conducted in English, where the research participant was American and did not feel her Polish skills were advanced enough, even though she did frequently switch between the two languages during the actual interview. In another case Polish was actually the research participant's second language, who was a

German native speaker, but fluent in Polish. At the same time, the situation of collecting data (mostly) in one language, that is Polish, and presenting it in another mirrors my own experience of undertaking doctoral studies in English as a native speaker of Polish. I am used to frequent code-switching and working with the two languages at the same time, including when it comes to academic writing.

Expectations of the research participants in the interview situation

In the context of the interview situation I strove to acknowledge the fact that a number of research participants brought their earlier expectations of (mostly) journalistic interviews into the encounter. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, a number of the activists were involved in interactions with the media, which turned out to have a direct impact on the interviewing process. For instance, I noticed that in a number of interviews, initially the research participants often seemed quite baffled at the way I handled the interview situation and would sometimes comment that it differed significantly from their previous experience of interviews with media representatives. After all, a typical journalist would usually be in a hurry and neither had the time nor the interest for in-depth probing, and instead would expect a factual, condensed summary of the issues related to public gay and lesbian activism. My aims were quite different, as I was interested in gaining an insight into the meanings of public activism and was not really looking for factual details (the “what, where, when” of marches), which would normally be the focus of a journalistic interview. While in general I followed an interview guide, I had time for follow-up questions to address any potentially interesting issues that emerged in the context of the interview. Furthermore, I also had the time to wait for the research participants to deeply reflect on their answers to my questions. This sort of

approach would be at cross-purposes with the principle of maximum efficiency for a journalistic interview.

Another relevant issue, which came up repeatedly in the context of the interview situation was connected with my positionality as a former activist. Our shared experiences meant that some research participants felt frustrated at having to tell me what they assumed I already knew, as I demonstrate in the following excerpt from an interview with Bettina, an activist involved in organising the Krakow March for Tolerance between 2006 and 2007:

Interviewer: So what does this Gender Studies⁵⁰ group do and what are you doing there?

Bettina: Well, Love without Borders does this Gender English thing, should I keep talking or not?

I: Of course.

B: But you already know all that -

I: No, yeah, right, I mean, I know the way I know, but I don't know the way you know, if that makes any sense.

This example shows how presumptions of a common frame of reference and shared identity can complicate the researcher's task by leaving certain notions implicit, making the researcher work to get people to state, explain and situate the obvious. This issue was not only relevant to me in my capacity as a researcher. For instance, one of the research participants challenged the methodological assumptions of my project, arguing that because I was interviewing people I knew in my previous capacity as leader of Campaign against Homophobia, it would be difficult to stay "objective". While I was not really concerned with the notion of "objectivity" as understood by the research participants (i.e. the need to maintain distance and outsider status) in the context of this thesis, nevertheless, this comment did touch upon an issue that was a constant element of this research project.

⁵⁰ One of the informal queer-based groups in Krakow discussed further in Chapter 7.

As Weston adds, reflecting on her own fieldwork in the lesbian and gay community that she was herself member of, “to study one’s own culture involves a process of making the familiar strange” (Weston 2004:202). As I show in the above excerpt of the interview with Bettina, my approach to anticipating problems which might stem from my insiderness was twofold. First of all, I was aware of the potential danger of taking certain accounts of public activism for granted and so would deliberately ask questions that might have seemed redundant to research participants. At the same time, as also indicated in the above quote, I was also keen to maintain awareness that insider status and potentially shared knowledge still left space for differing interpretations and different ways of “knowing” about the issue at stake. This way, I strove to acknowledge the fact that commonalities in terms of sexual orientation and activist status need not necessarily translate into shared knowledges or entitle me to make presumptions about the way in which the activists would create meanings of public activism (Almack 2008).

Just as I was keen to exercise reflexivity in terms of my positionality, I strove to maintain a similarly reflexive approach to issues of power in the context of the research-researcher relationship as they arose within the interview encounter. The following excerpt from an interview shows how issues of power in the research relationship were being actively negotiated during the interview process:

Michal: I don’t know if you’re nodding to say that you agree, or is it more like, yeah, yeah, I understand -

Interviewer: [laughs]

M: I get it, I get it, as a researcher you cannot really say that, only maybe if we switch the dictaphone off.

I: No, why, of course I can, I don’t really work on the assumption that I am a holy cow and not permitted to have or express my own opinion.

This way, I attempted to “effectively challenge the researcher/researched split; let[ting] slip the cloak of authority, lower the barrier between the researcher and the

researched, and allow both sides to be seen and understood for who they are” (Etherington 2007:600). In addition, I believe that in many other ways the barrier between the researcher and the researched was certainly not insurmountable. There were even instances, especially in the case of research participants with social sciences background, where the roles were reversed during the interview and I found myself being interviewed about my theoretical assumptions, my sampling strategy and project design. Practically without exceptions, the research participants I interviewed were highly confident and articulate, and overall they appeared quite clear about what they were ready to talk about during the interview and which issues they would rather leave alone, such as, for instance, in Agata’s case, details of her arrest at the 2005 March for Equality in Poznan. At the same time, this does not mean that I managed to avoid difficult moments in the course of the interview. On some occasions, my questions touched upon areas that were a source of trauma, especially in the case of research participants who had encountered violence during the marches, including those who had been arrested in the 2005 November March for Equality (see Kajinic 2003 for a discussion on traumatic memories surfacing in the context of the Belgrade Pride). In such cases, when the research participants seemed visibly at unease I respected the clear signals given by them that this was an area they would rather not address in any further detail and abandoned further probing. At the same time, as I show later, I need to acknowledge the power imbalance when it comes to issues of interpretation and post-fieldwork writing-up.

Another set of challenges that I encountered in the course of the fieldwork were connected with my decision to incorporate elements of visual methods in the research design, which I am going to discuss in more detail in the following section.

Photo-elicitation interviews

My decision to include visual methods as part of my research design entailed introducing photographs produced by the research participants into the interview context and using these photographs as a tool to expand on questions (Clark-Ibanez 2004). As the use of visual data allows the researcher to become aware of “performances that cannot be reduced to words and which words alone cannot represent” (Halford and Knowles 2005), this was crucial in the context of such complex phenomena as public gay and lesbian protest. In making this methodological decision I was also relying on scholarly work, according to which photo-elicitation interviews can be used to elicit further information and can facilitate a more nuanced understanding of the complexity of the places, events and relationships that are portrayed (Bijoux and Myers 2006). It has to be added that initially I planned for visual methods to play a much bigger role in the research design, where ideally I would have been able to incorporate a photo-elicitation component into all the semi-structured interviews. As I show in this section, I needed to scale this ambitious plan down quite significantly. Consequently, I also discuss the challenges of implementing visual methods in social movements research.

While I was certain from the outset that I was interested in incorporating visual methods into the research design, I used the pilot project in May 2007 to rethink the practicalities of photo-elicitation. One of the methodological decisions I had to make first was to choose who would take the photographs. Some researchers, who are also talented photographers, take the photographs themselves and present them to the interviewee; there is also the option of using ready-made images (Harper 1997). As I did not feel very competent as a photographer, I discarded the option of using my own images right away. I decided to focus on activist

photography, as I was interested in getting the research participants actively engaged in the process of constructing knowledge about public gay and lesbian activism.

In terms of the practicalities of the photo-elicitation method, during the pilot project, I distributed five single-use cameras among the Krakow March for Tolerance organisers and later on during the main fieldwork period I distributed a further five cameras among the research participants in Poznan during the March of Equality in November 2007. On both occasions, the people who took the cameras were instructed to take photos of anything they found interesting or worthwhile during the march, as long as they felt this image was connected with their understanding of public activism. I also explained that they could take as few or as many photos as they wanted and that they should return the cameras to me after the event. I explained I would develop the photos at my own cost and provide them with a personal copy. I also mentioned that I would contact them to arrange an interview which would incorporate the use of photographs. The instructions were quite brief, as I did not want to pre-determine what the activists would photograph and thus limit the potential benefits of the method. I also used this opportunity to gain initial consent from the research participants about their involvement in the photo-elicitation interviews at a later date, as I explain in a later part of this section devoted to the ethics of interviews when incorporating self-directed photographs.

At this point, I encountered the first challenging issue connected to the fact that I chose single-use cameras. While the use of single-use cameras seems to be the most widespread technique in photo-elicitation research (Clark-Ibanez 2004, Epstein et al. 2006), I discovered that many research participants, who almost exclusively used digital cameras, found these gadgets confusing and needed some

coaching. However, in the context of this research project, it was not financially viable to supply digital cameras. Furthermore, the fact that it is only possible to take 27 photographs with a single-use camera actually turned out to be an advantage. After all, as the activists were prevented from churning out hundreds of photographs (as would be the case with a digital camera) they had to be more reflexive in their choices of situations to capture.

During the main fieldwork period I first conducted three photo-elicitation interviews in Krakow, on the basis of the photographs I developed from the 2007 May March for Tolerance. Two other research participants, who had also received single-use cameras from me, were not available for a follow-up interview. After careful consideration, I decided in favour of having a separate photo-elicitation interview that followed the semi-structured interview. Having a second interview allowed me to focus in more detail on the photographs and also to explore the themes that emerged in the context of the original interview. This way, I could truly use the method to its full advantage to explore issues that would not have surfaced otherwise, allowing the visual data to “amplify, supplement, or contextualise non-visual data”, that is, the data I would gather from the semi-structured interviews (Harper 1997:57). During the second interview I would also obtain the formal consent of the research participant to reproduce some of the images in publications stemming from the research. Accordingly, the consent form (see Appendix 1) contained an additional clause regarding permission to reproduce the photographs taken by research participants in an academic context in the future.

As already noted, my decision to incorporate visual methods entailed the need to address additional ethical considerations (Wiles et al. 2008), especially as I planned to reproduce some of the photographs taken by the research participants in

the publications resulting from this study. Commenting on ethical issues in the context of photo-elicitation, Wang and Redwood-Jones, advocate that consent should be gained from the subjects in participants' photographs (Wang and Redwood-Jones 2001). This was not practicable in my study, where the research participants were taking photographs of a demonstration with hundreds of participants. Furthermore, during the marches, as I explain in Chapters 5 and 7, organisers and participants alike expected to be in a public space with journalists, photographers and TV crews present. Thus, I feel justified in reproducing a photograph (see Figure 1, page 128) which portrays march participants whose consent I was unable to obtain, as they could reasonably assume that they were in a public space and as Pauwels puts it, dealing with "unknown people in a public context precludes consent" (Pauwels 2006:250). At the same time, as this thesis demonstrates, visibility was not an unproblematic strategy and being visible as an openly gay or lesbian individual in a public space carried potential risks, which will be addressed in Chapter 7.

Nevertheless, it has to be noted that I encountered a number of obstacles to my initial attempt to base all (or most) of the interviews during the main fieldwork period on the photo-elicitation method. In the end, I had to scale this ambitious plan down and altogether, out of 40 interviews, only 5 incorporated a photo-elicitation element. As mentioned earlier, altogether I distributed ten cameras, which means that half of the potential participants of the photo-elicitation interviews dropped out (these research participants took part in the semi-structured interviews, though). There were a number of reasons which prevented me from using this method on a larger scale. First of all, my research design depended on the research participant agreeing to take photographs during the event. This meant that they had to be

present on the day of the march and had to be relatively free of other responsibilities. Thus, photo-elicitation interviews were quite impractical for the main organisers of the events, as they were too busy coordinating the event and in most cases had their hands occupied with megaphones and banners. On top of that, the research participants who agreed to participate in a photo-elicitation interview made the commitment to take the photographs during the demonstrations, return them to me and then arrange yet another meeting for the interview. This made photo-elicitation extremely time-consuming, requiring a great deal of time and commitment both from the research participants and the researcher (Bijoux and Myers 2006). At the same time, I believe that incorporating visual methods into my research design, despite the challenges mentioned above, proved very beneficial, as it alerted me to the relevance of issues around visibility and representation. In particular, I became more attentive to the ways in which issues related to image control and production were relevant in the construction of the meanings of public gay and lesbian activism, as will be discussed in Chapter 6 TYPO. This way, even if the interviews took less prominence than planned initially, incorporating visual methods became a useful tool for identifying relevant themes for this thesis and literally “looking” at public activism. Accordingly, in the next section, continuing with this metaphor of “looking” at public activism I turn to participant observation, which helped me to complement the information gathered in the interview situation (Lichterman 1998).

Participant observation

Marshall and Rossman define participant observation as “the systematic description of events, behaviours, and artefacts in the social setting chosen for study” (Marshall and Rossman 1989:79). Furthermore, participant observation provides the context

for the development of sampling guidelines and interview guides, as it allows researchers to check the definitions of terms that participants use in interviews as well as observe the situations described in interviews (Kawulich 2005). I conducted participant observation of the Krakow March for Tolerance in April 2007 and the Poznan March of Equality on November 2007, both of the preparatory period and the actual events. Furthermore, during the main fieldwork period, whenever possible, in all three cities, I participated in meetings organised by the organisations and informal groups on relevant gay and lesbian themes, including cultural meetings, conferences, and informal meetings. In terms of recording my observations resulting from the participant observation method, I kept field notes, which also served as an initial ground for sounding out ideas and making preliminary assumptions about the data as well as record emerging themes (Wolfinger 2002).

For the purposes of participant observation, my insider status proved enormously useful in terms of access and so I could attend events that were not officially advertised, such as press conferences. At the same time, while my insider status has given me a number of certain advantages, it has also raised some challenges. To start with, on a number of occasions I would encounter a problem of ambiguity between my role as a (former) group member and as a researcher (Weston 2004). I was often asked to contribute to the running of the events attached to the march, even though from the beginning I stated that my presence at the festival was connected with my research. For instance, the organisers of the March of Equality in Poznan wanted me to join the team of stewards responsible for issues of safety and security during the march. Also, while in Krakow I was asked to

represent the organisation as a panellist during a meeting with the media on issues of homophobia.

I accommodated such requests on a case-by-case basis, always viewing data collection as my priority. I decided not to become involved as a steward during the March of Equality, as that would compromise my data collection and my ability to move freely among the march participants. I also declined the request to appear as a panellist on a debate on gay rights with a number of prominent media celebrities, because that would have meant that I could not observe their discussion. Furthermore, I was not comfortable with posing as a legitimate representative of the organisation that I was no longer an active member of. Nevertheless, I did make use of my interpreting skills on a number of occasions during my stay in Poland and would interpret from English into Polish during meetings with international activists.

Moreover, my insider status also raised a number of ethical considerations, and so I strove to make the community aware that my purpose for observing was to document their activities. Since it was not feasible to introduce written consent forms as was in the case of interviews, instead, I shared information about my project, made myself available to answer the questions of research participants and followed Kawulich's advice "to constantly introduce [myself] as a researcher", within practical limits (Kawulich 2005).

Collecting secondary data

Finally, my data was supplemented by secondary sources in the form of newspaper articles and documents related to the marches. First of all, relying on media accounts is a common method in social movements research (Earl et al. 2004). Furthermore, I was keen to supplement the data I acquired in the course of the

participatory methods with other sources as well, as using one type of data to validate or refine another, helps the researcher to “increase recognition and understanding of the diversity and complexity of experiences” (Wadsworth 2000:65).

Most of the secondary data was in the form of newspaper articles, as this was also the primary medium through which the activists interacted with representations of the marches produced by the media, as I demonstrate in Chapter 5. Initially, my project involved a much larger focus on online sources, such as, for instance, discussion forums and mailing lists,⁵¹ but I decided against incorporating that material, as during the main fieldwork period I realised that these resources did not really feature very prominently in the research participants’ accounts of public activism. As I show in Chapter 5, not only was print media the main source of news coverage on the marches for the activists, but also, the activists were most concerned about their interactions with representatives of the press.

In terms of the material chosen for analysis, when it comes to the daily newspapers, I relied on Minalto’s classification that points to the following three newspapers as a space where gay and lesbian issues are most often mentioned: *Rzeczpospolita* (approximately 250,000 circulation) with its centre-right orientation, the left-of-centre *Gazeta Wyborcza* (formerly an opposition paper connected with the Solidarity movement, distribution approximately 600,000) and the Catholic-populist *Nasz Dziennik* (distribution approximately 150,000) (Minalto 2007). In my efforts to get a comprehensive overview of the ways in which public gay and lesbian activism is represented, I also relied on the three most influential Polish weekly newspapers: the right-wing *Wprost* (circulation approximately 300,000), the

⁵¹ While the activists used closed mailing lists to distribute information about the marches, I did not observe any instances of relying on social networking tools, such as youtube or Facebook.

leftist-liberal *Newsweek* (Polish edition, circulation approximately 120,000) and the leftist *Polityka* (circulation approximately 150,000) (see Wyrozumska 2007 for the classification of the political affiliations of these newspapers). Furthermore, I also relied on information provided on the website of Polska Agencja Prasowa [PAP – Polish Press Agency, www.pap.pl] as well as mainstream Polish information websites, onet.pl and wp.pl. The newspaper and magazine-based articles were supplemented by resources produced by gay and lesbian online media⁵² (Kowalska 2006). In my choice of online resources, I drew on the overviews provided by Kowalska (2006) and Weseli (2006), both of whom name the resources mentioned in the table below (page 109) as providing up-to-date information on events relevant to the LGBT community.

In order to collect the secondary data for this thesis, I ran searches on the online archives of my chosen newspapers and websites using the following keywords in Polish “March for Tolerance”, “March of Equality”, “Equality Pride”, “Warsaw Pride”, “gay marches”, “gay and lesbian marches”, “gay prides” limiting my time frame to between 2001-2007. Overall I collected 1,600 newspaper articles from Polish news sources about public gay and lesbian activism. As I explain later, this data was analysed on the basis of a coding scheme developed for the interviews. The table below (Table 1, page 109) shows all the mainstream and LGBT-specific online news sources from which I selected articles to code and analyse.

⁵² I relied solely on gay and lesbian online media as currently the only print gay magazines are pornographic ones and do not deal with issues relevant to public activism.

Table 1. Secondary sources

Mainstream sources			LGBT-Specific sources
Daily newspapers	Weekly newspapers	Online sources	www.kampania.org.pl www.lambda.org.pl www.homiki.pl www.innastrona.pl www.gaylife.pl www.kobiety-kobietom.com
<i>Nasz Dziennik</i> (national, ultra-right-wing) <i>Rzeczpospolita</i> (national, right-centre) <i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i> (national, centre-left)	<i>Wprost</i> (national, right-wing) <i>Polityka</i> (national, centre-left) <i>Newsweek</i> (national, liberalist-left)	www.pap.pl www.onet.pl www.wp.pl	

Finally, in my data collection strategies I also relied on archival material related to gay and lesbian activism in Poland. In December 2007 I spent two weeks in the archives of Lambda Warsaw and Campaign Against Homophobia (in Warsaw), collecting news coverage on the prides and marches, as well as documents connected with the prides, such as leaflets, banners, official letters between the organisers and the local government. I used this archival material in order to gain information about marches occurring within the time frame under consideration in this thesis. Furthermore, I relied on the collected data to acquaint myself with developments in the Polish movements over the previous decade and to write Chapter 2. Having discussed the nature of the data collected, I now move on to discuss issues connected with the research process – such as reflexivity, positionality and power in the researcher-researched relationship.

Reflections on the data analysis process and writing up

For purely practical reasons, leaving Poland marked the end of the intense data collection period and signalled a transition towards dealing with the data in a more analytical way, organising it with a view towards the process of writing up. At the same time, as noted previously, this narrative of linear progression from the data collection to the data analysis process, as well as implying the possibility of a neat division between the two processes, is quite artificial. For instance, both during the interviews and the participant observation, I was constantly reflecting on what I was learning, and in the process I would re-think my earlier ideas and formulate new insights. I would then apply this new understanding to the remainder of the fieldwork and for instance modify the question guide accordingly, to incorporate the newly reached conclusions. This shows that data analysis, in the sense of the interpretation of experiences encountered in the course of the research process, goes on throughout the research process and not only in dedicated, clearly isolated moments of focused data interpretation (Schiellerupp 2008). Nevertheless, for the sake of clarity, this section is devoted to issues of data interpretation, starting from salient issues in data analysis, followed by a discussion on issues of power and reflexivity with regards to the researcher-researched relationship.

As Schiellerupp puts it, reflecting on her own journey as a doctoral researcher, “organising, interpreting and writing up qualitative data is a lengthy and exhausting process” (Schiellerupp 2008:167). On the basis of my experiences I can certainly confirm the truth of this claim and add that above all, I found the process quite daunting. While theoretically I could imagine what my next steps should be, that is, coding and thematic analysis, on going back to Poland I felt hugely overwhelmed by the sheer volume of the data collected, which incorporated hundreds of transcript pages and newspaper articles, not to mention the photographs

produced by the activists. As I recorded quite early on in the process, when I reflected on speaking to one of the research participants about what was going to happen with all the data I had been collecting during my time in Poland:

I told her [i.e. the research participant] that it would be really nice if I could just take all my transcripts and photographs and all the rest [to the examiners] and just throw it across the table and say – look, this is my doctoral thesis, let this data speak for itself, but the whole thing is to give some structure to this data, to create some sort of coherent narration (Field notes, November 2007).

Thus, a large part of my data analysis process consisted of finding that coherent narration, a story that “felt right” in order to give a more coherent structure to what felt like a disorganised pile of data (Schiellerup 2008:167). In order to start making connections between the emerging themes in the data, apart from coding, I relied on free-writing where the idea is to keep “writing without stopping or editing about a specific topic” (Li 2007). Free-writing facilitated my own learning process and turned out to be a very useful method for exploring the meaning-making processes in the context of gay and lesbian public activism throughout various stages of this thesis. For instance, I returned to free-writing whenever I felt I needed some space to clarify my thoughts to help me make connections between the data. The main method of data analysis was coding, which took place over a prolonged period in a couple of stages, during which I took advantage of the features of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software [CAQDAS], NVivo8. As I explain in the next section, the first phase of coding took place alongside transcribing the interviews.

As mentioned previously, all the interviews have been recorded on a digital dictaphone and stored on a password-protected laptop. While I began the process of transcribing during the fieldwork period, I transcribed the bulk of the interviews after returning to the UK. Throughout the transcription process I indicated as faithfully as possible the pauses, half spoken words and emotional responses such

as laughter as well as silences etc. When each interview had been fully transcribed, I went back to the original audio file to double-check for accuracy.

As mentioned previously, there was hardly a clear-cut line separating various research stages from one another and so the process of transcription also overlapped with the data analysis process. All the transcribed interviews were exported to Nvivo8, where my main purpose of using the software was to facilitate the task of organising a large amount of qualitative data. Thanks to the features of the programme, I sorted the data into various themes that could easily be grouped together and viewed in one place with a few quick computer commands. This process was much more efficient and quicker than manually cutting and pasting different pieces of text relevant to a single code onto pieces of paper and then storing these in a file (Welsh 2002). At the same time, while I found that the process of coding and data analysis was greatly aided by the use of NVivo8, some scholars raise potential problems connected with employing CAQDAS in qualitative research, such as the danger of oversimplifying the process or producing too many codes (Smith and Hesse-Biber 1996, Welsh 2002, Schiellerupp 2008). I responded to these concerns by educating myself about the complete range of the features of the software and by engaging in the process of reflexivity throughout. For instance, throughout the coding process, I relied on the memo feature of the programme (i.e. the possibility to attach commentary sections to the transcript) in order to reflect on the emerging codes as well as document my decisions connected with assigning a particular code to an interview excerpt. In the course of that process, I continued to work with the transcripts in their original language, that is, in the prevailing number of cases, Polish. I decided against translating entire transcripts into English at that

stage, as this would be impractical. It was only later, as I was working with shorter excerpts in the final text, that I translated these quotes into English.

Thus, once I finished transcribing all the interviews, I had a preliminary coding scheme in place already, with approximately a hundred so-called free nodes, i.e. individual coding themes. On the basis of that scheme I undertook the second round of coding, where my emphasis was primarily on exploring connections between the data. During that process, I regularly returned to the field notes and relied on insights gained in the course of the free-writing process. In the second coding round, I continued working with the previously created scheme of individual codes (i.e. free nodes in Nvivo8). At this point, I also started grouping these into larger clusters, striving to identify patterns emerging in the data. All throughout this process, I engaged in the process of constant comparison (Warrington 1997) in order to fine-tune my coding scheme and to gain a more in-depth understanding of the connections between the data as well as an overview of the emerging patterns. Finally, I applied this coding scheme to my secondary data (as well as photo-elicitation data, using the image analysis function in Nvivo8) in order to ensure consistency.

Power in the research relationships: Issues of interpretation

As I have already mentioned, I strove to acknowledge the implications of power relationships in the process of collecting data. In the earlier part of this chapter, I outlined these processes with regards to the researcher-researched relationship in the context of interviewing. In this section I turn to discussing these processes in the context of interpretation, which has been described as a “key process in the exercise of power” (Holland and Ramazanoglou 1994:116). In doing that, I remain aware of the need “to listen, contextualise, and admit to the power we bring to bear as

multiply-positioned authors of research projects” (Nast 1994:59). After all, it is my research interests that shape the interpretation of the experiences of research participants in the final write up. As Taylor and Rupp argue:

Even researching informants very much like us still means that researchers, even as we work to collaborate with those we are researching, hold power in formulating questions and analysing results (Taylor and Rupp 2004:2123).

In order to address the potential power imbalance, I strove to embrace the suggestion of Kelly et al. who recommend that researchers should extend the practice of reflexivity through asking respondents to comment on the interview process and the reasons for taking part (Kelly et al. 1994). Accordingly, I provided opportunities for feedback at the end of the interviews and again when I sent respondents copies of their transcripts. While as I noted earlier, some research participants did offer their feedback on the interview process during the actual encounter, it turned out that nobody considered involvement beyond the interview as part of their “research contract” (Almack 2008). Despite initially expressing interest in seeing the transcripts and commenting on them, no one contacted me when I sent out the transcripts. This way, throughout this process I have discovered that the advice to shift the power balance between the researcher and the researched by for instance “sharing equally in profits resulting from the research” (Opie 2008:369), seems quite utopian in the context of the realities of doing a PhD (or in fact any research project), due to time and financial constraints. Nevertheless, even though the involvement of the research participants effectively stopped after the interview, I hope that those who took part in the research were able to feel that their contribution was worthwhile on at least the level of being able to express their own views, and thinking through their own position (Homfray 2008). I am supported in this belief by the feedback I received from the activists, for instance Michal added

at the end of the interview “I had to think hard and reflect for a while on many questions, but this was good”. As I continue charting the research trajectory of this thesis, the next section is devoted to issues of reflexivity in the context of data analysis and the writing process.

Issues of reflexivity and positionality

Gabb, writing about issues of positionality in the context of her research on lesbian families, argues that the insider status of researchers in the field of sexual minorities’ research is “routine...highlighted at the outset and situated as crucial to the research process” (Gabb 2004:170). Of course, researchers of sexual minorities need not be homosexual themselves, however, researchers pursuing LGBT-related topics are very often assumed to act out of personal interest (Irvine 2003). To a large extent, my personal interests have certainly played a role in the research undertaken for this thesis, as I had previously known most of the research participants in my capacity as the coordinator of the Krakow branch of Campaign Against Homophobia (between 2001-2005), Poland’s biggest gay and lesbian organisation. As a leader of the organisation involved in the March for Tolerance, I had a first-hand experience of dilemmas related to gay and lesbian public activism. Thus, in many ways, my personal involvement with the events discussed in this thesis has been crucial to the focus of my research (Brown 2007).

The questions of reflexivity, positionality and power were present in my research throughout the process of research design, data collection and analysis. For the purposes of this thesis I have adopted the research tradition of looking at reflexivity as an exploration of the “dynamics of the researcher-researched relationship and how the research is co-constituted” (Finlay 2002:536). Being reflexive about my own research project means being aware about my own complex

positionality as a former activist, since, as Gabb argues in her account of the research she conducted on lesbian mothering from an insider's point of view, "how we situate ourselves within lesbian and gay politics may significantly affect the ways we structure the research process and interpret our data" (Gabb 2004:170). Gabb, who researched lesbian parenting practices, contends that her insider status as a lesbian birth mother to some extent predetermined the practices she looked at and her subsequent analysis of them (Gabb 2004). Thus, I strove to examine the ways in which my positionality affected how I have gathered, analysed, and interpreted my data (Hesse-Biber 2006). At the same time, I have attempted to see insiderness as "something to capitalise on rather than exorcise" (Glesne and Peshkin 1992:104). Accordingly, in this chapter I engage in an explicit, self-aware meta-analysis of the research process, in order to analyse how subjective elements influence research, thus transforming subjectivity in research from a problem to an opportunity (Finlay 2002, Reinharz 1992).

Debates among qualitative researchers over the desirability of "insider" and "outsider" status represent efforts to understand how identity is implicated in the structure and process of fieldwork (McCorkel and Myers 2003). To start with, my insiderness was certainly beneficial in reducing the need for preliminary negotiation at the outset of the research as well as when it came to locating key informants (Ohnuki-Tierney 1984). This was crucial in allowing me to complete the data collection phase within the limited time I had within the project, as I knew it would probably be quite difficult to make a repeat visit to Poland for any prolonged period of time. Furthermore, my insider status was also important in helping me to win the trust of a group that can be very mistrustful of outsiders, including academic researchers, who might want to exoticise them (Lee 1997). As I demonstrate in

Chapter 6, most activists had negative and quite frustrating experiences with representatives of the media who tended to sensationalise the portrayal of the marches. Furthermore, a number of research participants mentioned bad experiences with researchers from the psychology department at a local university who turned out to be advocates of reparative therapy and pathologised the persons they interviewed. Finally, my insider status facilitated access to information about certain events such as press conferences and informal meetings that would not have been easily accessible otherwise (or, in the case of an outsider researcher, a much longer period of time would have been needed to obtain this level of access and win the trust of the group). At the same time, it does not do justice to the complexity of my positionality to merely argue that I was an insider, since after all I was a former activist returning as a researcher. As noted by Valentine “dualisms such as insider/outsider can never (quite) capture the complex and multi-faceted identities and experiences of the researcher” (Valentine 2002:120). Accordingly, that complexity will be explored in more detail in further sections of this chapter.

Griffith, while discussing issues of epistemological privilege potentially connected with insider status, points to the following questions that frequently come up in the debate:

Does the biography of the researcher – their race, class, gender, sexual identity and history – privilege or disqualify their knowledge claims? Do researchers with an intimate, often tacit knowledge of a group construct accounts that are more authentic or trustworthy? (Griffith 1998:361-362).

Thus, what is at stake with the insider/outsider debate is the claim that insider status equals epistemic privilege. A small fraction of researchers support the idea of minority standpoint as having the potential to produce a “better” account. For instance, McIntosh, examining the idea of a lesbian and gay standpoint suggests that it “enables [the researcher] to question concepts which may be taken for granted in

the straight world” (McIntosh 1997:206). As noted earlier, with regards to the processes of data analysis and collection I often drew on my personal reflections of being a participant in the events in question. Furthermore, my positionality has certainly impacted on the processes of interpretation and knowledge production. At the same time, the ideas put forth by McIntosh are based on an essentialist understanding of gay and lesbian identity and have been critiqued by researchers such as Herman who problematises the assumption that a particular standpoint offers epistemological privilege:

Identity standpoints ... do not reveal true or better interpretations of social phenomena within academic research. Furthermore, such standpoints impose a homogeneity upon the category being claimed which cannot reflect or represent the diversity within it (Herman 1994: 12)

Similarly Kelly et al. argue that the respondent may not experience the researcher's presumptions of similarities in the same way, if at all (Kelly et al. 1994). Following the critique of such assumptions, I remain sceptical whether “lived familiarity with the group being researched” entitles me to greater claims to epistemological privilege (Griffith 1998:362). To start with, even though I had personal experience of involvement in public gay and lesbian activism, I did not necessarily share the meaning of that involvement with the research participants. Thus, as noted earlier in my discussion of the interview encounter with Bettina, I was conscious to indicate the fact that despite shared experiences, our knowledge need not necessarily overlap.

Even more importantly, simply stating that I was an insider does not give justice to the complexity of my positionality. During the fieldwork I found myself “shift[ing] back and forth” between various degrees of insiderness and outsidersness (Browne 2003:13). Overall, my experiences coincide with the argument put forward by Naples that neither insider nor outsider exist as fixed positions, rather they are

constantly negotiated social locations that researchers occupy at particular times and places (Naples 2003). After all, I was coming back to the community as a researcher, having been away for three years. During this time I still contributed to Krakow's activist life by going back every year for the Culture for Tolerance festival, similarly, I still had quite strong activist ties in Warsaw and Poznan, but the intensity of my full-time involvement in activism was very much a thing of the past. On top of that, three years in terms of activism is a very long time indeed, and as most activists were involved on an entirely voluntary basis, there was a very high turnover. Furthermore, the act of undertaking research per se may also set one apart from the phenomenon or social world being investigated as noted by Griffith (1998).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided an account of how the research process unfolded. Overall, I discussed the issues of research design in the context of collecting data on gay and lesbian public activism in Poland, focusing on my decisions in terms of the qualitative methods chosen. I examined salient issues as they emerged in that process, such as managing the expectations of the research participants during fieldwork, translation-related decisions, the use of computer-aided qualitative data analysis software, and the role of free-writing. I outlined my steps in data analysis, beginning with the process of transcription, followed by coding and data interpretation. I also indicated the ways in which I dealt with ethical issues as and when they arose in the context of fieldwork, flagging up the specific considerations connected with visual methods. I examined the researcher-researched relationship and the ways in which my positionality has shaped the processes of data collection and analysis as well as how it has influenced knowledge production. At the same, I

set out to problematise the notion of epistemic privilege on the basis of insider status, that is, the possibility of gaining a “more authentic” account of gay and lesbian public activism. Finally, in this chapter I have examined issues of power in the context of the research process and post-fieldwork writing-up.

Importantly, throughout this chapter I looked at how my thinking about this thesis was continually evolving, starting from the research design, through the data analysis to the writing-up process. As a result, the project that I imagined doing three years ago was different from the research I ended up conducting. Some of these changes were connected with practical considerations. For instance, I show in this chapter how I had to modify my initial plan to incorporate photo-elicitation interviews on a much larger scale. I also discuss how my initial attempt to receive feedback from the research participants on the transcripts, in order to make the data analysis process more collaborative, was curtailed by the unwillingness of the activists to engage in the research process beyond the interview.

As noted previously, this chapter tells a “story” of research where the stages of data collection are separate from data analysis, the actual process was much messier and felt much more like going round in circles than following a clear-cut path, emphasising the circular and iterative nature of the process of writing up qualitative research (Warrington 1997). Building on that “story” of research design, I now turn to discussing the multiple “stories” that the research participants shared with me. Therefore, in the following chapters I move on to discuss the meanings of gay and lesbian public activism in Poland, starting with issues of representation and movement-media interactions.

CHAPTER 5

Movement-media interactions in the context of public gay and lesbian activism

Previous analyses of gay parades have noted that the issue of representations generated in the context of these events has been a key issue for its organisers, especially when it comes to the image of sexual minorities that the activists hope to be projected to the general public (Bell and Valentine 1995). This has also been the case of the Polish gay and lesbian movement, above all in view of the prevalence of negative representations in the public sphere, as discussed in Chapter 2. At the same time, an important element of full citizenship is the ability to access the more symbolic arenas of the public realm so that “members of subordinated social groups [can] ... formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs” (Fraser 1997:81).

As mentioned earlier, one of the aims of this thesis is to explore the ways in which the organisers of gay and lesbian marches relied on these events in their efforts to challenge dominant constructions of citizenship in Poland. Accordingly, throughout this chapter I concentrate on the ways in the encounters between the activists and the media as a constituency (and in particular media-generated representations of gay and lesbian marches) were relevant to this process. I situate this discussion within Bernstein’s identity deployment framework; in particular identity for education where lesbian and gay organisations deploying this strategy are keen to gain legitimacy and confront negative stereotypes by emphasising their similarity to the mainstream (Bernstein 1997).

Overall, my focus on movement-media interactions stems from the fact that marginalised members of the audience are forced to see their images as they were produced by and for the majority (Gross 1998, Kama 2002). When it comes

specifically to the ways in which the media represent the gay and lesbian marches in Poland, most scholarly work has pointed out that on the whole this representation is hugely negative and focuses on conflict and anticipated and/or actual violence (Dunin 2004, Klimczak-Ziolek 2006, Kowalczyk 2006, Kubica 2006). On top of that, as will be discussed in this chapter, quite often media representations collude with the homophobic statements uttered by religious authorities and right-wing politicians. Hence, the media operate as one of the vehicles for mainstream constructions of citizenship in Poland, based on the obligatory heterosexuality and Catholic ideology. This is not surprising if one takes into account the politicised nature of the media, connected with particular historical circumstances in which the independent media in Poland had developed and its connections with the Catholic Church, as discussed in Chapter 2. At the same time, although most scholars focus predominantly on issues of media coverage and representation from the perspective of the media (as discussed in Chapter 3), I am more interested in contributing to research connected with concepts of collective identity and collective agency, as this is an under-researched area in the context of Eastern European sexual politics, as discussed in Chapter 3. Furthermore, my focus on activists' agency is also connected with my choice to situate some of the theoretical framework of this thesis within issues of sexual citizenship. Thus, in this chapter I engage directly with my research question, that is, "what are the ways in which via public activists events, movement participants attempted to influence the existing representations of sexual minorities in Poland?".

Before engaging in a more in-depth analysis of the activists' strategies in response to representations of gay and lesbian marches, I first discuss the activists' general media awareness. I demonstrate that as a group, they showed a high level of

media literacy and took a professional approach to their contacts with media representatives. I then analyse the significance of movement-media interactions for the shape of public activist events. To start with, the case study of the Krakow 2004 March for Tolerance will allow me to demonstrate how movement actors deployed their identity strategically in the context of ideological entanglements between the local media and Catholic authorities. I then move on to discuss the ways in which a concern with producing “good” media images led to the cancellation of the 2005 March for Tolerance, following the death of the late Polish Pope, John Paul II. Finally, I discuss the visual strategies aimed at emphasising the peaceful nature of the marches, so as to counteract the journalists’ tendency to focus on conflict and violence in their coverage of the events.

Activists’ consciousness of the media

Stulhofer and Sandfort, writing about gay and lesbian activism in Eastern Europe, point out the existence of a new generation of sexual minority activists, whose agenda is increasingly pro-active and media-conscious (Stulhofer and Sandfort 2005). This was confirmed in my research as the activists placed a big emphasis on obtaining media skills.⁵³ For instance, major gay and lesbian Polish organisations, such as Campaign Against Homophobia and Lambda Warsaw regularly organised workshops on public communication skills. Moreover, a number of activists, especially in Warsaw had professional experience of dealing with the media – among the Warsaw Pride organisers there were journalists as well as public relation specialists.

⁵³ It has to be added, that while the activists I spoke to were very keen to interact with the media and quite professional in their approach, this has not necessarily always been true for the Polish LGBT community. For instance, an overview of articles from the 1990s that I gathered in the course of archival research shows for instance that most activists would not agree to have their full names appear in print or agree to being photographed. At the same time, it is outside of the scope of this thesis to trace the reasons behind that change.

Furthermore, in all three cities, during the weeks leading up to the demonstrations, members of the organising committees made an effort to cooperate with the media as they organised press conferences, kept sending news updates to the local newspapers and appointed spokespeople who were responsible for contact with the journalists. As I gathered from the interviews and from attending the meetings, the main basis for deciding who would be the responsible PR officer, was self-selection followed by approval from the group. Apparently, there have been no cases of people volunteering for the task and being rejected. Thus, for those who volunteered to act as official representative of the movement as media representatives, the first fundamental and quite obvious basic criterion was the ability to be "out" as an organiser of a gay and lesbian event.

Secondly, the self-selection process was also connected with organisers' skills and previous experience. For instance, in Poznan, Iza decided to become responsible for contact with the media during the first two marches, as she had gained considerable expertise in public relations thanks to her involvement in the local branch of the Green Party. Finally, availability was also among the deciding criteria, as cooperating with the media often meant that the activists needed to show up for an interview at very short notice or be able to answer the phone throughout the day, quite often late in the evening and a number of activists commented on what they perceived as unreasonable demands of the journalists that interfered with their duties as march organisers. For example Monika, who was involved in the Poznan March of Equality, complained that a huge chunk of her time was taken up by dealing with journalists who quite often called her about matters only vaguely relevant to the event and would for instance demand that she provide them with contact details for "a gay couple with kids by 6 p.m. on that day". At the same time,

it was possible for her to respond to these queries (even if only to decline) and keep her phone switched on at all times because she was self-employed. Similarly, in Krakow, throughout the period of 2004-2007, Ida was the person in charge of contact with the media - first of all, she had some relevant practical experience; secondly, as a student she could be quite flexible with her time. Last but not least, at that time, she could afford to devote all her free time to activism without needing paid work. In Warsaw, the task of communicating with the media mainly fell on the main coordinator of the event, and both Szymon (Pride coordinator between 2001 and 2004) and later Tomasz (Pride coordinator between 2005 and 2007) were self-employed and enjoyed greater flexibility.

As I argue later in this chapter, the activists were intent on constructing a “normal” gay and lesbian subject via public activist events. At the same time, at least officially, the focus on “normalcy” did not translate into attempts to regulate who should (not) appear in the media and the activists argued that the choice was made on the basis of self-selection and certain criteria as described above, that is, openness about one’s sexuality, media skills and availability. Nevertheless, unofficial conversations during meetings told a slightly different story and on some occasions I could hear complaints that a particular spokesperson was “too camp” and maybe a more “straight-looking” one would be preferable. However, there were never any attempts to discourage anybody from becoming a spokesperson on that or any other basis. After all, this was a task that came with a lot of responsibilities and pressure, requiring enormous emotional resilience. Any PR person had to be able to cope with being permanently on-call and responding to the queries of hostile journalists. As will be discussed later, they also had to cope with a high level of exposure, quite often beyond their control.

The strategic use of the media in the context of the public gay and lesbian activism featured quite prominently in the research participants' narratives, as can be seen in the following quote:

Julie: Essentially we have to, as a movement, think about ways to be visible, to get into the media; maybe pay attention to us, so that people would know that we exist.

Thus, Julie's comment emphasises that the movement's principal rationale for engaging with the media is to gain a stronger presence in the public sphere. After all, at the time under consideration in this thesis approximately 90% of Poles claimed they did not know anybody who openly identified themselves as gay or lesbian (Wenzel 2005). Greater visibility would help the general public realise that gays and lesbians were legitimate members of society; unlike threatening sexual "deviants" appearing in the media (potential problems stemming from this strategy will be discussed in Chapter 7). Other activists pointed to a purely pragmatic aspect of visibility connected with public activist events. For example, Agata stressed the limited financial resources of the movement that would not allow the group, on their own, to be able to afford to reach out beyond the immediate circle of their supporters. She added that marches functioned as a tool that allowed gays and lesbians to "exist in the social consciousness" and channel their message via the media. Thus, outsider status and marginalisation were relevant to explaining why it was important to stage a public protest spectacle to attract media attention (Barker 2008).

To a certain extent, the process of channelling information went both ways. For instance, Aneta, when talking about the banned 2005 Warsaw Pride, mentions the role of the media as a sole medium through which the activists could learn about the ever-changing decisions of the authorities:

The way it worked, we'd come home and then we'd learn who [among the official representatives of local authorities] said what, who supported us, what sort of decisions had been taken by whom, and even if this was the case in which, let's say the ombudsman was issuing some sort of official statement, nobody was really talking to us [i.e. organisers] but they would go straight to the media, so we learnt everything from the media.

Of course, a situation in which the only way that the Warsaw Pride organisers can learn of the authorities' decisions is via the media was quite extreme. Nevertheless, most movement actors depend to a considerable degree on the mass media to obtain relevant information on the standpoints of third parties, and the larger public on the issues that concern them. Thus media discourse is a crucial source of information on which movement activists base their strategic decisions (Koopmans 2004).

Overall, in the context of public gay and lesbian activism in Poland, the issue of representations produced by the media was one of the central themes for the movement and took up significant space both during the planning period and later in the interviews. As Melucci argues, for groups such as the women's or the environmental movement (and by implication, also the gay and lesbian movement), communication is a central goal (Melucci 1985). This aspect of involvement with the media is fittingly illustrated by a photograph that was produced as part of the photo-elicitation interview⁵⁴ (Figure 1, page 128). Sebastian argued that the photo best captured his understanding of the relevance of the march:

This is the moment when Jaruga-Nowacka [former vice-Prime Minister and former Plenipotentiary for Equal Rights of Men and Women] is making a speech, there are all these cameras, she is surrounded by the police, but what she says goes out to the outside world, there are cameras pointed at her and at the same time she is separated by a cordon of people...it is a symbol that locally we are cordoned off, but the cameras are pointing at us, even from this enclosed space we can send some information and what is more important, the cameras are directed at the activists and they are the ones who are being listened to on the other side.

⁵⁴ See Chapter 4 for a discussion of the ethical considerations involved in reproducing images produced in the context of photo-elicitation interviews.



**Figure 1. Scene from the 2007 March for Tolerance
(Prime Minister is in the middle of the photograph, with the red
balloon over her head)**

To start with, Sebastian's comment gives quite a strong impression of how fragile and temporary the gathering of gays and lesbians is. Judging from the strength of anti-LGBT protests (as discussed in Chapter 2), openly gay and lesbian groups would have great difficulties with gathering in a public space without the presence of the police. Therefore, the fact that despite its vulnerability, the group managed to attract media interest is quite significant. Gaining support of a prominent politician is an even more relevant aspect of media attention. Furthermore, as will be discussed in Chapter 6, this type of support has proven crucial on occasions such as the banned Warsaw Pride in 2005. Finally, Sebastian's remark signals an issue which will be explored in more detail in this chapter, namely, he emphasises the fact that in the photograph, the cameras and microphones are focused on the politician and the marchers inside the police cordon. After all, getting noticed by the media was only half of the battle as the point was to keep the focus on the issues brought up by the gay and lesbian activists and not on the right-wing protesters. As

will be discussed later, the activists were quite frustrated when it came to movement-media interactions, not only were the journalists often homophobic, but on occasions they even contributed to the violence directed at the marches, as will be discussed in the case of the Krakow March for Tolerance. I start exploring these frustrations by devoting the next section to the activists' perceptions of existing representations of the marches.

Activists' perceptions of media representations

When speaking about existing images of the gay and lesbian movement in the media, the activists usually mentioned an overall feeling of frustration at the media distorting their message and failing to acknowledge the carefully planned content. This sentiment was already hinted at in the interview with Sebastian discussed above but it is even more vividly expressed in the following quote:

Jarek: The coverage [of the marches] and the message that appears in the papers isn't really the message that the organising committee wanted to convey, only to a certain extent. Quite often, when it comes to a large part of this message, we imagine things absolutely different; we had a completely different vision in our minds from what later appears in the papers.

Jarek's comment points to the activists' sense of inaccuracy in representing the movement, perceived as a clash between the intended and the actual representation of their organising efforts. Furthermore, the frustration connected with disparity between the movement's sense of "we-ness" and its representation by the media was a recurring theme in a number of interviews. The frustration was even bigger if one takes into account the effort that went into communicating with the media. As I have already mentioned, the activists devoted long hours to planning their interactions with the media. Therefore, in the following paragraphs I will look in more detail at some of the most salient examples of this perceived disparity. The

activists repeatedly brought up the following themes: inaccuracy in representing the movement, focus on conflict and violence as well as the tendency to reduce the march to an exotic show of oversexualised bodies:

Marta J.: [in terms of the way that the media portray the movement] there are two things: first of all, sensation, and secondly, conflict. Sensation, because it is all about sex ...the media like conflict, that is all the time they were contrasting us [with the opponents]; well, we were looking for a compromise, but the media, they were looking, every time that they recorded something they decided they urgently need somebody who is completely on the opposite side, overall, all the time there was this fight so that we could squeeze in some of our messages, but really, it was all about sex and conflict, and all the questions were like, ok, will there be fighting and will we see bits of naked flesh, they will always show the weirdest, so to say, element of the march.

Inga: I was trying to see [in the news] in what way they [journalists] were presenting [the march], I remember that quite often I would get really angry, that they were showing certain things in a way that wasn't very compatible with what really happened, I mean, it was very strongly filtered through a particular point of view, where somebody [journalists] would assume that we have no right to enter the public sphere, and that we are aggressive, so they [journalists] would show it as aggression, right, and show the sort of images that will strengthen this impression of aggressiveness and it wasn't too great.

These comments are not altogether surprising, as when it comes to reporting public protest, activists often are trivialised, marginalised, or portrayed as deviant (Shoemaker 1984, Eliasoph 1988). They also seem quite consistent with the main themes that I mentioned scholars identified earlier as prevalent in the media in Poland, that is, focus on conflict and an overall negative tone. At the same time, Marta's interview points to yet another aspect of the activists' involvement with the media, that is, continued efforts to counteract the biased representation and "squeeze [their] message in" to challenge these perceived inaccuracies. Inga's comment is also relevant in the context of my concern with the concepts of citizenship in this thesis. One of the central aims of the movement was to gain inclusion in the public sphere as fully-fledged (sexual) citizens, with the marches

viewed as the main tool at the activists' disposal. However, if the media continued to provide homophobic and inaccurate representations of public activism, then those journalists would actually collude in denying full citizenship to sexual minorities. At the same time, as I show in this chapter, the activists' response to negative images went beyond merely expressing frustration as can be seen in the following excerpts:

Inga: I guess this is why we are thinking of the media. I think we do want to be able to influence the society, and media are important to help us do that, at the same time, the media can always show everything from a particular point of view, it isn't really that difficult to put together a couple of shots and create a street fight out of what was in reality a peaceful demonstration, it really isn't difficult. And, I guess maybe at least not giving them an excuse to do that helps us feel fair, we know that we have done everything and we are attempting to show everybody, that to tell the truth we are not aggressive at all.

Gaja: Well, this is hard work, but we do care, we care about being able to get through to the media, to finally be able to say what we want to say because if we do not make the contact with the journalists first, then the journalists will come up with their own ideas and we will not necessarily like that.

Thus, the activists not only critiqued what appeared in the media in connection with the march, but also planned strategies in response to what they perceived as biased representation. This is consistent with scholarly research that views the movement-media interactions as a form of team-work and in a sense a two-way process, where the media and the organisers are to a certain extent tied up in the creation of the event, with the process described by Oliver and Myers as "routine interplay of activists with police and reporters" (Oliver and Myers 1999:44). Moreover, even if the activists were frustrated with the way they were represented by the media, a significant majority argued that even biased representation was preferable to a lack of representation. This attitude echoes the claim by Gamson and Wolfsfeld who argue that a demonstration with no media coverage at all is a "non-event, unlikely

to have any positive influence on mobilising followers or influencing the target” (Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993:116). After all, the activists did rely heavily on the media as their main channel of communication with the public. Despite reiterated fears of bias on the part of the media, overall, the march organisers actively sought out media attention, since they saw it as a prerequisite for entry into the public sphere; as Ida, one of the March for Tolerance organisers put it, “the moment we are not visible, we do not exist, the absent ones cannot argue anything”. Similarly, Robert, involved in organising the Warsaw Pride over a number of years, argued that demonstrations functioned as a tool to enter the mainstream and stressed the need to “go out in the public sphere at least once a year, articulate our [i.e. movement’s] issues, our tasks”. The overall opinion of the activists was best summed up by Gaja, who speaking about the coverage of the Poznan March of Equality admitted that she was grateful for media interest but felt frustrated by the inaccuracies and the feeling of manipulation.

Moreover, while the activists recognised the need to work with the media and also to influence the coverage of public activist events, at the same time, they were clearly aware of the limited scope of possible interventions. Accordingly, they tried to make the best of a less than ideal situation; as Kasia argued: “what do you expect; the media are only interested in the sensational”. Tomek added further, that even if the media were largely manipulative; there was still space for the activists to communicate their message if they learnt how to strategically use the opportunities that public activist events offered:

People who think that the pride is a moment when we will talk about values, these people are deeply mistaken, because how can you discuss the finer details of tolerance on the street, how can you address transgender issues properly during the parade. This is a demonstration, what we need is a

slogan, a banner ... we have to understand that a demonstration is a form of communication.

Finally, even the negative portrayals did acknowledge the existence of an active LGBT community in Poland, which could assist those who were closeted and felt isolated. Agnes argued that even if the march and its representations in some media actually increased the number of opponents and contributed to the polarisation of the public opinion, it would still send a positive sign to the wider community:

I think this March [for Tolerance] is something like; it's like creating your own space in the public sphere, something that you can later build upon, and that is important and I believe that it could perhaps have an influence on people who are hiding in their homes.

It has to be mentioned, though, that some gay and lesbian individuals did not necessarily support the efforts of the activists. As will be discussed in Chapter 7, increased visibility could be problematic by attracting unwanted attention to those still in the closet.

Thus, having analysed the nature of the media-related resources in the group and the overall awareness of media strategies, in the next section I turn to investigate activists' strategic dilemmas around issues of representation. Furthermore, as Hunt and Benford suggest, collective identity is not only a "shared sense of we-ness" but also of "collective agency" (Hunt and Benford 2004:440), and so in the remainder of the chapter I focus on the ways in which the activists exercised their agency when engaging with the representations produced by the media. I also look at the connections between the media representatives and religious authorities as well as right-wing politicians, focusing on activists' identity deployment strategies in relation to these constituencies outside of the movement. This analysis relates to the main focus of this thesis, that is, the question of how the

activists used the gay and lesbian public events to construct and control the main frame of representation of sexual minorities in Poland.

St Stanislaw's procession vs. the March for Tolerance

The March for Tolerance was the only public event planned during the four-day festival of gay and lesbian art and culture, that is, Culture for Tolerance, where apart from the March; the organisers prepared a number of lesbian and gay-themed events: movie screenings, concerts, workshops and talks,⁵⁵ organised by members of Krakow Campaign Against Homophobia group (Kubica 2006). The planned demonstration provoked a heated discussion on the appropriateness of bringing up gay and lesbian issues in public space, with a large part of that discussion taking place in the local media. When speaking about the causes of the controversy that the march had stirred up, most organisers of the Krakow March for Tolerance in 2004 pointed to the article “Manifestation of Gays and Lesbians during St. Stanislaw’s⁵⁶ Day” and the illustration that accompanied the article (Kula 2004). The illustration (Figure 2, page 136) portrayed two marches, separated from each other by a fence, with the leaders of the demonstrations – one carrying a rainbow flag and the other one a cross – walking in opposite directions (Kubica 2006).

The organisers were aware that the event might draw some public attention as the first event of this kind in Krakow. After all, some of the organisers had previous experience of protests on the part of local authorities during two visibility campaigns that took place in 2003, that is the “Let Them See Us” exhibition or the educational campaign “I’m Gay, I’m Lesbian” (see Chapter 2 for more details). Moreover, some of the members of the organising team had also attended the

⁵⁵ Based on the information from www.tolerancja.gej.net; also see Chapter 2.

⁵⁶ St Stanislaw is a religious icon, famous for his association with the Polish nation. As Bishop of Krakow, he was killed and dismembered by King Boleslaw the Brave in 1079 for competing with the secular power (Zubrzycki 2001).

Warsaw Pride in 2001-2003, which drew protests on the part of the ultra-right wing All-Polish Youth. At the same time, the organisers never really took into account the possibility of provoking such a huge scandal:

Ida: We were organising things; everything was getting along nice and quiet but then after that article [by Kula, discussed in this section] appeared, everything changed – the day after the article appeared, there literally was a political and religious tornado ... I believe that the media started the whole conflict, I mean, really, from the very beginning they were using the sort of language and saying that we must contain that, that for sure there will be riots, that this is a threat, this is a war, they were using precisely the language of the war all the time so definitely they must have heated the atmosphere up ... I believe this [conflict] is introduced mostly by the media.

According to the journalist, Kula, both the planned date and the route of the March for Tolerance would clash with the festivities of the Catholic holiday of St. Stanislaw. She argued that people leaving Wawel Cathedral after the St. Stanislaw service would bump into the participants of the march and “could even be handed leaflets on gay and lesbian rights” (Kula 2004:1). Ida complained that this framing bothered the activists, and presented them as a fringe group, absolutely at odds with the values of “respectable” Krakow inhabitants. It was not only the text that Ida felt contributed to portraying the march organisers as the complete opposite of “decent” Krakow inhabitants, who needed to be protected from dangerous knowledge disseminated by the marchers. She also indicated that the illustration (reproduced below) that accompanied the text was culpable for stirring the controversy.

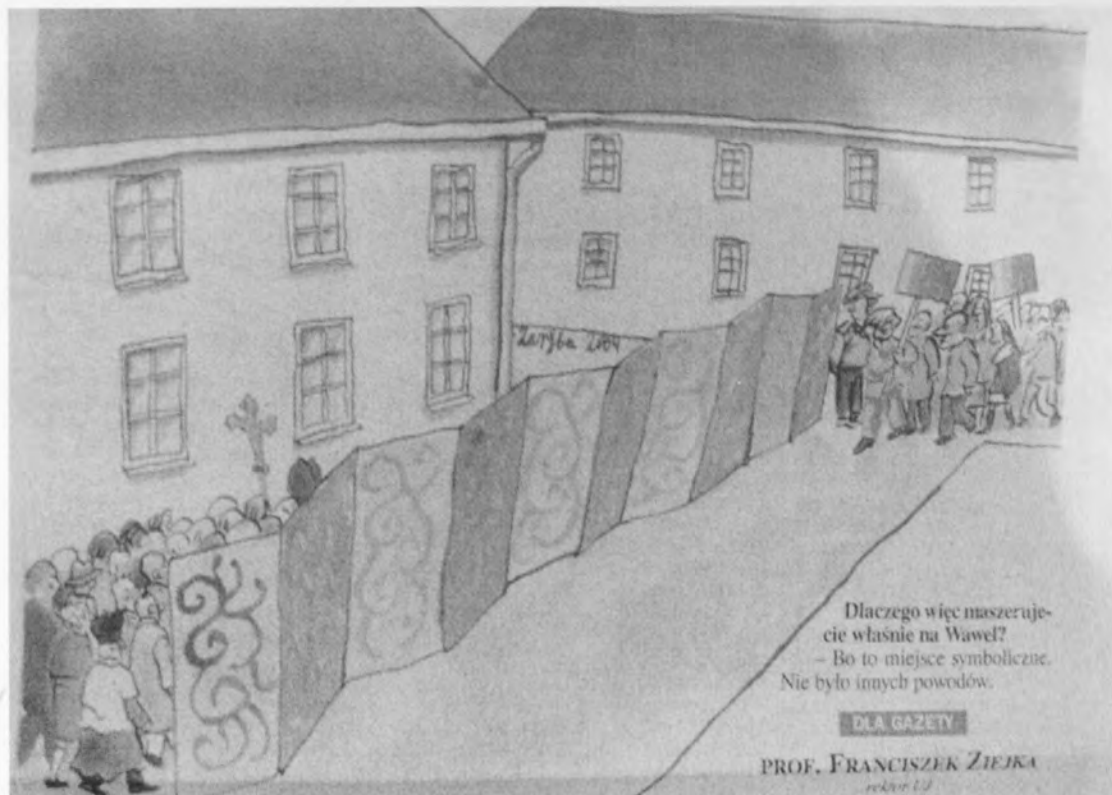


Figure 2. Illustration accompanying an article on the 2004 March for Tolerance

[The text in the corner of the illustration reads: So why are you marching towards Wawel Castle? Because it is a symbolic space. There were no other reasons.]

Ida also argued that the article and the illustration, which stressed the fact that the two groups should not ever meet (or even look at each other!) for fear of contamination and possibly violence; could be linked to a later hate campaign in which a number of right-wing and Catholic organisations urged the city authorities to ban the event. What is relevant here is not only the fact that the article largely contributed to unleashing the storm of protests directed at the march. Even more importantly, in her disapproval of the March for Tolerance organisers, the journalist sided with the ideology of the Catholic Church and by extension, its heterosexist understanding of citizenship. After all, she never questioned the right of the participants of the St Stanislaw's procession to appear in the space of the city. As Brickell points out, heterosexuality in public is regarded as unproblematic, whereas

lesbian and gay identities are policed by subtle or overt means (Brickell 2000). The theme anti-LGBT protests based on the need to protect spaces of national and religious importance from gay and lesbian "invasion" will be explored further in Chapter 6.

The March for Tolerance generated opposition from the local government, city council, university authorities, and local right-wing and Catholic organisations who tried to convince Krakow's mayor to block the march on grounds of public depravity (Kubica 2006). For example, the city council representatives of the ultra-right wing League of Polish Families protested against the planned march, calling the event the "promotion of deviant attitudes" (Krzeminski et al. 2006:185). The way that the activists handled the controversy around the event, in particular the alleged clash with the procession, was quite telling. To start with, they were quite keen to point out that the encounter between the St Stanislaw's procession and the March for Tolerance would never happen, as the festive service and the procession would end a couple of hours before the march was due to start. Secondly, they pointed out that while the planned route of the march ended at the statue of the Wawel Dragon at the foot of Wawel Castle, the marchers would be at least 500 yards away from Wawel Cathedral itself. As the attempts to pacify the right-wing opposition seemed to fail, the organisers decided to move the date of the event by two days, that is, to the 7th May 2004 (the implications of that decision for the movement's identity will be discussed in Chapter 7) nevertheless, that decision did not stop the spiral of protests and violence.

While the illustration accompanying Kula's article did not spell out what the participants of the St. Stanislaw's procession might encounter on the other side of the fence (probably assuming that gays and lesbians on their own were threatening

enough), the right-wing organisations protesting against the march were keen to supply graphic images. The campaign of Piotr Skarga Association of Christian Culture was possibly the most striking example. During the campaign, in the weeks leading to the march, the organisation sent out 280,000 leaflets to the inhabitants of Krakow, urging them to “say no to the promotion of homosexuality in Krakow”. The leaflets recommended saying the rosary to counteract the sin of sodomy and sending appeals to the local authorities so that they would ban the demonstration. The illustration accompanying the first page of the leaflet juxtaposed two images (see Figure 3, page 139). The first one showed Wawel Castle, which functions as a sacred space in Krakow and is home to the cathedral where a number of Polish saints and kings are buried. Wawel Cathedral was also where participants of the St. Stanislaw’s procession would gather for a festive service and so that space had to be protected from the potential “pollution” by gay and lesbian activists, at least in the eyes of the opponents. The need for that protection was quite evident from the leaflet, as below Wawel Castle there was an image of drag queens, taken most probably from the Berlin Pride (Kubica 2006).



**Figure 3. Leaflet produced by Piotr Skarga Association of Christian Culture
The text in red reads: "Say No! To the promotion of homosexuality in
Krakow".**

Faced with the hostile campaign of Piotr Skarga Association of Christian Culture and the equally hostile reactions of local politicians, the organisers of the March for Tolerance decided to be pro-active and strategically excluded drag queens from participating in the demonstration. That is, shortly before the event was due, the organisers of the first March for Tolerance in Krakow were contacted by the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence⁵⁷ who wanted to support the march. As the contact was made at the time of an intensified hate campaign against the march, Tomek, the international contacts person informed the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence that their presence would only be welcome if they did not attend the march in drag, as their safety could not be guaranteed otherwise. Furthermore, their presence would be detrimental to the non-confrontational message of the event. Even though this was quite an extreme attitude, and even though most activists in principle recognised drag queens as an important element of Polish gay culture, they still feared the

⁵⁷ The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence are members of an order of gay male nuns in drag whose mission is to promote sexual health, for more information see www.thesisters.org

biased representation in the media. Just as changing the date of the march to avoid the alleged clash with a Catholic procession was a preventative measure; similarly, the decision to remove drag queens was also aimed at the media. This way, the activists hoped that they would give the journalists less opportunity to create a situation in which “the actions of a small minority may come to represent, in the eyes of the public, an entire movement” (Kruse 2001:69). At the same time, the implications of that decision went beyond producing “good images” for the media and its meaning for the movement will be discussed in Chapter 7.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the participants of the March for Tolerance never made it to the planned destination point at the foot of Wawel Castle, as the marchers were stopped mid-way by a group of right-wingers gathered in an illegal anti-demonstration. As already mentioned, after the march was formally dissolved, its opponents followed the march participants into the city centre, behaving in an aggressive way. When it came to the media coverage on the evening of the event; most TV stations and newspapers focused primarily on the violence on the part of the March opponents and for the most part, mentioned the event itself only in passing (Kubica 2006). The following paragraph focuses on the two most salient examples.

The article by PAP⁵⁸ only acknowledged the fact that the march did indeed take place and provided information about the number of participants. There was no information as to why the march was taking place at all, what the organisers’ aims and objectives were or what banners they were carrying. In contrast, the core part of the article (supposedly about the March for Tolerance) was devoted to the anti-march demonstration. To start with, the journalist provided information about the

⁵⁸ Polska Agencja Prasowa [Polish Press Agency] – see also Chapter 2.

slogans on the banners (such as “Wawel dragon was hetero” and “Let’s kick homosexuals out of Krakow”). The focus of the article was hugely slanted towards the riots incited by the opponents after the march, almost to the extent of a certain fascination with the ensuing violence, starting with the rather dramatic title: “Shots fired at Krakow Market Square after the March for Tolerance”. This was accompanied by a detailed description of the damage caused by the opponents, such as the fact that the right-wingers demolished beer gardens and threw beer glasses and stones, and hundreds of policemen were needed to stop the riots. There was no mention, however, of why the March for Tolerance occurred in the first place or what the ideas of the organisers were (PAP 2004).

The article in *Gazeta Wyborcza* took on a similarly sensational tone, with Pelowski and Kula announcing “this is war” and focusing primarily on the response of the police to the riots and the use of police batons, tear-gas and gun shots (Pelowski and Kula 2004). Furthermore, a substantial part of the article focused on the press conference organised by the League of Polish Families before the march, with three representatives of the party given a chance to publicly express opinions such as Krakow becoming “city of evil”. This is significant as the League of Polish Families supported the illegal demonstration against the march, which resulted in the riots. At the same time, there is no mention of a press conference organised by the March for Tolerance organisers, and there was only space for one short comment from the main organisers of the March towards the end of the article (Pelowski and Kula 2004). This is consistent with the scholarly claims that incidence of violence at a protest attracts media coverage, but often results in news stories that focus on conflicts with the police, obfuscating the issues raised by the protesters (Gitlin 1977).

Furthermore, quite a large number of media outlets actually blamed the organisers of the March for Tolerance for the ensuing violence. In doing this, not only did the media give ample space to the religious authorities who voiced their disapproval, but also to some journalists who joined in with their condemning comments. The most striking example was probably an article that appeared in *Wprost*, one of the most popular right-wing Polish weekly magazines. In an article written shortly after the march, Knap called the organisers “masters of propaganda”, arguing that the organisers set the date for the 9th May (i.e. St Stanislaw’s Day) in order to deliberately provoke the opponents. This way, Knap’s reasoning went, the organisers of the march could easily get proof of discrimination and thus claim “special rights”, which, according to him, consisted of “manifest[ing] one’s own sexual preferences to persons who do not wish that” (Knap 2004). Just in case the readers had any doubt about what manifesting one’s own sexual preferences might consist of, the journalist provided gory details of pride events elsewhere in Europe:

Participants [of Berlin Gay Pride] started throwing used condoms and exposing their genitals at those inhabitants of Berlin who were unhappy with the pride ... In Paris, elderly gentlemen on roller-skates were chasing vehicles on which you could see the most provocatively dressed transsexuals. To the rhythm of samba they were shaking their genitals, encouraging the audience to copulate; they also mimed scenes of oral sex (Knap 2004).

Finally, he argued that the organisers of the March for Tolerance were intolerant of the religious feelings of the majority and were disrespectful towards the prevailing societal norms in Poland. The tone of the article was practically identical to the opinions expressed by Church authorities. Instead of condemning the violent attacks on the march, the clergy accused the gay and lesbian activists of deliberate provocation. For instance, Krakow’s bishop Pieronek argued that, “if you provoke

somebody [i.e. the right-wing] long enough you shouldn't be surprised that there is a reaction, and quite often an aggressive reaction" (Sadecki 2004).

Thus, on the basis of the experience of the first March for Tolerance, the activists were acutely aware that most of opposition to gay and lesbian marches was based on the principles of the Catholic faith. Furthermore, they also learnt that on some occasions the media would collude with the religious authorities in their criticism of the marches. Following the problems experienced in 2004 because of the St. Stanislaw's holiday, the activists in Krakow took a strategic approach with regards to the timing of the event in 2005 from the beginning of the preparatory period. In the remainder of this section I show the ways in which the activists decided to maintain strict group boundaries in relation to the Catholic Church authorities so as not to be "caught out again by the media", as Maks, one of the organisers, put it. As Maks joked, there weren't really any "safe dates", as in Poland it would be close to impossible to find a day that did not fall on or within a day of a Catholic holiday, and he added that it was necessary to "choose those [dates] which are less obvious". As Ilona, one of the Krakow March for Tolerance organisers – and a religious education student - explained, the process of choosing a "less obvious" date for the demonstration was three-tiered. As a rough guide, first the organisers would make sure that there was at least a week's distance between the planned date of the March for Tolerance and Easter as well as Corpus Christi, as these are both national and Catholic holidays. Secondly, the organisers had to make sure that the demonstration did not fall on any of the minor holidays in the Catholic calendar, in particular Catholic holidays that were important locally, such as St. Stanislaw's Day. Finally, as Ilona added; "just to be on the safe side", they had to make sure that the demonstration would not fall on any of the dates that were

connected with the Pope, due to his connections with Krakow, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

These issues were not confined to the Krakow activists, however. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the activists in Warsaw faced the same problems, when in June 2004 the pride had been banned because the event was originally planned to take place a day after the Corpus Christi holiday (PAP 2005a). According to Lech Kaczynski, then mayor of Warsaw and currently Polish president, organising the Pride in such close proximity to a major Catholic holiday would be an insult to the religious feelings of the majority of Polish citizens (Krzyzaniak-Gumowska 2004). This way, the efforts of the pride organisers were read as an attempt to violate the basic tenets of the Catholic Church; and so their feelings about the cancellation did not have to be taken into account.

Tomasz brought up this issue when he compared his own personal experiences of organising the pride in Germany (he was co-organiser of the Christopher Street Days, i.e. Berlin Pride) and Warsaw Pride in Poland. He pointed out that in Germany the organisers would know the dates of the event far in advance, as it always fell on the penultimate weekend in June. In his opinion, the situation was drastically different in Poland due to the religious context:

Every year, when we try to figure out the date of the parade, we always look at the calendar, whether god forbid, the chosen date isn't close to Corpus Christi, St. Veronica holiday or any other saint, because there's always protests ... I mean you can get into some sort of absurd situations, but really, we always open the [Catholic] Church calendar and we look there whether [there's any clashes], I mean, you know it yourself from Krakow, St. Stanislaw or whoever that was ... well, we can be happy that the Pope [John Paul II] died at the beginning of April and not in May or June, because these dates would be out of question, too.

Similarly, when talking about the 2007 Warsaw Pride, Tomasz mentioned that a gay and lesbian film festival would precede the event. He remembered heated

discussions among the Pride organisers about whether it was prudent to start the film festival (not even the Pride itself!) on the 2nd June. The problem was this date would be in close proximity to International Children's Day on the 1st June. This could potentially be seen as provocative, mainly because journalists and Church authorities alike have a tendency to conflate homosexuality and paedophilia (see for instance Kowalski and Tulli 2001, Czarnecki 2009). Even though these fears bordered on the absurd, as Tomasz admitted himself, in the end, the film festival took place in mid-May, a safe distance from the potentially troublesome International Children's Day. Moreover, Tomasz's comment about the perceived need to avoid dates related with the Pope links to my discussion of the circumstances surrounding the 2005 March for Tolerance in Krakow.

Extreme measures for extreme times: The cancellation of the 2005 March for Tolerance

The atmosphere in which the organisers prepared the second March for Tolerance in Krakow was quite tense, with issues surrounding religion and media representation quite prominent. First of all, the memory of the attack in May 2004 was still quite strong. The organisers were painfully aware that the Church authorities disapproved of the event and called it "shameful provocation that humiliated the sacred city of a hundred churches" (Ostolski 2005:16). On top of that, the 2005 March in Krakow would be taking place after the banned Warsaw Pride in June 2004 and the attack on the Poznan March of Equality in November 2004, where both events drew intense protests from Church representatives (see also Chapter 2). As of early February 2005, yet another potential problem cropped up, when the Pope's health started deteriorating rapidly (Lizut 2005). While theoretically this should have had no bearing on the organisation of the event, the activists were aware of the intense

cult of John Paul II in Krakow, as this is where he had worked for twenty years.⁵⁹ With the march planned for the second half of April, the activists feared that the Pope's death before that date would negatively affect the march and so during the meetings the organisers regularly discussed the plan of action in case this happened.

The worst-case scenario did happen and John Paul II died on the evening of the 2nd April, 16 days before the planned date of the march. His death unleashed a nationwide process of mourning (Klekot 2007). In Krakow, because of the Pope's links to the city, that process was characterised by huge, public displays, including a massive procession on 7th April. On that day, approximately 500,000 participants from all over the country gathered to commemorate the Pope (Hrabiec and Dabrawa 2005). This is how Ida remembered the situation immediately after the Pope's death:

The Pope died, and two or three weeks later we were supposed to have the [march], and of course there was this huge national mourning for the whole week, in reality, from the outside it might have looked differently, but really, in Krakow it was a state of national mourning ... there were people kneeling in the street, day in, day out, praying.

After a number of extremely heated discussions, the activists came to the decision to cancel the March for Tolerance, and wrote in an official statement to the press that "Krakow, as a city which is now mourning [the Pope] is not an appropriate place for a public discussion about the rights of the gay and lesbian community" (Ostolski 2005:17). As Adas argues, the decision to cancel the march was essentially a rational one under the circumstances. Above all, it was a tactical move so as not to create a pretext for the opponents to attack the participants of the March for Tolerance for being the first group to break the period of mourning. The fear of

⁵⁹ Before his election as Pope in 1978, John Paul II was Bishop of Krakow. The Pope became a symbol of the anti-communist Church, as well as a symbol of national independence and strength. His visit to Krakow in 1979, in capacity of Pope, triggered a mass mobilisation where, as Brier argues, a "whole generation experienced for the first time a feeling of collective power and exaltation of which they had never dreamt" (Brier 2009:74).

attack becomes even more understandable in the context of a brief reconciliation of the football fans of two competing clubs, Cracovia and Wisla, largely the same crowd that attacked the 2004 March for Tolerance. The football fans demonstrated their unity by organising a mass service in the memory of the Pope on the 8th April. For about a week or so afterwards, there were also groups of football fans walking around the city centre in their club scarves, shouting “reconciliation for the Pope” (Olszewski 2005). The activists feared that the energy of the now united football fans could very easily be channelled against gay and lesbian marchers, especially as the Pope’s conservative views on homosexuality were common knowledge⁶⁰:

Kasia: Well, I remember, that I was against the March taking place because I was afraid that after all this collective hysteria ... people were in such a state that they could crush us and that the aggression will be much, much stronger.

The decision to cancel the 2005 March for Tolerance was not only motivated by issues of safety. Maks mentions that the national mourning verged on national hysteria, and the organisers were afraid of a hugely negative movement image if they decided to go ahead with the demonstration and so became the first group to break the national mourning. Furthermore, as Agnieszka adds, the activists were concerned that the decision to organise the event could cost them the support of their allies, including the support of the gay and lesbian general public. As Medwid argues in an article that appeared on the gay and lesbian website *homiki.pl* shortly after the Pope’s death, according to an informal survey, over half of the respondents stated that the pontificate had a significant meaning for them (Medwid 2004). Implicitly, that might have meant that these individuals would not support the

⁶⁰ See for instance *Evangelium Vitae* [Gospel of Life] published in 1995, where John Paul II describes homosexuality as an epitome of the “civilisation of death” and violation of the sanctity of life (John Paul II 1995).

decision of the Krakow activists to organise the march in such circumstances. Nevertheless, mainstream media did not comment on the cancellation of the march and essentially treated that decision as a non-event. The only media outlet that did comment was the LGBT online media, where opinions were divided.

Overall, the decision to distance the gay and lesbian marches from any associations with the Catholic Church as much as possible so as to minimise the risk of accusations on the part of the media was echoed by other research participants, not only in Krakow. The attitude of the activists towards religious authorities is best summed up by Robert (one of the Warsaw Pride organisers) who stated quite bluntly:

I am not interested in the attitudes of the Catholic Church [towards homosexuals]. I believe that any sort of dialogue with this institution with regard to homosexual persons will be futile.

This statement reflects a more general tendency, as in Poland the issue of religion remains conspicuously absent from the agenda of the gay and lesbian movement, even though, as discussed in this thesis, opposition to the marches on religious grounds was a regular feature of public activism. Furthermore, even though an enquiry into religious affiliation and the practices of the activists was not part of this thesis, a number of research participants both during the interviews and in more informal conversations stressed their conscious efforts to disassociate themselves from Catholicism. At the same time, it can safely be assumed that most of them, if not all of them, were actually brought up as Catholics, since this is how an overwhelming majority of people in Poland identify themselves, as discussed in Chapter 2. Nevertheless, currently, the website homiki.pl is the only place that discusses issues of religion (understood mostly as Catholicism and Christianity) in the context of the gay and lesbian community. The only gay and lesbian Christian

group “Berith”, which met irregularly in Warsaw, suspended its activities in 2003 (Podgorska 2007). This is quite a stark contrast to the situation for instance in the UK and in Scandinavian countries where a number of gay and lesbian religious initiatives exist (see for instance Paris and Anderson 2001, Hunt 2002). The strategy adopted by the activists in Poland, who deliberately avoided any overt confrontation with the Catholic Church authorities will be discussed further in the context of the dilemma between assimilation and radicalism in Chapter 7. At the same time, it could be argued that organising gay and lesbian events in a predominantly religious country was already a direct attack on Catholic values and an incitement to violence. As mentioned earlier, when it came to existing media representations, a number of activists pointed to the predominant frame of aggression. Accordingly, in the next section I discuss the ways in which the activists responded to that framing and what these responses meant in terms of identity deployment strategies.

“Faggots vs. fascists”: Responses to conflict

As argued previously, a number of research participants pointed to a drastic difference between the way that they planned to be represented, that is, as a peaceful demonstration for sexual minorities, and the actual representation, where the event was portrayed as a street battle between the marchers and protesters. Another recurrent comment was that the activists felt that once the journalists managed to stir up some controversy, they were only “interested in the blood” and focused almost exclusively on the side of the protesters. As already discussed, for instance in the case of the 2004 March for Tolerance, the activists were hugely frustrated that the media chose to concentrate on the riots after the march, at the expense of portraying the largely peaceful march:

Ilona: During our meetings we talked about the fact that for instance when it comes to the coverage on public TV, the march [March for Tolerance in

Krakow, 2004] was barely mentioned, they [journalists] only said that after the march there was this battle with the police, that there were loads of hooligans and so on, that there was a battle with the police and we were really angry, because it wasn't our point.

According to the activists, this type of coverage emphasised action rather than context, leaving the public ignorant of the causes and goals of the movement (Jenkins 1983). The activists had similar perceptions of the coverage of the 2006 march, which had been attacked by the participants of the counter-march, the March of Tradition and Culture organised by radical right-wing organisations (Amnesty International 2006, see also Chapter 2). When discussing the coverage of the event, the activists yet again complained about the media using the frame of “a street battle”. On top of that, when the media used the format of a “simple stor[y], built around a visible contrast or a dramatic conflict” (Graff 2005:38), they tended to give much more coverage to the more aggressive side. For instance Julie, one of the 2006 March for Tolerance co-organisers, mentioned that in reporting the demonstration in Krakow, for the most part, the journalists chose to focus on the violent counterdemonstration, that is, the March of Tradition and Culture, instead of the peaceful march itself. Julie argued that the dominant journalistic format seemed to be “we're going to show two quick shots of the march and like thirty seconds of the skinheads or something”. Furthermore, Majka complained of what she called “the comparative tendency of the media”, that is, portraying the two marches as equivalent events taking place in the public sphere:

Generally there is the impression that suddenly we are a group of hooligans who come to have a fight with the All-Polish Youth and in general we come accepting the same rules.

Similarly, Kasia, one of the march's co-organisers argued that some of the commentaries in the media reduced the event to “faggots [who] had a fight with the

fascists” thus dichotomising the problem and displaying the “tendency to reduce controversy to two competing positions” (Gamson 1988:169). The activists feared that this comparative tendency could lead to gross misrepresentations where:

Agnieszka Z.: You can only see how people are chasing after one another, no idea who is after whom, on the basis of some coverage you could even draw a conclusion that we were running after these guys.

This is not altogether surprising, as in an effort to appear unbiased, the media typically present alternative views of the issue in hand (Gamson 1988). Unfortunately, as the above comments show, in the case of the 2006 March for Tolerance, the media seemed to operate on the assumption that its organisers were just as radical and dangerous as their opponents, the right-wing anti-demonstrators. This is consistent with the scholarly claims that the news coverage tends to portray protesters negatively, exaggerating their deviance and ignoring their substantive goals in favour of superficial appearances and violent actions that tell a more dramatic and colourful story (Chan and Lee 1984). Even more importantly, as I argue in this chapter, the organisers and participants of the marches were seen as a reflection of the gay and lesbian community as a whole. Even more importantly, negative media portrayals can severely damage a movement’s image and strongly influence the public’s view of the acceptability of movement organisations and members (Friedman and McAdam 1992).

At the same time, my research shows that the activists were not merely passive recipients of the biased representations mentioned above. First of all, as I indicated earlier in my discussion of activists’ media awareness, they were proactive in gathering information about the images produced with regards to the march. Consequently, during each event there was a designated person who bought all the daily and weekly newspapers with articles related to the march. That person would also search the Internet for links to news coverage concerning the event and

then post these links on the organisers' mailing list. Finally, these representations were discussed in detail during preparatory meetings for future events, as were strategies for avoiding similar problems in the future. Thus, in the remainder of this chapter I look at the ways in which the activists attempted to counteract the accusation of aggression by emphasising the pacifist character of the 2007 March for Tolerance.

Soon after the March for Tolerance organisers announced their intention to hold another event in April 2007, the representatives of the Krakow branch of All-Polish Youth publicly stated during a press conference that they would do everything in order to prevent it from going ahead. They also informed of their plans to organise a counter-march, on the same day, just as they did the previous year. Finally, they added that the participants of the counter-march would block the March for Tolerance from reaching its final destination, Market Square, through the use of "peaceful methods", such as sitting down in large groups on the pavement (PAP 2007b). The right-wing organisation presented the rationale behind the protest not as a wish to discriminate against homosexuals, but rather to protect the "the freedom of the inhabitants of Krakow who would be forced to watch this ugliness and abomination" (Kachel 2007). At the same time, for the gay and lesbian activists "ugliness and abomination" was rather on the side of the aggressive right-wing. For instance, the organisers commented a number of times on the bleakness of the protesters and the fact that during the 2004 and 2006 March they were quite uniform in appearance, with the majority of them wearing white T-shirts with the All-Polish Youth logo. Thus, this section continues with the theme of media-movement interactions and focuses on a careful, well thought-out strategy that the

activists adopted in order to clearly distinguish themselves from the violent protesters:

Inga: Well, we had a discussion about what we would like the March [for Tolerance] to be like, what formula this should have, and quite recently there were, I mean, there were always efforts so that we do not end up looking like the other side, so that, on the one hand, we can show that we are here, we cannot be ignored, but at the same time we are showing that we are not the aggressive side.

As Inga adds, overall, the group of young, (mostly) bald-headed men would be a far cry from the more diverse group with colourful banners on the side of the march participants:

All that time we had this idea, to provide a counterbalance for bald guys in white T-shirts who came with all their aggressive slogans, bottles and stones; we wanted to provide a really sharp contrast, so that you could see it, I mean, when you look at pictures of their side and our side, I think it [the side of the march participants] shows something very positive.

While a number of options were considered, in the end the activists decided to distribute six hundred balloons in six colours of the rainbow among the march participants, so as to represent the colours of the gay rainbow flag (Sawer 2007). As Ania explains the rationale behind this decision:

We did this [the balloons], to tell the truth, to create a vivid contrast with them [the right-wing protesters], to show that in reality we are peaceful, we chose the colours of the balloons so as not to create associations with aggression, [we wanted to point out] that the aggression was on the side of the protesters ... the point is to show that everything is peaceful, that it [the march] is distinctly different from what is happening on the protesters' side. ... they [the balloons] create the idea that we are nice, and that we have great ideas, it's colourful and nice, and so you should join us.

Majka stresses yet another aspect of that visual performance, that is, by emphasising the peaceful aspects of the march, the activists were hoping to provide a clear-cut

boundary between the pacifist March for Tolerance and the aggressive participants of the March of Tradition and Culture:

Well, this is an attempt to make it impossible for the media to lie when it comes to the coverage, if we go in with joyful slogans, with the balloons, if we are, I don't know, this sort of peaceful, joyful crowd, then nobody will be able to hold it against us, that I don't know, we are going to beat somebody up, that our aims are aggressive, I don't know, that we want to hurt somebody, or, that we are a gay equivalent of All-Polish Youth...so our aim was to appear dissimilar to the other side, not to enable the media to create this comparison [between us and them].

Furthermore, in their effort to create a performance that would emphasise the peaceful image of the group, the activists in Krakow could rely on an example of similar strategies employed in other cities where the activists took great care to respond to the aggressiveness of the protesters in a pacifist way. For instance, during the 2003 Pride, the organisers invited a feminist group, Radical Cheerleaders to take part in the event. The role of Radical Cheerleaders was to sprinkle fairy dust and shout "we love you" to members of the All-Polish Youth, in response to the right-wing protesters who were shouting back "Faggots, go home" to pride participants. Another relatively prominent example was the 2005 March of Equality in Poznan, first banned by the city authorities and later brutally interrupted by a police intervention. As will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 6, the organisers of the March of Equality decided to go ahead with the event despite the ban and based their decision on the constitutional right of assembly when it comes to peaceful demonstrations. Thus, they used a number of props to stress their peacefulness and the wish not to appear aggressive. One of the elements, which the organisers had planned beforehand, was the creation of a pacifist symbol with candles in order to mark "the death of democracy". This was eagerly picked up by the media, and a number of photographs that appeared in the papers after the event showed the pacifist symbol being reflected in the police shields (Kowalczyk 2006,

unpublished manuscript). As Kowalczyk adds “the media picked up the nicely dressed men and women being forcefully dragged by the police and juxtaposed that with the aggression of the police”, thus breaking the usual convention of reporting on the marches as a conflict between “sexual deviants” and right-wing protesters (Kowalczyk 2006, unpublished manuscript). Thus, it was quite a striking (even if not fully planned beforehand, as I will explain later) example of an event where the activists managed to create performances that emphasised the peaceful image of the group. At the same time, while the strategy of emphasising peacefulness turned out to be successful in terms of media coverage, the March of Equality organisers could have hardly anticipated the police intervention or planned for such dramatic visuals, as the images of the police brutally dragging the march participants into police cars (it has to be noted, though, that they did prepare the candles beforehand). Similarly, the March for Tolerance organisers were also keen to focus on creating a peaceful performance. Moreover, the introduction of the balloons demonstrated their willingness to stage an event that would provide “camera-worthy props” (Schwartz 2002:27).

On the day of the march, the participants of the March of Tradition and Culture gathered at Market Square about an hour before the March for Tolerance was due to set off from Matejki Square a couple of hundred yards away. After about fifty minutes the front of the March for Tolerance entered the entrance to Market Square, which was followed by clapping and visible enthusiasm on the part of the participants. As the activists related in the interviews, that collective joy was mostly connected to the fact that Market Square, a place of big symbolic and patriotic relevance in Krakow, was the original destination in 2004 and 2006. However, on both occasions the route was either interrupted or changed. However, their joy was

rather short lived, as it soon turned out that the head of the march could not advance any further into Market Square because of a counter-demonstration that had gathered in the centre of the square and blocked access. The right-wing protesters were also throwing eggs and bottles at the police, who decided to use tear-gas and one of the policemen was injured (Jalowiec and Romanowski 2007). Finally, the police urged the participants of the March for Tolerance to disperse, thus officially ending the event. The March for Tolerance participants released the balloons they had distributed among the participants at the start of the march. The success of the strategy adopted by the activists was limited and the media still paid considerable attention to the conflict between the two marches. Nevertheless, a number of articles commented on the colourfulness of the March for Tolerance participants and juxtaposed it with the aggressive crowd blocking entrance to Market Square (See for instance Jalowiec and Romanowski 2007).

At the same time, I argue that the relevance of the strategy also consisted of the way that the activists incorporated this particular element of the strategy, emphasising peacefulness in the movement's sense of "we-ness". I base that claim on the basis of the data that I obtained from the photo-elicitation interviews that took place following the 2007 March for Tolerance. Of course, as the activists distributed a couple of hundred balloons at the start of the event, it is no surprise that the balloons appeared in the photographs that were produced as part of the photo-elicitation method. At the same time, all three participants that took part in the photo-elicitation interview, produced images where the balloons were the focus of the picture.

For instance, the following picture (Figure 4 below) presents some elements of the media strategy that was designed, as Majka put it, to provide a contrast with

the aggressiveness and uniformity of the All-Polish Youth. As discussed in this section, the general impression that the March participants attempted to create was that of peacefulness and openness. A number of elements contributed to that framing of the event, such as the colourful balloons and a large rainbow flag of about 100 metres in size that was carried by the activists at the front of the march. When commenting on the rationale behind taking that photograph, Majka said:

Majka: Oh, here I was trying to catch the march, the fundamental part of the march, the essence of the march.

Interviewer: So what did this essence consist of?

Majka: Well, it was all about these colours and this diversity.



Figure 4. Scene from the 2007 March for Tolerance

The photograph, reflecting the colourful and diverse aspect of the march, matched Majka's earlier description of her ideal vision of the march. Similarly, Sebastian made the balloons the focus of a number of pictures, focusing on the moment that the balloons were being released into the air (see Figure 5 below). Furthermore, he added that he considered this photograph as one of the most relevant among the

ones that he had taken because of their symbolic meaning. To him, the balloons signified the freedom and liberation of sexual minorities.



Figure 5. Scene from the 2007 March for Tolerance

Agnieszka Z. also chose a picture showing the release of the balloons into the air (very similar to the one that Sebastian took) as one of the most important and said that the balloons symbolised the most important aspect of the march, that is, the fact that finally after two years the marchers had managed to reach Market Square.

Even if the march participants technically only made it to the head of Market Square and were prevented from going any further, there were no such limitations for the balloons that were released all over the surface of the square. In their accounts of that moment, the research participants emphasised their joy at their success in reaching the desired destination as well as the colourful ending of the event. This joy is related to an aspect of activism which will receive more attention in the next chapter, that is, emotions generated in the context of gay and lesbian

marches. Furthermore, I believe that the discussion of emotions is relevant not only when it comes to the positive aspects of public activist events, such as the success of the 2007 March for Tolerance in Krakow. After all, a large part of this chapter has been devoted to the obstacles and the frustrations that the activists experienced in the context of movement-media interactions. As I situated my discussion within the theoretical framework of identity for education, I did not address the emotions stemming from these quite often hostile encounters. Thus, the next chapter will fill this gap and focus on the emotion work of movement actors involved in public activism.

Conclusion

Overall, in this chapter I have focused on various facets of movement-media interactions in the context of public activism. I started out by providing an overview of the group's resources when it comes to media skills and literacy. As I discussed, gaining media attention often required planning and staging an event that yields compelling photo opportunities and engaging sound bites, a challenging but manageable task, especially when taking into consideration the high level of media literacy of the research participants (Schwartz 2002). To get media attention, protesters often engage in what Gamson calls "a barter arrangement", that is, if the protesters provide action that makes for good videos and still pictures, the media will cover the protest (Gamson 1989:159). Drawing on examples from the interviews, I have addressed activists' perceptions of the tactics that the media employed in representing public gay and lesbian activist events. As I demonstrated in this chapter, the activists were wary of the strategy of the media to detextualise gay and lesbian public events by focusing on the sensational or exotic aspects of a protest. Consequently, I analysed the ways in which the march organisers

strategically deployed their identity in an effort to challenge these negative representations and assert their rights as (sexual) citizens; in particular their right to produce more positive representations of sexual minorities. At the same time, the consequences (and resulting dilemmas) of adopting the identity for education approach for the construction of the gay and lesbian subject will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

Importantly, while a substantial number of researchers touch upon issues of the relationship between social movements and media, my contribution lies in adopting an approach that focuses on the concept of collective identity, with an emphasis on identity deployment. Thus, instead of focusing on the existing representations in isolation from the activists' voices, I pay attention to issues of collective agency and identity. Furthermore, I have broadened the scope of my inquiry by focusing on the entanglements of the media with Catholic ideology. In addition, the originality of my approach lies in drawing upon visual sociology methods as I rely on data produced from the photo-elicitation interviews and throughout the chapter pay attention to the ways in which movement identity is mediated through visual means. I now move on to discuss the issue of emotion work, which I flagged up towards the end of this chapter as a relevant issue for exploring the meaning of public activist events.

CHAPTER 6

Emotional spaces of Solidarity

The notion of collective identity has become a central concept for exploring how movement participants come to think of themselves as sharing fundamental elements of who they are as people distinct from those not tied to their movement (Taylor and Whittier 1992). One of components of movement identity involves group members' recognition of the saliency of a common characteristic which is defined by the group as important. It is the heightened saliency of this shared trait that promotes a strong sense of "we-ness," or "us versus-them" (Shriver et al. 2000:44). I locate my discussion of those salient shared traits of the Polish gay and lesbian movement within Bernstein's concept of identity for empowerment, that is, the feeling that action is feasible (Bernstein 1997). Importantly, I propose to broaden that framework by including a discussion of movement emotion work, as I believe an exploration of the emotions generated in the context of prides and marches will allow me to successfully analyse the meanings of public gay and lesbian activism in Poland.

On the basis of the research participants' narratives, I first explore the overall relevance of the marches for the emotional culture of the movement. Focusing on two banned marches – that is, the March of Equality in Poznan and the Warsaw Pride in 2005 - I then provide a more detailed analysis of specific emotions, namely anger, fear and euphoria which to differing extents surfaced in the context of public activist events. Furthermore, I argue that yet another way in which prides and marches functioned in the emotional culture of the movement was the inscription of public activist events into "freedom narratives" connected with the Polish anti-communist opposition movement of the 1980s. Thus, I first discuss the

inscription of the 2005 Warsaw Pride into these opposition narratives and in particular the narrative of the 2005 Orange Revolution in the Ukraine and later analyse the analogies that the research participants drew between the banned March of Equality and the rhetoric of the Solidarity movement. I show how the efforts to reclaim the complex legacy of the Polish opposition movement further linked with the activists' efforts to challenge the mainstream definitions of citizenship which denied gays and lesbians access to public space. Finally, I argue that the "pleasures of protest" (Jasper 1997:108) were crucial in sustaining the activists' decisions to persevere with organising marches and prides despite the unfavourable political context and hostile local authorities.

Gay and lesbian public events in the emotional culture of the movement

As Polletta and Jasper argue, collective identities are expressed in cultural materials such as names, narratives, symbols, verbal styles, rituals, clothing, and so on (Polletta and Jasper 2001:285). The following quote from one of the Warsaw Pride organisers asserts the relevance of prides and marches in constructing movement identity:

Tomasz: Pride is a symbol ... every year we have a motto for the pride, in the first year [i.e. 2005, the first year that Tomasz took over organising of the event] it was "different but equal", standard, because it was the first year after, after this Kaczynski, after the first ban [in 2004], we have the same rights and so on, so we were accused, just like you are trying now, why this parade, why are you organising it, and we answered, because we have our own culture, our own identity, our own community.

Thus, in this chapter, I treat marches and prides as a space to discuss the emotion culture of the movement and in this context I focus specifically on unravelling the various meanings of what the activists framed, in Tomasz's words, as "our own identity". His quote also points to what is the central focus of this chapter, that is,

the fact that the process of mobilising identity for the purposes of public activism was taking place under quite adverse circumstances. Furthermore, Tomasz's quote is related to the theme of (sexual) citizenship, which is a running thread throughout this chapter. Specifically, he stresses the right of sexual minorities to appear in public spaces, and as I have already demonstrated, the entitlement to public space had been questioned numerous times by religious and political authorities.

The label of homosexual in Poland continues to have negative associations, the roots of which stem from the country's historical circumstances, that is, the communist past and the powerful influence of the Catholic Church, as discussed in Chapter 2. Numerous authors place prides and marches in the context of "the second emancipatory wave" (as opposed to the "first emancipatory wave" in the early 1990s, after the fall of the communist regime) that is, the awakening of a huge public debate on homosexuality, which brought issues of sexual minorities in Poland into the public sphere (Kochanowski 2004, Sypniewski and Warkocki 2004, Selinger 2008). On a related note, Graff adds:

A mere few years ago gays and lesbians were still basically invisible to the heterosexual majority, at least not as an interest group with specific demands ... an astounding shift in public discourse about homosexuality occurred in the space of a mere two or three years—from complete silence at the turn of the twenty-first century to almost daily headlines (Graff 2006:434).

At the same time, protests against the LGBT activity were a regular feature of the public activist events. From the beginning, the Warsaw Pride attracted protests on the part of the right-wing organisations that regularly held anti-demonstrations on the route of the pride. These protests intensified as the marches spread to two other cities; that is, Poznan and Krakow, as discussed in Chapter 2 (see also Graff 2006, Kubica 2006).

I start my discussion on the ways in which pride parades and marches became the central focus of the movement by analysing the account of Szymon, the first organiser of a successful gay and lesbian pride in Warsaw in 2001. I believe that understanding his account of the breakthrough event illustrates my point about the links between public activism and emotion culture of the Polish LGBT movement. During the interview, Szymon painted quite a vivid scene, which, he argued, was the moment that his decision to organise the pride crystallised:

On the huge TV screen [in a gay pub] there was a programme that showed snippets from Sydney Pride in 2000, colours, flags, fireworks, naked men, I mean, everything was just overwhelming, we [i.e. a group of Szymon's friends] were all sitting and watching quite stunned, I mean, our thoughts were something like, oh my god, mhm, that is fantastic, wow and so on and then somebody, I don't remember who, blurted out, it's such a shame that we can't have something like this in Poland and then my contrary nature forced me to say, well, why not.

Thus, this quote addresses a number of issues connected with gay and lesbian public activism. First of all, it points to the overwhelming sense of impossibility to be able to organise a public gay and lesbian event. This feeling was also echoed by the representatives of the gay and lesbian movement speaking out in publications that appeared around that time. For instance, Garwatowski (quoted in Filipczak 2000), the organiser of Gay Pride Days between 1998 and 2000,⁶¹ argued that the event was not accompanied by a public demonstration because of prevailing negative attitudes towards homosexuality. Garwatowski also added that even if such an event had been organised, it would attract no participants for fear of the consequences of a public coming out. This pessimistic outlook might have been based on the fact that there were two previous unsuccessful attempts at organising a public gay and lesbian demonstration, in 1995 and 1998, discussed in Chapter 2. These rather

⁶¹ An event organised yearly by the Warsaw gay community since 1995; despite the very similar name it was not connected to the later Warsaw Pride – see Chapter 2.

discouraging experiences might have left the activist community feeling at least for quite a long while that they were unprepared to go ahead with public demonstrations. In light of these two events, it is unsurprising that Szymon, when speaking about the first pride, repeated a couple of times that he “didn’t really imagine it at all”. He mentioned that the pride was a completely new situation for everybody involved, starting from the organisers themselves and the gay and lesbian community, through the inhabitants of Warsaw, the media and finally even to the opponents. After all, as mentioned earlier, protests against the pride were a regular feature of the event from its beginning. Szymon recalled, however, that in the first year the group of right-wing protesters was relatively small and not very well organised, unlike in the following years. Furthermore, he added that until the very end the organisers of the first pride did not really know what would happen, as they had no previous experience of organising or attending similar events on which to base their expectations.

Nevertheless, even though the organisers lacked practical experience of public activism, Szymon’s account points to the pre-existing knowledge of march organisers, that is, familiarity with the public representations of gays and lesbians, here in the context of the Sydney Pride. After all, these were stock images used by the journalists to report on anything even vaguely related to gay and lesbian issues. Even more importantly, as I discussed in Chapter 5 these were the same representations that fuelled the protests against the marches and influenced movement-media interactions. As a result, the familiarity with this particular public image of the gay and lesbian community might have created quite a large distance between the colourful pride and the Polish reality. By the same token, this context could have made the idea of having a pride in Poland an act of extreme bravado

akin to a revolution. This revolutionary aspect of prides is evident in Szymon's account, where he frames his decision to get involved in organising the first pride as a result of an unexpected spark of inspiration. As will be discussed throughout the chapter, this seemed to be the prevailing narrative for a number of other research participants, who would discuss their involvement in public activism as strongly connected with intense emotions such as anger or euphoria. At the same time, they would downplay the more mundane aspect of their efforts, such as sorting out the practical arrangements. Similarly, Szymon's account of his "light-bulb moment" seems to completely overlook the fact that his involvement in the event did not come out of the blue as at that time he was involved in LGBT activism as co-ordinator of the local branch of ILGCN.

Similar motifs recurred in other accounts of first-time organisers. For instance, Ida, who was involved in the first March for Tolerance in Krakow, summed up her impressions by using an interesting metaphor: "we were like a group of kids on tiny bicycles who crashed against a massive tank". After all, as the organisers of the first March for Tolerance stressed during the interviews, what they originally envisaged was a quiet, toned-down march combined with a "pink picnic". They imagined that no more than a hundred people, dressed in costumes representing various professions (from carpenters to doctors, in order to stress that literally anybody could belong to a sexual minority group), would march from Market Square down to a designated spot for the picnic by the River Vistula, a popular meeting place in Krakow. The picnic would be an event open to everybody, where both the gay and lesbian marchers and passers-by spending a quiet afternoon on the river bank would join in. Therefore, while the activists did plan to include an element of a public demonstration, nevertheless, the focus was on creating a safe

and non-threatening atmosphere. Instead of the quiet event they envisaged, however, three weeks before the planned date of the march things got hugely out of hand and they found themselves in the midst of a media storm, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 (see also Kubica 2006).

Graff claims that through public activist events, the figure of the homosexual in Poland has moved from the margin of collective consciousness to the centre of an increasingly polarised public debate (Graff 2006). In their accounts, research participants spoke of this polarisation as generating extremely intense emotions, as demonstrated in the following quote:

Tomek: We got inscribed into this [political trend], into the stream of events that we had no influence on ... We clashed with, well, all this culture, conservatism, with all these football hooligans, with the grand politics that claimed us, with the bishop; in general, everything that could have happened to us during these short four days did happen to us, and there was such an intensity of emotions, not only when it comes to our emotions but also on the other side, all these politicians, our opponents, their level of emotions was quite extreme, everything they said all of it was full of hate. During one day [i.e. the March for Tolerance in 2004] I experienced what other people have no chance of experiencing during ten years of activism or sometimes at all, I experienced everything possible, pride, fear, tears ... from total ecstasy to total desperation, and I think it changed me immensely as a person, in all possible ways.

Thus, as Tomek's quote demonstrates, he saw the protests against the March for Tolerance and the event itself as generating intense emotions for all the actors involved. At the same time, even though this excerpt implies a certain lack of control with regards to these emotions, this was not necessarily a uniformly negative experience. Throughout the interview, Tomek repeatedly asserted that the experience of the March for Tolerance cemented his commitment to activism and transformed him both personally and professionally. At the same time, in his account he paints a picture of being on an emotional roller coaster, and does not really discriminate between different emotions. Accordingly, the next section will

be devoted to a more systematic overview of the emotions generated in the context of public activism, where I primarily focus on anger, fear and euphoria in the context of the banned Warsaw Pride, followed by a discussion of the banned Poznan March of Equality.

Warsaw Pride: This was something we couldn't give up

In May 2005, the Mayor of Warsaw, Lech Kaczynski banned the Warsaw Pride for the second time, fearing that the pride would be obscene and added that he was “for tolerance, but against propagating gay orientation” (Baczowski 2005). Even more importantly, the 2005 Warsaw Pride was taking place in the run-up to the presidential elections, where the mayor of Warsaw, Lech Kaczynski, was a candidate. As Graff (2006) argues, the ban of the pride was a well-planned element of Kaczynski's presidential campaign, as mentioned in Chapter 2.

The organisers brought up the relevance of the political context themselves, arguing that the unfavourable circumstances made it even more crucial to persevere in their efforts:

Aneta: I remember, you know, there was this moment when we were wondering whether to keep on organising this pride [in 2005] at all, despite all those difficulties, whether it wouldn't be better, you know, to be this wounded martyr and simply stay at home, and I remember that somebody said that we need to organise this march in order to show all those people who will for the next couple of years have to live under the rule of Law and Justice, that they are not alone...that this was something we definitely couldn't give up, because if we did then we'd be seriously oppressed for the next couple of years to come.

Just as the decision to ban the 2005 Pride was a symbol of the increasing influence of the right-wing, the activists' decision to persevere despite the problems was a symbol of the resilience of the movement. As Johnston puts it, for the participants of pride events “in that place, in that moment, the queer nation, and their full

citizenship of it, seems to exist” (Johnston 2007:30). Thus the Warsaw Pride would be an emotional resource from which the both the activists and gay and lesbian individuals in general could draw on in the foreseeable future.

At first, the organisers tried appealing the ban, and once that route was unsuccessfully exhausted, they attempted a legal trick that involved registering five different rallies on the originally planned route of the pride. The point of the trick was that according to Polish law, a rally can be registered up to three days before the planned event, as opposed to a march, which requires that the event is registered thirty days before it takes place. The organisers reasoned that this way they could actually have the pride go as previously planned, as people would need to move between demonstrations, as Tomek explained: “people would gather for a rally, and then we’d dissolve that rally, move over to another one, and gather for a rally again and so on”. However, the city authorities ruined this alternative plan by also banning the rallies at the last possible date, exactly three days before the due date. This meant that the organisers did not have the time to re-apply or appeal the decision, as it takes precisely three days to process such an appeal. The activists’ reaction was to call for an illegal demonstration in a statement on the Pride’s website, a day before the due date:

As citizens we have the right to come on Saturday the 11th May 2005 at 12 in front of the parliament building, at Wiejska Street, and say what we think about the lack of respect for us and for fundamental human and citizen rights in Poland.⁶²

The fact that the activists challenged the ban of the pride by using the rhetoric of citizenship is even more significant in the context of Kaczynski’s rationale to refuse permission for the event. Kaczynski openly stated that he would issue the ban no

⁶² Based on the information from the Warsaw Pride 2005 organizers’ website http://www.paradarownosci.pl/_index.php

matter what the organisers wrote in the necessary paperwork, arguing that gays and lesbians could “take part in organised protest as citizens but not as homosexuals” (Krzyzaniak-Gumowska 2005). This way, he made it clear that sexual minorities in Poland were not entitled to full citizenship. In the light of his decision, the act of civil disobedience on the part of the pride organisers would mean an active appropriation of (sexual) citizen rights. The emotional significance of that decision is crucial here, as to begin with, while the illegal event did take place and its participants managed to march successfully both as homosexuals and as citizens, this was not a guaranteed outcome. Aneta, one of the organisers, mentioned listening to the radio on the way to the site of the Pride, when she heard a representative for public safety who argued that the police were entitled to use force to disperse the illegal gathering. This way, the participants and organisers of the Pride were constructed as those who “cut into and disrupt the ‘normality’ of heterosexual space” and so could suffer consequences for breaking the norms and be forcibly removed (Valentine 1996:147).

When speaking about the day of the Pride, most organisers remembered the chaos at the meeting point, where a crowd of about three thousand gathered. They quickly found themselves behind a tight police cordon that initially prevented them from going anywhere. The chaotic beginning included a shouting match between the Pride participants and its opponents who were behind that cordon. Surprisingly, about half an hour later the police cordon opened and the pride participants were able to head in the direction of the city centre. As Lukasz, one of the organisers explained, this was possible thanks to the presence of the then Vice Prime Minister Izabela Jaruga-Nowacka and European MPs from the German Green Party. Because of them the participants could march through the streets of Warsaw, enjoying police

protection from the opponents, who were throwing eggs and bottles and tried to block the streets (Baczkowski 2005). Importantly, the presence of the politicians was not just a lucky accident, but rather a result of hard work over many months on the part of the organisers.

After the first ban of the Warsaw Pride in 2004 pride, the organisers anticipated potential problems with organising the pride the following year, especially in view of the increasing influence of the right-wing. Accordingly, they decided to increase the profile of the event and invite international politicians who would serve as international observers, giving more credibility to the cause. Tomasz, who was in charge of international contacts, explained that the organisers could not simply invite European MPs to the pride and needed to provide a more official “excuse” for the politicians. The solution was to organise a conference on the topic of gay and lesbian rights a day before the Pride. This way, the politicians invited to the conference would have a legitimate reason to participate in the event on the following day. Thus, on top of sorting out the Pride arrangements and dealing with the city authorities, the organisers were also busy organising a conference and coordinating visits of the international guests. At the same time, despite all these efforts, the activists were deeply uncertain and quite anxious as to what would happen on the day of the illegal demonstration and what its outcome would be. In the next section I examine the ways in which the research participants narrated the events during the Pride, focusing on the saliency of emotions in these accounts. I also broaden my discussion of identity for empowerment by examining the references that the activists made to other narratives of truly revolutionary events, such as the Orange Revolution and the anti-communist opposition. This

discussion will also be relevant for looking at emotion work in another banned event later on, that is, the Poznan March of Equality.

It was like a revolution: Narrating Pride events

In their recollections of the pride, most organisers mentioned a general sense of disbelief mixed with euphoria. Lukasz went as far as to compare the event to the Ukrainian Orange Revolution, an event which raised considerable political interest in Poland, with connections being made to the 1980s opposition movement:

Lukasz: I remember how all of it happened and I remember how people could not really believe that we really did have the [Warsaw] Pride ... this was amazing, this was really, this really looked like a revolution, we knew we were doing something illegal, that theoretically at least we could have been fined or even brought into court if somebody really wanted to, but there were so many of us that they wouldn't, well, this was after the Orange Revolution, I remember, how people were shouting, '*raz u nas bahato, nas nie podolaty*' [In Ukrainian: 'Together, we are many! We cannot be defeated!'],⁶³ this was amazing, yeah, amazing, this feeling that you are walking through the city and so what, that we're there illegally, what are they going to do to us, they won't do anything, we were like miners who go out on strike to negotiate their pensions or something, we did not have pick-axes, we had some colourful balloons, rainbow flags, but the effect was the same ... there was something revolutionary about it.

Before discussing the emotions mentioned in this quote further, I will contextualise the Orange Revolution, as this is significant for my discussion of "revolutionary narratives" in the context of public activism in Poland, as well as the links between emotion work and citizenship.

The Orange Revolution was a series of political events and mass protests that took place in the Ukraine from late November 2004 to January 2005, in the aftermath of the 2004 Ukrainian presidential election (Christensen et al. 2005). According to the opposition, the results of the vote between leading candidates Viktor Yushchenko (the opposition candidate) and Viktor Yanukovich (the former

⁶³ The chorus of the unofficial anthem of the Ukrainian Orange Revolution (originally, a line of a song by a popular West Ukrainian band) (Kuzio 2005).

Prime Minister of the Ukraine) had been manipulated by the authorities in favour of the latter. The supporters to the challenger took to the streets, gathering under large orange banners, which represented the colour of Yushchenko's parliamentary bloc called "Our Ukraine" (Tucker 2007).

As Jedras (2004) argues, the events in the Ukraine had a special resonance in Poland. The general public and politicians alike expressed their support for the Ukrainian opposition as it attempted to overturn the results of the flawed presidential elections. For instance, the leading newspaper, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, produced a special insert on the Orange Revolution complete with orange ribbons to be worn in solidarity with the Ukrainian protesters. A group of Warsaw University students created an association called "Free Ukraine", which organised a number of public rallies, concerts and poetry readings. As Jedras put it, reporting on the general mood of the people participating in the events organised in solidarity with the Ukrainian opposition:

Again and again, Poles say that the protests in Poland's Eastern neighbour remind them of 1980 and 1989, the years when Poland's trade union movement Solidarity pressed the communist system to the wall and finally toppled it. [As some say] "We were supported then; now we are supporting" (Jedras 2004).

Thus, the overwhelming support was based on parallels with Poland's situation in the 1980s, when the mass protests of Solidarity activists were one of the elements in the demise of the communist regime (Latoszek 2006). These links were strengthened even further by the visit of Lech Walesa, the former leader of Solidarity who flew to Kiev, at the invitation of the opposition leader, Yushchenko (Jedras 2004). Finally, the Orange Revolution was also significant for the Polish LGBT community as three representatives of gay and lesbian organisations (including Lukasz) joined the Polish Observatory Mission, an initiative of "Free

Ukraine", at the end of December 2004, in order to register any problems during the repeated round of voting (Palucki 2005).

It can be argued that in the desire to undermine the communist regime, one of the goals of both the Solidarity activists and Orange Revolution oppositionists, was in fact a desire to renegotiate a new, less oppressive definition of citizenship. Thus, Lukasz's reference to Orange Revolution in his description of the illegal Pride is quite significant. This way the event becomes inscribed into the tradition of mass protests as part of larger revolutionary movements whose aim was to broaden the scope of citizenship, where all excluded groups would be finally welcome. Furthermore, Lukasz's references to miners' strikes show that the organisers of the Pride positioned themselves on a par with other social actors whose appearances in the public sphere were perceived as legitimate (Bogucka 2004). The overwhelming feeling of euphoria was a factor in the research participants' decision to engage in the public protest despite the official ban. All things considered, in comparison with more powerful groups with political backing such as the striking miners mentioned by Lukasz, the gay and lesbian activists' resources must have seemed quite paltry. After all, the Pride participants did not espouse violence; they came equipped with nothing more than banners and a strong moral conviction that they had the right to appear in public spaces. In this context, even the awareness that technically they were breaking the law, would not paralyse them with fear or be an insurmountable obstacle.

Lukasz was not the only activist who relied on comparisons with grand revolutions in his account of the Pride, as can be seen in the following quote:

Sergiusz: There was such a power in that...those of us who didn't have a chance, I mean, I still caught up with what was happening towards the end

of [the communist period], those who didn't have that experience of being engaged in opposition, of protest against the communist regime, they could feel exactly how it was then. I remember I was calling my friends, calling my boyfriend and I was like, listen, we are taking over Krakowskie Przedmiescie [street], the whole Warsaw is ours, there was something, there was something just great about that ... it is difficult to describe, but there were so many emotions in that, such happiness, that [the Pride took place] despite the ban, despite him [Lech Kaczynski].

Thus, Sergiusz brings up yet another aspect of the revolutionary nature of the Pride, making a strong link between the grand narrative of the Polish anti-communist opposition and the emotions generated in the context of the Pride. As Maryniak argues, the dominant emotion in the context of the Solidarity movement (synonymous with the opposition movement in Poland) was that of a collective euphoria, a discovery of social unity and possibility of free speech despite the oppressiveness of the communist regime, best summed up by a quote from one of the observers of the era as "the country was high" (Maryniak 2002). Therefore, the emphasis of this revolutionary narrative also stressed the symbolic value of the Pride for the movement's culture and identity. Furthermore, Sergiusz recalls the euphoria of taking part in the Pride as an openly gay individual, defying the decisions of the oppressive city authorities. This is particularly relevant in the context of a number of homophobic protests based on the need to protect public spaces from the "promotion of homosexuality", as discussed throughout this thesis. For instance, the League of Polish Families protested against the planned route of the Warsaw Pride in 2004, expressing its concern at the fact that "a parade affirming homosexuality will walk past Warsaw churches" (PAP 2005a). Similarly, Krakowskie Przedmiescie, one of the central arteries of the city is a street adjacent to three churches as well as the presidential palace. This might explain Sergiusz's account and his euphoric feelings at being able to march as a (homo)sexual citizen alongside places of religious and national importance. The use of public spaces in

the case of gay and lesbian movements is of particular significance, as political organising around sexual dissidence takes place in a heteronormative public sphere (Warner 2002).

A related aspect of the revolutionary nature of the Pride was the emphasis on the overwhelming power of emotions experienced during the event, akin to collective effervescence (Gould 2002). While this aspect was already present in the interview excerpts I discussed above, the next quote is an even more striking example, with Adam conjuring a cinematic image in his description:

I believe in 2005...it was like this impulse which was the reason why nobody was really thinking too much whether to organise, not to organise [the Pride], go out to the streets or not, I mean, simply, it was this sort of impulse, yes, let's go and that's it, this was a moment, like in a movie where suddenly somebody calls out and then everybody gets up, takes their banners and off they go.

Similar motifs were present in the interview with Michal, who was on the Warsaw Pride organising committee that year. I asked him, just as I did in the case of other research participants, what influenced the decision of the organisers to go ahead despite unfavourable circumstances and overall opposition to the event on the side of the local authorities. Similarly to Adam, Michal painted a picture in which the decision to proceed was largely spontaneous, where the crowd that gathered at the beginning of the Pride was overcome by powerful emotions and the organisers were equally mesmerised:

Interviewer: Did you have any script?

Michal: No, the script was that we aren't going ahead [with the Pride] but then suddenly, there was a choir of people [urging to go ahead] and it seemed as if people were collectively pissed off and you it would have been impossible to stop that, I mean, if I started to say to people, let's stop because the police will beat us up, it would fall on deaf ears, people would just keep going, I am sure.

Thus, both these answers make it seem as if the decision to go ahead with the Pride despite the ban was largely beyond the control of the organisers and was instead made on the spur of the moment, with the both organisers and participants carried away by a wave of strong emotions. Naturally, as I mentioned earlier, these events were the fruit of many months of hard labour and were preceded by many months of organising and countless hours spent in meetings and on the phone. Two of the organisers, Tomasz and Adam even took unpaid leave during that time, to be able to concentrate on the organising efforts full-time. Granted, the organisers could not really have predicted the outcome of the illegal demonstration on that day. At the same time, as discussed previously, they took care to get high-profile media coverage by inviting internationally high-ranking politicians such as members of the European Parliament. Arranging their visit meant months of meticulous preparation. Thus, in view of these facts it is quite significant that the activists chose to narrate the Pride related events as stemming from an overwhelming emotional impulse, rather than a culmination of months of strenuous work. This stresses the link between public activism and the emotional culture of the movement even further.

At the same time, it has to be noted that even though the Pride was banned it was nevertheless successful, and so the discussion of emotions in this section has predominantly focused on the “pleasures of protest”. In the next section, I broaden the discussion of emotions in the context of public activism, looking at the interplay of (primarily) anger, fear and euphoria generated in the context of the banned Poznan March of Equality. Furthermore, I continue with the discussion of the links between emotion work and revolutionary narratives, focusing on the inscription of the March of Equality in the rhetoric of the Solidarity movement.

Fear and anger in Poznan

Four days before the planned date of the march, that is, on the 15th November 2005, the Mayor of Poznan refused to issue a permit for the event, arguing that the march would cause “significant danger to public morality and property” (Graff 2006:347). A day before the planned date of the event, after all legal attempts to undo the Mayor’s decision had failed, the March of Equality organisers took the decision to follow through with the demonstration, since the ban violated the freedom to assembly guaranteed by the Polish constitution. According to the accounts of the organisers, initially they were hoping that they would be able to hold the march, just as had happened in Warsaw a couple of months earlier, however, things did not turn out exactly as planned. The police brutally broke up the peaceful demonstration and arrested 68 participants (out of about 300).

The ban of the March of Equality in November 2005, similarly to the ban of the Warsaw Pride only a couple of months previously, needs to be put in the context of the governmental and presidential elections in the autumn of 2005, which brought political newcomers with stridently anti-gay rhetoric into both the government and the presidency (Millard 2006). The overarching theme of Law and Justice in the pre-election campaign was the rejection of the path of post-communist transformation. The party representatives called for a new constitutional settlement which would be based on moral revolution and the patriotic renewal of Solidarity’s core ideals and values (Millard 2006). As will be discussed later, this complex legacy of Solidarity was crucial to the organisers of the March of Equality.

The event constructed by local representatives of the state as an anti-Polish event going against “generally accepted rules of decency”, according to an official letter of representatives of the Poznan city authorities in which they urged the Mayor of Poznan to ban the demonstration (Kowalczyk 2006). The politicians in

favour of banning the march were supported by local religious authorities. A very telling event occurred a week before the planned date of the March of Equality, when the Mayor and his office were still considering whether to issue the ban or not. During a ceremonial mass with the participation of Poznan city authorities, the Poznan archbishop received an ovation for announcing during the sermon that:

Agreeing to organise this event [i.e. the March of Equality] – which in its essence is violating the most fundamental divine rights – is an insult to the memory of John Paul II, it is also undermining the credibility of the invitation that Poznan authorities sent out to Pope Benedict XVI ... Freedom to assembly cannot be used as a smoke screen for offending public morality and promoting homosexual behaviour (Quoted in Przybylska 2005).

As argued previously, these words have to be understood in the context of the extremely powerful position of the Catholic Church within Polish society, discussed in Chapter 2. This way, the organisers of the Poznan March of Equality were constructed by local religious and political authorities as going against “public decency”, “morality” and “divine rights”, and as violating one of the most sacred symbols of Polishness, the memory of John Paul II (the iconic status of the late Pope was discussed in detail in Chapter 5). The ban of the March of Equality came only a month after the elections, becoming what the activists involved in organising the event saw as a symbol of the new political regime, as is evident in Iza’s comment:

When they [the government officials] banned the March [of Equality], they didn’t even bother to pretend anything. They said basically that if we want to manifest ideas that are different from the agenda of the state, then we have no right to do it. And so very simply, by demanding the permit to organise the march, we were attacking the nation and the government. In their eyes, we were not citizens anymore.

Thus, the March of Equality became a demonstration that not only defied the ban issued by the Poznan city authorities but also violated newly established national

values, where full citizenship was only accorded to supporters of the ultra-right wing ideologies (Rae 2008). As Fisher comments on the new rules of citizenship after the 2005 elections:

In political statements as well as in their specific discourse and use of images, Polish groups of the far-right are quite clear about their utopia: a homogenously heterosexist Polish nation of drop-dead Catholics... Homosexuality is not only contradicting religion, but the whole idea of a "healthy" Poland (Fisher 2007).

Agata, one of the activists involved in organising the March, mentioned that before issuing the final decision to ban the event, the city authorities and the police tried to convince the organisers to move the demonstration to a remote space where it would not "offend public morale":

During the meeting with the police, they suggested to us some alternative spaces where they would guarantee us security; they mentioned a park or the artificial lake Malta [located on the outskirts of the city]. I'm sorry, there's no point to that, the aim of the manifestation is not to have a group of people meet by the river where nobody can see them.

Similarly, Marta mentioned that the right-wing opponents were coming up with related ideas and for instance submitted an application to the local city council for permission for the gay and lesbian march to take place at the airport. She jokingly suggested that they could just as well march in Madagascar, and stressed that the point was to be visible as gays and lesbians in public spaces.

The refusal to be relegated to the marginalised space of the lake or the airport, and the decision to engage in civil disobedience could be seen in the light of similar strategies employed by sexual dissidents who have focused on what might be described as the "queering" of space through its active appropriation (Bell et al. 1994: 33). An example cited by Bell and Valentine of such tactics is the "queering" of space by lesbian and gay organisations in Montreal in 1992. The activists refused to hold the Montreal Pride parade in the gay village, where it had been ghettoised in

the past years and instead marched through the downtown streets, a more “mainstream” area (Bell and Valentine 1995). As mentioned earlier, during the weeks leading up to the March of Equality, the state was explicitly communicating through its newly elected officials, that homosexuals are not welcome as rightful, fully-fledged citizens. After all, the idea that homosexuality is only tolerable if it remains in private – or contained safely outside of the city centre – is still prevalent, and, as Brickell puts it “an intolerable breach of boundary is perceived to occur if lesbians and gay men attempt to occupy public spheres and spaces” (Brickell 2000:165). The ban on the March of Equality was a painful proof that the “new Poland” was only home to a chosen group, in which minorities such as gays and lesbians were not included. The police intervention during the march was even further proof of the power of the state to exclude gays and lesbians (as well as those perceived as such) from rights and entitlements which fully fledged (heterosexual) citizens have (Johnson 2002).

In the narratives of the march organisers, the emotional context functioned as a significant factor in the framing of the decision to organise the march. The organisers recalled an emotion-laden, long discussion the evening before the planned day of the march, during which they tried to reach a consensus among the group as to whether they should still go ahead with the event despite the ban. They used the meeting to figure out what the strategy of the group should be and how they should cope with these unexpected developments. After all, it was only a couple of days after representatives of the organising committee had spoken to the police and were reassured that the march would go ahead as planned and that there was adequate police protection and all the legal requirements had been met. Therefore, it came as something of a shock to learn that the march had been banned

on the basis of the alleged danger to public property. The meeting has been referred to by a number of participants as quite an emotional moment and a turning point in the decision to get involved in organising the march. This is how Agnieszka recalls the evening before the march:

Well, I remember this last meeting in this, in Bookarest [bookstore where the conference before the march would be taking place on the following day], an empty room, some chairs, it was quite dark, we were sitting in a circle and the atmosphere was quite tense, there were all sorts of final arrangements, what to do, various scenarios. We did try to support each other and not to give in to fear, I mean, in any case, I did feel the fear, because after all it would be an illegal action that we were planning, I remember, when I was going back home later on the tram and I was thinking about all those things and I was afraid that something might happen.

This quote brings up a vital issue in the context of potentially high-risk protest actions, where fear could potentially be overwhelming and paralysing. After all, as Goodwin and Pfaff point out, when a protest is extremely risky or dangerous, fear may inhibit collective action or certain forms of collective action and so it must be suppressed or at least mitigated if such an action is to occur at all (Goodwin and Pfaff 2001). At the same time, Agnieszka's quote points to one aspect of fear management, that is, a concentrated collective effort not to "give in" to the fear by offering one another emotional support. Yet another aspect of fear management is mentioned in Blazej's account of the meeting:

I suggested, maybe it would be OK for some people not to go [to the march], but I was immediately told off by Agata, it was read as a sign of cowardice on my part, but I believed that fear should be a legitimate feeling.

Thus, while a fraction of activists tried to create a space where expressions of fear, including refusal to take part in a high-risk action would be legitimate, others perceived "giving in" to the fear as an unacceptable and rather undignified option. Goodwin and Pfaff bring up a similar argument in their analysis of the US civil movement. They argue that the activists would encourage each other to attend

demonstrations by shaming those who displayed fear into participation and so increasing the costs to individuals of choosing not to join others in potentially risky activities (Goodwin and Pfaff 2001).

One more strategy of managing fear in the context of the Poznan March of Equality consisted of the deployment of anger. While the main organisers geared themselves up mentally for the possibility of being arrested (for instance, they memorised the numbers of people to contact in case of emergency), retrospectively, the activists admitted that none of them even came close to imagining the actual disaster scenario of the police intervention. On top of that, they were concerned not only about their personal safety and the repercussions of a public coming out; but also for the safety of potential participants. Marta describes in detail how in the hours preceding the march the organisers tried to deal with the stress and fear of possible legal consequences of involvement in a demonstration that constituted an act of civil disobedience:

At some point I started to be afraid and everybody else was getting afraid. I saw the police cars in front of the shopping centre [where the march was to take place] and that raised my fears ... so half an hour before the march we got together, we went over through the whole plan, what happens if... and so on, which way to go. [We thought] if they arrest us, the better for the cause. But I was mad about it all, about the ban.

Thus, the activists used anger not only to legitimise their decision to defy the ban of the demonstration but also to manage the fear associated with the uncertain consequences of their actions. Similarly, Iza, one of the 2005 March of Equality organisers, in an interview in *Gazeta Wyborcza* mentions that on the day of the march "I was angry, I was not so much afraid of what might happen during the march, but I was rather scared that if we don't organise marches like this one, we would have to live in a terrible country" (quoted in Nowak 2005).

Thus, this emotional interplay between fear and anger, where anger was deployed to overcome potentially paralysing fear, was of crucial importance to the activists engaged in the event. Furthermore, anger was the dominant emotion in activist narratives, and the following quote illustrates how one of the organisers recounts her personal reasons to take on the risk of organising a demonstration that defied the ban issued by the Mayor of Poznan:

Alina: I had been to that banned march in Warsaw [i.e. the Warsaw Pride 2005], I was extremely angry because it was beginning to look like a tradition of sorts, a tradition of banning the marches and we thought, I do not remember that meeting [the night before the 2005 March of Equality] exactly, but I guess that what we wanted was to offer an answer [to that ban], an answer that would resonate with the society ... We were extremely angry, and I think is mostly because of this anger, the feeling of injustice, that this is hugely unfair, that we took this decision. I mean, everybody can organise a demonstration and in our case the event was banned just because the March of Equality was about sexual minorities, so we said, that we would go ahead, and the way we interpreted the situation, we had all the right to do that.

Bristow claims that heterosexuals have, in the majority of cases, the freedom to perform their heterosexuality in the street. As the street is presumed to be a heterosexual space, sexual dissidents are only allowed "to be gay [or lesbian] in specific places and spaces" (Bristow 1989:74). Thus, Alina's comment demonstrates that the activists were aware that they were being refused access to public spaces solely on the basis of their claims of the recognition of non-heterosexual citizens.

At the same time, the use of anger, both on a political and personal level, needs to be placed in the wider context of Polish gay and lesbian activism at that time (Gruszczynska 2009). Interestingly, the concept of political anger was brought up repeatedly by Polish scholars and academics prior to the 2005 Poznan March of Equality. For instance Uminska, writing about the attack on the Krakow March for

Tolerance in 2004, as well as the attempts of the local religious and right-wing authorities to ban the event, argues that when dealing with manifestations of homophobia "anger is necessary, it is necessary to be fully conscious of one's own full legal status" (Uminska 2004). Similarly, Basiuk urges Polish activists to employ political anger, and compares the situation of Polish gays and lesbians in the context of the rising political power of the right-wing with the reality of 1980s AIDS epidemic in the United States (Basiuk 2004). Furthermore, through engaging in a public protest, ACT UP sought to reclaim not only space but also citizenship for those being silenced, constrained or excluded by the government's response to the AIDS crisis (Geltmaker 1992), and, as I argue in this thesis, the understanding of the public protest as an act of reclaiming citizenship was also crucial for the Poznan activists.

Furthermore, the fact that Alina mentions the success of the Warsaw Pride is also significant here, as this might have influenced the decision of Poznan activists to engage in an act of civil disobedience. The organisers of Warsaw Pride themselves made the link between the demonstration that went ahead successfully in spite of the ban in Poznan, in a statement that appeared on gay and lesbian websites and encouraged Poznan activists to go ahead despite the ban:

Despite the ban of any form of manifestation, a couple of thousand people came in front of the government building [on the day of the Pride]. We came, we marched, and we conquered. We showed that our rights need to be respected and we do not regret that. November 2005, Poznan. A different city, a different date, an identical situation. The local authority, contravening democratic rules, bans a peaceful march ... But our rights remain the same, just as important! Nobody will fight on our behalf if we don't. We have the right to be tomorrow in front of Stary Browar [shopping centre] at 15:00.

As I argued earlier, the emotion work in the context of the Warsaw Pride was connected with identity for empowerment, that is, the feeling that action is possible

(Bernstein 1997). I believe that the references to the collective “high” of the illegal Warsaw Pride might have inspired activists involved in the Poznan March of Equality to undertake a similar risk. As mentioned in the context of the Warsaw Pride, the collective euphoria was inscribed in the narrative of the Orange Revolution and the Polish opposition movement. The next section continues the latter theme and discusses the complexity of the legacy of Solidarity in view of the fact that the newly elected right-wing based their claims to power on the same premise (Gruszczynska 2009).

Complexity of the legacy of Solidarity

The Polish Solidarity movement functions in the Polish political discourse and collective memory as a significant point of reference for political and religious leaders in Poland (Pearce 2009). More importantly, during the autumn of 2005, in the wake of the 25th anniversary of the Solidarity movement and the up-coming elections, references to the oppositional past of the politicians of Law and Justice, juxtaposed with the communist past of the left were evoked very frequently (Kutyla 2005). Lech Kaczynski, during interviews at the time of the presidential campaign, stressed his visions of a new Poland built on the values of Solidarity (in this context, understood mostly as anti-communist and patriotic attitudes) together with Catholic ideology. Furthermore, when making comparisons with other candidates he repeatedly mentioned his oppositional background (Millard 2006). Thus, this section will attempt to answer how it was possible for the organisers of the Poznan March of Equality to draw on the legacy of Solidarity when it was being evoked by those who were behind a number of homophobic decisions, including the bans of the gay and lesbian marches.

The organisers of the March of Equality drew on the legacy of Solidarity already when it came to their choice of repertoire:

Agata: I think it is extremely important not to let ourselves be threatened, not to be forced into silence, this is why I think marches are important. Although it is a shame, it is quite sad that in Poland apart from the Solidarity period and then shortly in the beginning of the 90s these marches were really mass events, meaningful events, a lot of different marches, at the moment, I have a feeling it is not such a popular form of expression.

This way, the references to Solidarity legitimised the use of public spaces to challenge heteronormativity in an act of civil disobedience. After all, public protest was very much part and parcel of the “memory package” of Solidarity and was perceived as an appropriate way of expressing collective grievances (Ekiert and Kubik 1998:93). At the same time, the government used military force to suppress public protests against communist totalitarianism in Poland (Bruner 2005). Thus, the symbolic links with the Solidarity movement were strengthened by the way the activists narrated the police intervention and the brutal break-up of the March of Equality.

Members of the organising committee claimed that the police intervention came unexpectedly, at a moment when the organisers had already officially ended the march. Once the police intervention started, most of the demonstrators were sitting on the ground shouting back at the police “this is a peaceful demonstration”, “martial law,⁶⁴ we’ve seen that already” and “it’s just like in the 1980s”, or “ZOMO”.⁶⁵ Iza mentioned that at some point in the intervention the demonstrators

⁶⁴On 13th December 1981, the communist authorities, led by General Wojciech Jaruzelski, imposed martial law throughout the entire country. Martial law restricted the rights of the individual, where citizens were not permitted to leave their places of living, correspondence was censored, and initially the telephones were turned off. Furthermore, the martial law regulations imposed army and police supervision over all units of state administration and public, economic, cultural, and educational institutions, while trade unions as well as numerous associations were disbanded. The martial law was lifted in July 1983 (Kwiatkowski 2006).

⁶⁵ZOMO – acronym for Zmotoryzowane Oddziały Milicji Obywatelskiej [Prevention Squads of Citizen’s Police]. ZOMO squads were created in Poland in the 1950s, originally to offer protection

started singing “Mury”⁶⁶ [The Walls]. The Solidarity memory functions in the Polish national imaginary very much in the form of hegemonic “frozen memory”, where one of recurring images is that of ZOMO squads breaking up illegal demonstrations (Evans 1992:749).

Precisely these images were mentioned by the march organisers who had personal experience of participating in the demonstrations connected with the 1980s Solidarity movement. For instance, on his way to the march, Lech recalled seeing a huge concentration of police complete with squadron carrying tear-gas containers and added that the image “translated immediately into that reality [of the 1980s]”. Similarly, Iza referred to her memories of participating in demonstrations organised by the anti-communist opposition, saying that the police cordon during the march reminded her of “row after row of ZOMO officers with shields”.

References to the legacy of Solidarity were not only limited to the organisers with personal experience of the opposition movement. This is how Agnieszka described the moment of police intervention and her subsequent arrest:

Suddenly I can feel that I am being raised over the ground [laughs], I was grabbed by two policemen, I could barely see their eyes as they had their faces covered, and they treated me as somebody who is resisting, who is being aggressive, but I was just standing there as a pillar of salt, feeling paralysed and didn't really defend myself at all ... they carried me over to the police car, it was quite brutal, I have never ever been treated by anybody like that before ... to tell the truth I had no idea what to do in such a situation and right at that moment I felt the way I imagined my father must have felt during Solidarity times.

during mass events. In the 1980s, ZOMO squads were sent to break up the illegal Solidarity demonstrations, which they usually did with great force and brutality.

⁶⁶ “Mury” [The Walls] is one of the best known protest songs from the 1980s in Poland by Jacek Kaczmarski, who was unofficially dubbed as the “Solidarity bard” (Diehl 1986). The song refers to the role of the poet during times of oppression. It became a symbol of the fight against the communist regime.

This way, through the emotional context of the event, even the March of Equality organisers who were too young to have been active participants of the Solidarity movement located their experiences of public protest in the collective memory of the 1980s opposition movement. The following two quotes will allow me to reflect further on the ways in which the activists engaged with the Solidarity legacy:

Marta J.: I am twenty-three years old. When the fight for freedom was going on, I was a small child, so what I know comes from books and my parents' stories ... Even though I do not remember all of this, censorship and so on ... there is a memory in me which comes from history, literature and various stories, and I want to have a right to it, as a young person ... Is it like during the communist times, can you compare the police to ZOMO or not? ... I think you can compare, treat it as a warning, to show the direction it can take, where it might end.

Agata: This [references to the Solidarity in the march] came about because of the whole idea of the march, ... and, because we wanted to emphasise our vision to build an open society, one that would be tolerant and so on, on the other hand, of course, we were making references to Law and Justice appropriating the Solidarity rhetoric, they tried to capitalise on it, they were distorting it, the point was to counteract this rhetoric ... they started talking about *solidarne panstwo* [nation built on the ideas of Solidarity movement] ... and what they were doing, it had nothing to do with the real ideas of Solidarity, it was more about dictatorship and taking away people's rights.

To start with, both quotes hint at the complexity of the Solidarity legacy as well as certain uneasiness about claiming that legacy. Thus, Marta legitimises her right to use the Solidarity frame by evoking her parents' involvement in the opposition, even though, as she mentioned in the interview, this was mostly limited to distributing illegal samizdat publications and participating in strikes. She also draws upon the imperative of her "will to remember" (Nora 1989:17) the times of the communist regime and the opposition movement. Importantly, Marta's comment bases parallels with the Solidarity movement on the level of practice, that is, she is drawing comparisons between the behaviour of the police during the march and the actions of ZOMO officers during anti-communist demonstrations. Agata, however,

emphasises the ideological links between the values represented by the organisers of the march and the core principles of Solidarity, which consisted of a “combination of the values of democracy, participation, justice, equality [and] human dignity” (Mason 1989:52).

As Pearce argues, the Solidarity movement has been described as one that defended the core of Polish society against the state apparatus that was viewed as externally imposed (Pearce 2009). Thus, by defying the ban of the Mayor of Poznan, the Poznan March of Equality organisers could be seen as representing the founding ideals of Solidarity, as opposed to representatives of the newly elected government. In many ways, some of Solidarity’s claims, such as freedom of association and freedom of speech (both of which were constantly violated by the communist regime), overlapped with the claims made by the organisers of gay and lesbian marches. Through the emotional context of the event, the March of Equality organisers could actively challenge what they argued was the re-appropriation of Solidarity legacy by the right-wing in power.

Pleasures of protest

As Gould argues, protests engage groups of people in “sometimes dangerous and often risky, intense, dramatic and exhilarating activities” (Gould 2001:155). In their narratives, a large number of activists drew on that euphoria and “pleasures of protest” that they saw as sustaining them in the face of adversity:

Marta: What do I remember [from the March of Equality]? Emotions, so many emotions. Mostly positive ones, I mean, there was of course enormous stress, from a perspective of a person who organises the event this is enormous stress, but also enormous mobilisation after such a march you hurt all over, even if there is no police intervention, then you hurt all over as well, because you have to mobilise all your energy, but these are positive emotions, I was sure I was right, I was sure that what I was doing was just and important, and this is OK, you are hugely empowered, you shout through the tube, stand amid the noise

and chaos, take decisions very quickly, adrenaline levels rise but this is a good sort of adrenaline.

Furthermore, the rush of positive energy that was empowering to the activists could outweigh the impact of potentially traumatic experiences, such as the police intervention. Similarly, when referring to the beginning of the gay pride festivals and parades in the United States, Armstrong and Cragé claim that activists discovered that bringing homosexuals together in public had a magical emotional impact, as “the ritual created collective effervescence by visually and experientially counteracting the view that homosexuality is private and shameful” (Armstrong and Cragé 2006:742).

Collective identity defines boundaries of who is within the group and helps to establish trust, which is essential in getting members to take actions that may be time-consuming, uncomfortable or even dangerous (Della Porta and Diani 1999). Thus, the heightened emotions that were connected to the bans of the marches and the accompanying protests, helped to establish long-lasting connections between movement participants and to sustain them in the face of adversity. Yet another quote points to the Poznan March of Equality as a highly transformative event, where Blazej described the rush of powerful and largely positive emotions in the aftermath of the march:

This [experience of the march] brought us together, and Lech [one of march organisers] said something along these lines, you can cheat on your lover, you can cheat on your mistress, but you will not cheat on your fellow companions in the battle, and this is how it was then, a bit, we were like, together, and there was this sort of elation, this great feeling of solidarity with the people.

This way, despite the traumatic experience of the police intervention, the Poznan March of Equality became a highly transformative event that strengthened the

connections between the activists involved in the movement. As Bosco adds, it is precisely the type of strong emotional bonds as mentioned earlier that permit the generation and sustainability of collective action under difficult conditions, such as an adverse political context, which was the case in Poznan (Bosco 2007). Furthermore, according to Bosco, these bonds are as important in facilitating collective action as other kinds of more tangible resources (such as money, expertise and so on).

Naturally, the euphoric feelings eventually became subdued, and as Agnieszka put it; the “thrill” of organising the march illegally was largely gone in the months following the event. Similarly, Juris, writing about the emotions generated in the context of public activism notes that:

The intense feelings ... associated with mass protests provide a store of emotional resources activists can draw upon to facilitate on-going movement building. However, peak emotional mobilisations are time-bound (Juris 2008:66).

Nevertheless, the event had a lasting impact on the group of march organisers. The feelings of solidarity and unity between the activists involved in the movement, stemming from the “pleasures of protest”, were still quite strong two years after the event, which was when I conducted the interviews. Moreover, during the fieldwork, I also heard numerous references to the event outside of the context of the interviews, with the march functioning as a significant point of reference for the activist community.

Furthermore, a number of the activists argued that the emotions that the Poznan March of Equality evoked served to force the broader public to start thinking of gay and lesbian issues in the context of citizenship rights and not necessarily “special rights”. The organisers felt that despite the trauma of the police intervention, the decision to go through with the Poznan March of Equality turned

out to be beneficial in terms of achieving the overall goals of the march; that is, reaching out to the wider public as well as exposing the extent of homophobia in Poland:

Aska: It's great there was this fight, even if it was really brutal. Before, the marches interested only people connected with the [lesbian and gay] movement. Now, the more hate the new government is showing towards gays and lesbians, the more so called normal people are beginning to understand that something is wrong.

Kowalczyk notes further how public events such as the March of Equality disturb "the carefully sustained fiction of homogenous Polishness, untainted by abject otherness, be it homosexuality, disability, a difference in religion or skin colour" (Kowalczyk 2005:41). Ferens adds that in a country where "the number of 'aliens' ... seems to be constantly on the rise, it is all the more important to take note of those who, by means of a leap of the imagination, spring over the fences to build coalitions" (Ferens 2006).

Thus, the "pleasures of protest" (Jasper 1997:108) generated by public activist events played a role in sustaining activism in adverse conditions and where protest came at a huge personal cost. To start with, the organisers of the banned marches had to negotiate with the local authorities that were openly hostile and refused to acknowledge their basic rights and the constitutional freedom of assembly. The activists had to face the consequences of a nation-wide coming out as well as possible legal repercussions of their actions. Furthermore, they coordinated the event on an entirely volunteer basis, and had to deal with sheer physical and mental exhaustion from a lack of sleep and working to very tight deadlines in adverse circumstances. A significant majority of activists during the interviews commented on having to put their life on hold while involved in organising the event, for instance, Adam, one of the Warsaw Pride organisers

mentioned using up all his holiday time when he was involved in organising the event in 2005. A number of activists mentioned feeling run down and actually falling ill after the event as the wave of stress relented.

What was quite remarkable, I believe, is that the activists decided to keep organising the marches despite the protests. After all, in the light of increasing public homophobia, connected with the rise of the right-wing politicians to power, and the repeated bans and attacks, the march organisers might have just as well decided to give up this form of activism.⁶⁷ I argue that the emotions generated in the context of the event can at least partially account for the reason why the activists persevered despite the obstacles. Moreover, the research participants' accounts point to the relevance of emotions in dealing with the violence that accompanied the events in the form of bans and attacks. Even if the violence was scary, it was meaningful as proof of homophobia and a source of inspiration to activism which would challenge that homophobia. In a way, these intense emotions, which surfaced in the context of the banned marches, seemed to strengthen the validity of the activists' choices when faced with the fierce opposition. Similarly, writing about the emotions that accompany protests, Hercus quotes activists who participated in feminist demonstrations and as a result spoke of having their views "confirmed, clarified, and strengthened through involvement in feminist events and [they also spoke of] of coming away from these replenished, renewed, and energised" (Hercus 1999:49).

Conclusion

Gamson characterises the process of collective identity formation as a "continuous, reflexive, dynamic and emergent aspect of collective action" (Gamson 1995:392).

⁶⁷ For instance, the gay and lesbian community in Serbia, after the brutal attack on the Belgrade Pride in 2001, have not made any further attempts to organise a public event since (Kajinic 2003).

This chapter discussed one element of this dynamic; that is, the emotional dimension, where I looked at how in the context of public activist events emotions were implicated in developing, strengthening and sustaining movement participants' sense of "who we are" (Gamson 1992:85). Importantly, this discussion was located within Bernstein's identity deployment framework, modified in order to include the discussion of emotion work as relevant to public LGBT activism in Poland.

As I argued in this chapter, the emotion work of the movement facilitated the decision to engage in public activism despite the official ban of the both Warsaw Pride and the Poznan March of Equality, thus successfully creating a temporary gay and lesbian public as well as a visible presence of sexual otherness in otherwise heterosexualised urbanities (Bell and Valentine 1995). As this chapter demonstrated, the organisers relied to a large extent on political anger in their decision to defy the bans, whereas anger was also an important component of managing fear and engaging in high-risk public protest. Finally, the collective euphoria generated in the course of that protest helped the activists sustain their efforts both during and after the events, even if the intensity of emotions, in particular the collective euphoria, inevitably subsided. Thus, this chapter provides some answers to the question explaining the saliency of public activist events for the movement. After all, the activists had at their disposal a much broader repertoire, and theoretically could concentrate their efforts on for instance political lobbying or educational campaigns. At the same time, the prominent space that the marches occupied in movement emotional culture might explain the activists' perseverance despite the obstacles they encountered.

Furthermore, I linked my discussion of movement emotion work with an analysis of the ways in which movement actors inscribed public activist events into “revolutionary” narratives, in particular the narrative of the Solidarity movement. This way, my analysis contributes to research that looks at the ways in which less-privileged groups subvert the dominant stories in order to challenge their subordination and reclaim citizenship (Sturken, 1997). At the same time, as I showed in this chapter, the legacy of the opposition movement in Poland is quite complex. After all, the homophobic right-wing politicians who rose to power in the aftermath of the 2005 elections used the opposition motifs to win support and to legitimise a number of political decisions. Nevertheless, I argue that the emotional context of the banned events has created a possibility for the activists to inscribe their efforts to claim citizenship for sexual minorities within the revolutionary narrative of the Polish opposition movement.

While this thesis does not really delve into issues of nation and sexuality as such focus remains outside its scope, it is worth mentioning that the inscription of collective identity into the Solidarity narrative could be connected with an attempt at re-figuring the boundaries of Polishness. As Long argues, in the conditions of post-socialist transformation, lesbian and gay activists are faced with a highly challenging task: producing new knowledge about the extended meanings of democracy and including sexual meanings (Long 1999). As mentioned earlier, in Poland homosexuality is seen as a phenomenon which is being introduced forcefully by the West and therefore decidedly non-Polish as well as alien (Minalto 2007). On a related note, Marston remarks that the conflict over who may demonstrate in public space is very much about who can be part of the national community (Marston 2002). Thus, by entering the public sphere as part of their

fight to attain subject status for sexual minorities, lesbian and gay activists are breaking a social contract, where Polishness and Polish citizenship are based exclusively on heteronormative and Catholic values. The activists drew on the legacy of “freedom narratives” such as the Solidarity movement in order to re-code to whom the streets – and more generally public space - belong. At the same time, the use of public space in the context of the “breakthrough narrative” which I analysed in this chapter, was very much connected with the internal dynamics of the movement and its “emotion culture” (Aminzade and McAdam 2002:108).

Importantly, in this chapter I have argued that potentially negative emotions – such as anger, fear and frustration – actually had quite positive outcomes in terms of strengthening the bonds between the activists and sustaining them in their efforts. At the same time, I believe that the reason this transformation occurred is because the research participants had an outlet for those potentially harmful feelings and could channel them into organising the marches, where in turn they had a chance to experience “pleasures of protest”. As will be discussed in the next chapter, when such an outlet was lacking, that is, in the case of the cancelled Krakow March for Tolerance, no such transformative results took place. Building on the discussion of the emotion work and earlier analysis of movement-media interactions in the context of public activism, the next chapter will focus on the tensions of identity deployment strategies.

CHAPTER 7

Identity deployment dilemmas

Within Bernstein's framework identity deployment is defined as expressing identity such that the values and practices of individuals become open to debate (Bernstein 1997). As I demonstrate in this chapter, the activists positioned themselves within that debate as keen on stressing similarities to the mainstream, where within Bernstein's framework this approach is equivalent to identity for education. I argue that to a large extent this strategy was connected with activists' efforts to introduce "normal" (sexual) citizens into the public space via gay and lesbian marches, and bridge the allegedly immensurable gap between "normal" (i.e. heterosexual) and allegedly "deviant" (gay and lesbian) citizens. At the same time, as will be demonstrated, this commitment to highlighting resemblances to the majority was based on rather restrictive and exclusionary criteria as to who fulfilled the requirements for a "normal" gay and lesbian citizen. Consequently, this chapter touches upon the meaning of these exclusions and addresses movement dilemmas stemming from the emphasis on identity for education strategies. Afterwards, I demonstrate that while in practice the strategies employed by movement actors were based on identity for education, nevertheless, a number of activists expressed their strong preference for a more critical approach. As will be shown in this chapter, this preference was expressed in the context of a declared affinity with identity for critique deployment strategies. On a theoretical level, this affinity was closely connected with the concept of queer politics which actually confronts the values, categories, and practices of the dominant heterosexist culture (Bernstein 2005).

Consequently, this chapter first examines the meanings of identity for education strategy; and looks at the efforts of the research participants to project an image of “normalcy” through public activism/public activist events. Later on, I examine the exclusions resulting from a strategy focused on creating performances of seemingly non-sexual, non-provocative, non-threatening gays and lesbians. Specifically, I focus on the marginalisation of drag queens as well as bisexual and transsexual/transgender individuals in the context of prides and marches. Following from that discussion, I also address some problematic aspects of using prides and marches as a visibility tool. I then discuss the significance of the activists’ declared affinity with the queer project, which they equated with an ability to engage in radical, “in your face” activism (Gould 2002). Finally I discuss the possibility of a critical engagement with the queer project in the context of public activism in Poland and in that context explore the notion of being “queer enough”.

Getting towards normalcy: The meanings of identity for education strategy

A number of activists saw the marches and prides as a chance to demonstrate to the public at large that both the marchers as well as their claims were absolutely “normal”, as exemplified by the following quote:

Adam: Always when we change something that is bad, we fight for a change for the better ... my understanding of this fight is so that we can be perceived as normal ... and this is something fundamental, I think this was the basic idea of all our marches in Poland, look at their names, March for Tolerance, March of Equality, Equality Pride...we are talking about equality, about fundamental values.

This quote stresses the relevance of public activist events as a vital tool for achieving social change. Furthermore, it serves as a useful opening for my discussion of the logic of identity for education strategy, where the activists focused on stressing similarity to the mainstream. Importantly, the goal was to gain

recognition as “normal” citizens, with the same rights to public space as those granted to the majority. As a result of implementing this strategy, gays and lesbians would hopefully gain access to full citizenship rights, exemplified by fundamental values, such as equality. In a similar vein Szymon, who was the main organiser of the prides in Warsaw between 2001 and 2004, explained the rationale behind the events being called Equality Pride and not Gay Pride. He argued that “it wasn’t about shouting, here we are and give us our rights, right now but it was always about, look, we are all the same, we want to be equal”. Graff, writing about the situation of the Polish gay and lesbian community, adds that this choice for the name of the event was quite significant and signalled a conscious emphasis on the rhetoric of human rights and civil liberties (Graff 2006). While in her research Graff does not refer to the rhetoric of citizenship, undoubtedly these efforts can be classified as striving towards belonging and inclusion on the basis of equality and on the same terms as the majority of citizens.

Using innocent sounding names for the demonstrations and drawing on supposedly mainstream, fundamental values of equality were not the only strategies that the activists employed in order to construct an image of “normalcy”. Some of these strategies have already been mentioned in Chapter 5, where I discussed the dynamics of movement-media interactions in the light of activists’ efforts to construct a positive representation of sexual minorities. Here I build on this discussion and turn to analysing how the activists strove to construct the marches as performances by “normal” citizens, where yet a further meaning of “normal” was equivalent to desexualised. This understanding recurred in the interviews, as demonstrated in the following quotes:

Ania: It is hard not to notice the marches. Even if you see a mass of completely regular people, then there are colourful banners and it is well

visible [Interviewer: uh huh] and on these banners there are slogans which tell you exactly, precisely what this march is about, who is marching there and what is the main theme of the March [for Tolerance]. People know very well that there are gays, lesbians in the march ... on an individual level there is nothing special about each and every one of the marchers, but taken all together they do stand out.

Lukasz: The message of the [Warsaw] Pride is the following: first of all, we exist, see what we really look like because the only thing you can see in the media are the drag queens ... and this really works for the people, for Warsaw inhabitants, who are watching this, especially when they were expecting God knows who and here they can see that the faggots don't really look like a [stereotypical] faggot, neither do the lesbians ... we are normal.

Alina: Our aim was to get closer to the society; it was about showing: we are just like you ... we are not that horrible, what are you expecting here, naked women, naked men, huge platforms and techno and we will have a love parade like in Berlin, and our aim [during the March of Equality] was to say, I look exactly like you do, I am just as ordinary, [we are] just a bunch of people dressed in winter jackets, wearing scarves.

To begin with, the discussion of these quotes is also relevant in view of the organising concept of this thesis, that is, identity deployment. As Bernstein argues, this notion entails expressing identity such that “the terrain of conflict becomes the individual person” (Bernstein 1997:537). This way, in the context of the gay and lesbian marches, the performance of the activists in those public encounters was subjected to close scrutiny. As the above quotes demonstrate, the research participants were keen on constructing the marches so as to suppress differences from the mainstream and blur the imagined boundary between the “deviant” gays and “normal” citizens by showing that they are essentially the same. As Ania suggests, one way of bridging the alleged differences was to present the general public with normalised images of marchers, while at the same time explicitly labelling them as gay or lesbian. Thus, hopefully, the focus of the majority would shift from expectations of a scandal to a more educational encounter (Bernstein 1997). On a related note, Lukasz stresses the positive aspects of the encounters

between the marchers and Warsaw inhabitants, highlighting that the construction of “normalcy” took place during encounters on various levels, from the media, through to local authorities to individual onlookers. Finally, just as Alina emphasises the ordinariness of the marchers and mentions the fact that they are wearing winter jackets, Sergiusz, another organiser of the March of Equality in Poznan similarly used the weather as a guarantee of a toned-down, desexualised image. As he put it: “I cannot imagine a way of presenting your own sexuality in the middle of November”. Krzysiek, one of the Warsaw Pride organisers, was even more explicit in his disapproval of potentially “oversexualised” prides:

If somebody told me that we should organise a parade of men copulating with each other or women who are making love to one another then I will say no ... but absolutely prides should be taking place and they should be a stage of getting towards normalcy, things will be normal when the pride no longer bothers anyone.

Thus, the activists’ accounts point not only to the emphasis on sameness with regards to the heterosexual majority, but also highlight the desexualised nature of the “normal” (sexual) citizen appearing in public spaces. Overall, the strong wish to name gays and lesbians as respectful citizens, undistinguishable from the mainstream public, is not surprising in the light of strong opposition to the presence of sexual minorities in the public sphere. After all, the desire to protect the public sphere from being “polluted” by public displays of homosexuality was the driving force behind the hate campaigns of groups such as All-Polish Youth and the Piotr Skarga Association of Christian Culture, discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. As Prusak adds, “homosexuals and also lesbians stay in the consciousness of many Poles as mythical, foreign characters, awakening disgust” (Prusak 2003:11). Furthermore, the images evoked by the activists, that is, the vision of a “parade of copulating people” populated by drag-queens and half-naked “perverts” were precisely the

representations that the right-wing authorities drew upon when banning the marches on grounds of danger to public morality, as mentioned in Chapter 6. Therefore, the activists engaged in public gay and lesbian events worked towards erasing the supposedly irreconcilable differences between the heterosexual majority and the homosexual Other, portrayed as an alien element to Polish culture and in particular its fundamental Christian values (Warkocki 2004).

The price of normalcy: Examining exclusions

At the same time, the efforts of the research participants to produce “normal”, desexualised citizens through the public encounters discussed in this thesis, relied to a large extent on an unproblematic understanding of heterosexuality and heteronormative assumptions of what is defined as (not) “normal” in the public sphere. After all, as discussed previously, the ideal of a “normal” Polish citizen was rather restrictive, where perhaps the most striking example was the “Normality Parade” organised by the All-Polish Youth a week after the banned Warsaw Pride in 2005 (see also Chapter 2). The event was mainly attended by young men chanting homophobic slogans such as “stop the gay propaganda”, “streets are ours, hospitals are yours” and “paedophiles and pederasts, they are the real supporters of the EU” (Grochal 2005). In this context, heterosexuality remains based upon homophobia and xenophobia.

While issues surrounding the construction of heterosexuality are outside the scope of this thesis, here I am interested in analysing the theme of exclusions on the part of the activists in the context of gay and lesbian marches. Importantly, reliance on identity for education meant adopting a very particular construction of gay and lesbian identity. Moreover, as Seidman writes, “positing a gay identity, no matter how it strains to be inclusive of difference, produces exclusions [and] represses

difference" (Seidman 1993:105). This was evident already in the themes brought up earlier by the research participants, that is, the emphasis on constructing the marches as public encounters ideally populated by desexualised, fully-clothed individuals, who would bear no resemblance to the supposedly "unruly" participants of Western Prides. While such a strategy was understandable in the context of the controversy raised by the marches, nevertheless, these images implicitly suggest who is not welcome as a representative of the Polish gay and lesbian movement. Consequently, the next section builds on these ideas as I start the discussion of the dilemmas of identity for education by looking at who needs to be excluded to ensure "normalcy". First of all, as indicated in the excerpt from an interview with Lukasz, in the context of public activist events, drag queens were seen as a threat to the vision of "normalcy".

The presence of drag queens at the marches was an issue which regularly came up during the preparatory meetings and often led to quite a heated debate among the organisers. To start with, drag queens were part and parcel of the (mostly) gay male culture in Poland, especially in the capital, and they did appear in the first three prides in Warsaw. Michal, who was involved in these events, explained that quite paradoxically, some members of the local community felt safer coming to the event in full drag, as that could guarantee them better anonymity. At the same time, a number of research participants complained about the fact that the media continually chose to illustrate the articles on the first prides with photographs of the few drag queens present at the event, omitting hundreds of marchers not in drag, as mentioned in Chapter 5 (for further examples see also Boboriko and Wojtczuk 2003, Slubowski 2004). Furthermore, in some instances the participation of drag queens in the marches was actively discouraged, for instance in the case of

the 2004 March for Tolerance (discussed in Chapter 5) when the organisers advised a group of Berlin drag queens not to show up at the event. Similarly, Yga mentioned that shortly before the banned 2005 Warsaw Pride, the organisers asked the local drag queens not to appear at the illegal demonstration. According to her, the members of the organising committee feared that the presence of drag queens might diminish the political impact of the Pride and distract the general public from the message of the event. As discussed in Chapter 6, following the decision of the local authorities to ban the peaceful gathering, the intention of the activists was to draw attention to potential threats to human rights and democratic freedoms. In that particular political context, the strategic decision to exclude drag queens can be understood as a means to try to ensure respectability for the marchers and their cause.

At the same time, this strategy designated drag queens as potentially “bad” (sexual) citizens and did not really address the question of why images of drag queens proliferated in images (re)produced both by the journalists and by the right-wing opponents. The campaign of the All-Polish Youth before the second March for Tolerance in Krakow (2006) was probably the most striking example of reliance on images of drag queens in order to discredit the march organisers. The far right-wing organisation described its activities as “a movement against the attempts of overtaking public space by organisations promoting sexual deviations”.⁶⁸ Shortly before the march, the All-Polish Youth representatives distributed hundreds of posters all over the city centre where the March for Tolerance would be taking place. The posters (see Figure 6, page 206) showed a heavily made-up drag queen

⁶⁸ Based on the information from the All-Polish Youth website <http://www.mw.org.pl/t.php?id=2100>

with the caption “this is their true face”.⁶⁹ They also informed of the date and starting point of the March for Tolerance, thus implying that it would be populated by similar “deviants”.

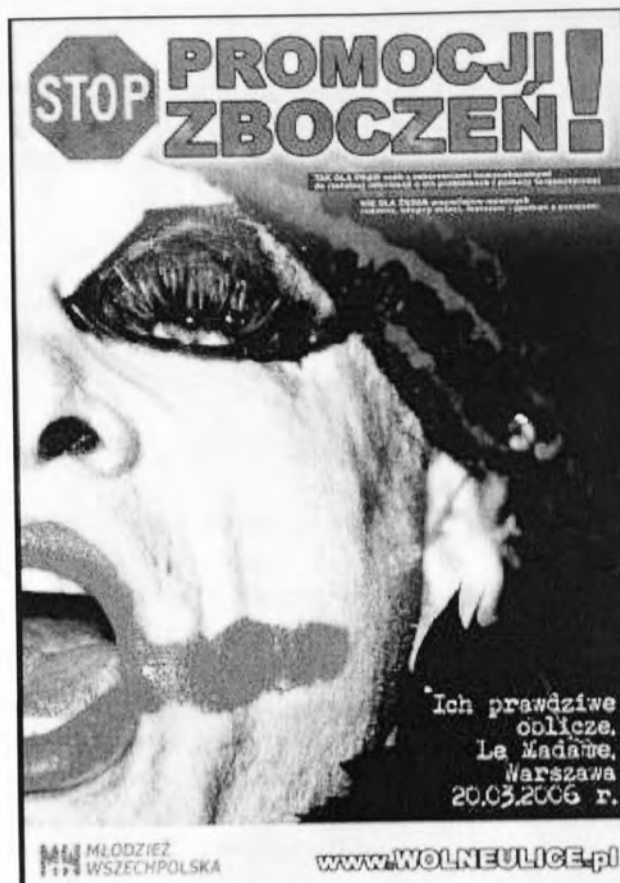


Figure 6. Leaflet produced by All-Polish Youth

The text in red reads: “Stop promotion of deviation!”

The illegible text below provides information about the March for Tolerance.

The text in white against the black background reads “Their true face. Le Madame. Warsaw 20.03.2006”.

⁶⁹ The call to “learn somebody’s true face” has strong, anti-Semitic overtones in Poland, with numerous publications referring to “the true face” of a number of politicians and public people who are allegedly Jewish and therefore a danger to Polish society. While further discussion is outside the scope of this thesis, there is growing literature on the linkage between Polish anti-Semitism and homophobia (Ostolski 2005, Majka 2006, Uminska/Keff 2006, Czarniecki 2007).

Thus, in choosing to discourage drag queens from participating in gay and lesbian marches, as indicated earlier, the research participants could be seen as colluding in the right-wing rhetoric. Within that ideology, drag queens were a threat to public morality as they crossed both gender and sexuality lines, defying the heterosexual norms of what was considered appropriate in public spaces. At the same time, in the interviews, some activists expressed their ambivalence about the consequences of relying on the tactic of “normalcy” and the resulting exclusions. For instance, Agnes voiced her unease at the way the organising team handled the storm over the 2004 March for Tolerance in Krakow and in particular the accusations of the media connected with the alleged threat of a clash with the St Stanislaw’s procession:

Agnes: They were responding to the attacks in such a way that, I don’t know, saying that this is only going to be a march [as opposed to a colourful, “oversexualised” Western gay pride] that there will be no drag queens ... then I had a feeling that it is quite weird for me but at the same time that this is the way things should happen, that this is how you should react to what was going on, the point was that it [i.e. the reaction to the accusations] had to look good in the media.

Interviewer: How did you want to react?

A.: Well, for sure I didn’t want to say that this isn’t for drag queens, not at all, I certainly didn’t want to start off by excluding somebody.

This comment points to the dilemma that the activists faced in trying to achieve two contradictory aims: on the one hand, to create a satisfactory and respectable representation of the movement and on the other hand, to uphold the basic principle of non-exclusion. This dilemma echoes the account of Gevisser and Reid who bring up a very similar predicament faced by the organisers of Gay Pride events in South Africa:

The drag queen issue has raged after each march: do we represent a public face that is clean and acceptable, even if it means ostracising those members of our own community in the very ways we have been ostracised by a homophobic world? Or do we embrace and celebrate our diversity, even if it means playing into stereotypes and allowing the media to sensationalise the march and ignore its very real, substantive issues? (Gevisser and Reid 2005: 281).

Furthermore, the exclusion of drag queens as those who violated the gender/sexuality lines struck an emotional chord with some of the research participants. For instance, when relating one of the discussions regarding drag queens during the preparatory meetings for the Warsaw Pride, Robert was quite outraged, arguing that, "it was frightening for me that we try to exclude drag queens when we are excluded ourselves". After all, the activists were familiar with feelings of exclusion themselves and knew the anger and the frustration at being denied access to public spaces and treated as non-citizens, as discussed in Chapter 6. Nevertheless, there were a number of other instances when the adoption of the identity for education strategy led to exclusions. Accordingly, I now discuss these exclusionary tendencies with regards to bisexuality and transsexual/transgender issues in the context of public activism.

As noted in the introductory chapter, in this thesis I apply the terms LGBT/lesbian and gay interchangeably, following the conventions of usage I observed among the activists. In general, the activists seemed to favour the use of the acronym LGBT, arguing that it was more inclusive (and, as will be discussed later in this chapter, potentially more progressive) than saying solely "gay and lesbian". At the same time, on a number of occasions, research participants would express their concern that the reality of the marches did not match this umbrella term and pointed to the exclusion of transsexual and bisexual persons (see also Dunin 2004, Kulpa 2007). To start with, the following two quotes touch upon the issue of the absence of transsexual persons both among the organisers and participants:

Aneta: It would be good, if the pride represented the transsexual community, but at the moment, to tell the truth, the community of transsexual persons in Poland is not represented well at all.

Agnieszka Z.: I believe ... that the problems with gays and lesbians in Poland are so big, that we aren't [ready to include the issues of] transgender, transsexual persons, they are even more of a bigger problem.

Stone, examining the contemporary LGBT movement in the USA, notes a similar ambivalence with regards to transsexual and transgender issues (Stone 2009). On the one hand, the gay and lesbian activists she interviewed were concerned about creating an atmosphere of inclusion and a similar concern is present in Aneta's remark. On the other hand, a number of activists in Stone's study worried that the inclusion of transsexual/transgender issues "dissect[ed] the community" and introduced too many unnecessary divisions (Stone 2009:347). Similarly, Agnieszka's comment suggests that undertaking advocacy on the part of transgendered/transsexual individuals could sap into the already overstretched resources of the Polish movement, taking away the energy and commitment necessary to address the pressing issues of the gay and lesbian community. Thus, transsexual/transgender issues are described as potentially draining and can only be attended to once the urgent gay and lesbian concerns have been addressed. As a result, this statement creates a hierarchy of discrimination. Ironically, a very similar rhetoric has been consistently employed by Polish politicians, unwilling to deal with issues pertaining specifically to women's rights, who argue that first they need to tackle more important issues such as for instance unemployment (Graff 2001).

Similar ambivalence is expressed in connection with bisexual issues in the context of public activism, where in theory the research participants declared their support, however these declarations rarely manifested in practice. The overall perception of the organisers was consistent with a comment by Yga who observed

that the majority of people who took part in and organised public activist events, were gay or lesbian, while bisexual persons constituted a mere fraction of that group. Importantly, this claim was not fully accurate as among the research participants, five identified as bisexual (see Appendix 2, pages 272-274). At the same time, issues of bisexuality were largely invisible and often dismissed as potentially threatening to the coherent public message the activists were trying to achieve. This was even more pronounced in the interviews with the bisexual-identified research participants as demonstrated by Ida's comment:

I learnt it on the basis of my own example, how "great" this is when in my first year of being in KPH [i.e. Kampania Przeciw Homofobii – Campaign against Homophobia] I had to engage in these constant battles with the people that I am not lesbian and that I will decide myself who I am and I am definitely not a lesbian and I will not keep quiet just because this is politically correct because after all everybody is gay or lesbian, right, and I am introducing unnecessary divisions.

However, despite the fact that she and other bisexual activists were quite vocal regarding their self-identification in the context of the research interviews, these convictions did not translate to the official representations constructed in the course of public activism. Especially with regards to interactions with the media, the activists consistently used the phrase "gay and lesbian", as Ida commented. As far as I was able to ascertain, none of these activists came out as bisexual during journalistic interviews.⁷⁰ I was not able to find references to bisexual-themed banners or slogans prepared specifically for the marches, either. At the same time, for the most part the research participants were keen to stress their commitment to the values of diversity and inclusivity, especially as they aspired to present themselves in a different light from their right-wing opponents who openly advocated violence and exclusionary practices towards sexual minorities. As

⁷⁰ I am aware that doing so would not necessarily be an immediate reflection on the movement's inclusion of bisexuality; however, this could be a useful indicator.

discussed in Chapter 6, these experiences of exclusion provoked very strong emotional responses. Nevertheless, despite these strongly held beliefs, during preparatory meetings and interviews I was witness to comments where a research participant would either debate whether bisexuality was a legitimate identity at all or if it was evidence of someone going through “a phase of sexual disorientation”. Consequently, there was a general lack of support for bisexual and transgender issues and these were not a feature of the marches. For instance, in Krakow, the programme of the Culture for Tolerance festival, included a short workshop devoted to bisexuality yet at the same time, “normalcy” restricted to gays and lesbians was stressed at the accompanying march.

So far I have discussed how the focus on “normalcy” has led to the exclusion of overtly sexualised and gender “deviant” performances (exemplified by drag queens) as well as bisexual and transsexual/transgender issues. At the same time, this prescriptive vision of the marches relied on one more element, namely stressing similarities to the mainstream by emphasising the peaceful and non-threatening character of these events. As I show in the next section, this aspect of constructing “normalcy” through avoiding aggression and confrontation resulted in further exclusions. Specifically, I return to the case of the cancelled March for Tolerance in 2005 to discuss how the strategy of deploying identity for education, taken to the extreme, led to the activists excluding themselves from public space.

No space for gays and lesbians

As discussed in Chapter 5, the activists put a considerable amount of time and effort into strategies aimed at controlling the representation of the marches, in particular when their opponents focused on the alleged provocative character of gay and lesbian events. Confronted with these representations, the activists adopted

strategies that focused on creating a peaceful image and downplaying any potential displays of aggressiveness, especially anything that might have been constructed as deliberate hostility towards religious authorities. Thus, yet another aspect of the desired “normalcy” was an emphasis on portraying the participants and organisers of the marches as non-threatening. This way, the activists hoped to erase the perceived dichotomy between dangerous, disruptive “deviants” and “normal” heterosexual citizens. At the same time, taken to the extreme, this strategy could lead to self-censorship as was the case of the cancelled March for Tolerance in 2005, following the Pope’s death. For example, Sebastian argued that the cancellation was a good move in terms of the official representation of the movement, but at the same time this decision meant that the activists denied themselves the right to appear in the public sphere:

Well, I mean, I generally believe that from the public relations point of view this was a good strategy, but personally I think it was a bad strategy, I mean, everybody just behaved as if they really had no right to organise that march. And even if only thirty-forty people came, it was still our right, I was swept up by this wave of hysteria, we all were, from the point of view of public relations it was a good strategy because in a way we had demonstrated that the oppressed group after all respects some of the community values, it is not radical, that the group [of gays and lesbians] can shut up when needed, but on a personal level we were just being dishonest.

Once again, this quote highlights the dilemmas stemming from the adoption of identity for education as the principle strategy for the movement. By choosing to cancel the march in response to an atmosphere of national mourning, the activists stressed their respect for the values of the Catholic majority and by implication, highlighted their similarity to the mainstream. At the same time, this decision entailed disrespect to the principle of non-exclusion with regards to sexual minorities. Some research participants even argued that by deciding to cancel the event and announcing in the official statement that mourning Krakow was not “an

appropriate space” to bring up issues of gay and lesbian rights, they were adopting the language of the right wing and sounded dangerously close to their opponents. For instance, before the 2004 March for Tolerance the official statement of the local branch of Citizens’ Platform read “Krakow, as a conservative city, whose inhabitants live according to Christian values is not an appropriate space for this type of demonstration” (Pelowski 2004:1). During the interviews, which took place roughly two years after the cancelled demonstration, a significant minority of the March for Tolerance organisers regretted not going ahead with the event, even in the form of a toned-down alternative, as already indicated in Sebastian’s remark. Similarly, Kasia suggested that they should have gathered in the city centre, at Market Square for a silent march. At the same time, reflecting back on the circumstances surrounding that decision, the activists did admit that at the time they were taking a gamble. First of all, they had no way of knowing when the intense period of national mourning would subside. Secondly, they had justified concerns for the safety of the march participants should the event take place. Nevertheless, in this case, the strategic deployment of identity for education actually led to self-imposed censorship and the exclusion of gay and lesbian individuals from public spaces.

Furthermore, in Chapter 6, I argued that even though the activists experienced a number of potentially negative emotions connected with the banned marches, their overall experience of the events was positive and actually had a bonding effect for the movement. Importantly, in the two previously discussed cases of the banned Warsaw Pride and the March for Equality, the organisers were able to channel these negative emotions into organising the illegal events as acts of civil disobedience. As noted in this section, the emotions experienced in the context

of the cancelled March for Tolerance – such as frustration and anxiety - did not have a similar bonding effect, on the contrary. First of all, the activists did not have a chance to find an outlet for their negative feelings or to experience the “pleasures of protest”. Instead, as discussed in Chapter 5, the aftermath of the cancellation was largely anticlimactic as it went unnoticed by the mainstream media and only drew some criticism on the part of columnists of gay and lesbian websites. Furthermore, the cancellation of the march did not come from the local authorities, as it was the activists’ decision to remove themselves from public space. Thus, these different circumstances meant that the emotions experienced in the case of the 2005 March for Tolerance did not result in increased mobilisation or feelings of empowerment.

Visibly normal: Dangerous exposures

At the same time, as mentioned in Chapter 5, the decision to cancel the March for Tolerance in the aftermath of the Pope’s death was made in response not only to the media, but also the opinions voiced by gay and lesbian individuals, who the activists saw as the intended recipients of the marches. As discussed in Chapter 6, the organisers saw the public events as a source of emotional sustenance not only for themselves, but also for gays and lesbians beyond the immediate activist circle. For instance, as indicated previously, in the case of the banned Warsaw Pride in 2005, the wish to create a space for the expression of gay and lesbian identities was one of the key arguments for going ahead with the illegal demonstration. The research participants involved in organising the banned Pride saw the event as a symbol of the political resistance of gay and lesbian minorities in the context of the increasing influence of the ultra-right wing. Furthermore, when commenting on the thrill and euphoria of participating in acts of civil disobedience, some activists stressed how important it was for them to be in a crowd of people who shared their

beliefs. This support was also crucial for the sustainability of the marches. After all, as I show in my discussion of the first Warsaw Pride in 2001 (Chapter 6), one of the concerns of Szymon, the main organiser, was that there would be nobody willing to risk participation in an openly gay and lesbian event. At the same time, as I have discussed in this chapter, these events were seen a crucial tool in the fight for “normalcy”, with the implicit assumption that “increased collective visibility could confer greater cultural acceptability, empowerment and freedom” (Harding 1998:225-6). Furthermore, for the most part, the activists viewed this enhanced visibility as a positive phenomenon, creating a temporary space for expressing otherwise hidden or repressed identities (Bell and Valentine 1995).

As discussed in this chapter, the enhanced visibility was connected with reliance on the identity for education strategy, specifically, the idea of introducing a “normal citizen” in public space. Having discussed the potential exclusions stemming from that approach, I now problematise the affinity of the activists with tactics of visibility. After all, the public revelation of identity as a political strategy is underlined by a belief that the development of visibility is beneficial and politically meaningful, despite the fact that visibility as a tool has not been successful in defeating racial or gender oppression (Weston 2002). To start with, the LGBT individuals who did show up at the marches or offered their support in other ways (via donations, volunteering etc.) seemed to be a minority. For instance, Ida mentioned her shock at learning that the prevailing opinion was not necessarily in favour of the marches:

I mean, the first time I was shocked as hell, how could that happen, that we are getting some horrific feedback from people who theoretically should support us, because the whole issue concerns them most, because that are gays or lesbians or whatever that does not fit into the mainstream, but what I actually learnt, it turns out that we are actually causing them great harm, precisely because we are doing something [i.e. organising the marches] and

then there is a lot of publicity involved, ...if you are not out, then every time this issue [of gay and lesbian rights] is highlighted, then this is a threat for that person [who is in the closet] ...the other thing is that when we organise something [in public spaces], then the reactions are now getting more and more radical.

Thus, to a certain extent, increased visibility might have led to enhanced homophobia and potentially threaten the well being of non-heterosexual individuals, who did not welcome this intensified exposure and resulting attention (see also Kuhar 2006 for a similar discussion in the Czech context). Moreover, the activists themselves were not immune from the danger posed by relying on visibility as the main movement tactic. As discussed in Chapter 5, they were quite careful about choosing who would become the “official” face of the movement and had delegated representatives who interacted with the media. At the same time, they had little to no control over the way these images were circulated after the interview was over. Those who appeared frequently in the public were easily recognisable and potentially more exposed to homophobic violence. Furthermore, during the actual marches, the activists had no way of controlling the dozens of journalists taking photographs of the organisers and participants, including those who did not wish their faces to become public. Of course, attending or even organising the march was no guarantee of one’s sexual orientation; nevertheless, the participants were “guilty by association”. Moreover, the images could easily be taken out of context, no matter how “normal” they were. For instance, All-Polish Youth keep on their website careful documentation of marches, where photographs taken during these events are stored in a catalogue entitled “deviants” and are freely accessible.⁷¹

⁷¹ See <http://mw.org.pl/galeria/>. It has to be noted that in contrast to the Redwatch website I mention later, the All-Polish Youth website is legal, as it does not contain any personal data such as names, addresses etc., furthermore, Polish law does not recognise homophobic insults as a crime, except in the context of the Labour Code, as mentioned in footnote 80, page 225 .

Furthermore, the activists were concerned about the danger of being unwillingly outed to their family or work colleagues through photos appearing in the media. For instance, Marta mentioned an incident that occurred hours before the 2005 March of Equality, during a conference on sexual minorities which was organised in a venue close to the starting place of the illegal march (see Chapter 2). As discussed in Chapter 5, the organisers were under a lot of stress in the run-up to the event and the tension on the day of the event was mounting. That tension increased significantly as the organisers noticed a man who came into the conference room and started taking photographs. None of the people in the room recognised him, he had no identification that would show his affiliation with a recognised media outlet and even more disconcertingly, he would not answer the questions as to why he was taking the photographs. Marta commented on her fear that the photographs would end up on one of the websites of the radical right-wing organisations. The references to fear as related to the potential consequences of visibility also showed up in other interviews with the organisers of the Poznan March of Equality. For instance, speaking about the actual 2005 March of Equality, Gaja recalled an incident where a woman that she recognised from previous demonstrations as a member of the All-Polish Youth started taking photographs of the participants:

I remember I felt really awful then, because there was no place to hide, because we are exposing ourselves to public scrutiny, we are public persons and we have to somehow deal with the fact that later our photographs end up on the web and we end up becoming an easy target for some aggressive people.

Unfortunately the fears that Gaja and Marta brought up had quite a solid grounding in reality. During the interviews, some research participants mentioned a Neo-Nazi website called redwatch.info, connected with the international fascist organisation

Blood and Honour. The site⁷² publishes photographs of march organisers, including their personal data and descriptions along the lines “faggot, traitor of the Polish nation, traitor of the race”. Almost all of the activists I interviewed were on that list, and they were aware that there had been at least one case of assault on a member of an anarchist collective (not directly connected with the LGBT activist circles, but known to the research participants) whose details appeared on that website.⁷³ Thus, even the assimilationist strategy of suppressing differences to the mainstream was connected with potential dangers, since, as Harding puts it, “visibility confers a degree of power but also renders those newly visible available to (existing) techniques of control” (Harding 1998:225).

Overall, so far I have demonstrated the movement’s reliance on identity for education strategies as well as the strong commitment to constructing “normalcy” via gay and lesbian marches. Therefore, it seems quite perplexing that I discovered in the course of my research how much of an affinity the activists demonstrated with identity for critique and in particular the concept of “queer”, whose relevance will be explored later. For instance, during informal meetings and the interviews, the activists would quite often express their discomfort with what they jokingly named the “nice teddy bears strategy”, which involved projecting the pacifist and desexualised image during public gay and lesbian events, as discussed earlier. Interestingly, alongside these complaints, they would often bring up a fantasy of an ideal march, where they could engage in radical, provocative actions modelled upon the in-your face activism of groups such as ACT-UP. This ideal vision was linked

⁷² Even though the website is illegal as it breaks the personal data protection law and promotes fascist ideologies, it is notoriously difficult to monitor. Once taken down, the webmasters simply move the content on to another server. During the fieldwork, I had no problems in accessing the contents of the Polish version of the Redwatch website.

⁷³ On the basis of interviews with research participants and information from <http://www.racjonalista.pl/index.php/s,11/t,7384>

very strongly with the concept of queer politics, labelled within Bernstein's framework as "identity for critique", which seeks to stress differences from the mainstream (Bernstein 2005:56). Accordingly, the next section will analyse the tensions between two opposing identity deployment strategies, that is, suppressing versus emphasising differences from the mainstream in the context of public gay and lesbian activism. I start my discussion by looking at how the research participants defined the concept of "queer".

Queer stages: Understanding identity for critique

Queer studies began functioning in Poland as an academic discipline⁷⁴ in 2001, at first informally within a circle of committed researchers, who created Kolo Naukowe Gender Studies "Nic Tak Samo" [Academic Association of Gender Studies "Nothing Is the Same"]⁷⁵ and organised the first conference devoted to queer studies in Karpacz (Basiuk et al. 2002). A significant number of research participants saw themselves as affiliated with the Polish academic queer movement (see also Basiuk et al. 2002, Ferens et al. 2006, Sikora et al. 2006). For instance, the activists involved in organising the March for Tolerance in Krakow also organised a series of bi-monthly meetings of the "Gender-English" group, where they read and discussed the founding texts of queer theory. The same group also planned a series of meetings devoted to queer art and culture, called "pro:kreacje". As the membership of these groups and of the organising committee overlapped, the concepts of queer politics and queer theory were mentioned frequently during the

⁷⁴ Gay and lesbian or queer studies are not officially recognised by the Academia of Polish Sciences, which is the regulating body for academic disciplines. However, within the sociology or psychology departments it is at least theoretically possible to undertake research on gay and lesbian issues. Anecdotal evidence suggests that it is quite a difficult undertaking because of prevalent homophobia.

⁷⁵ As the founders of the association claim, it was impossible to register an organisation at the University of Wroclaw whose name could contain the words "lesbian", "gay" "queer" or "homosexual". Despite its name, the organisation deals with queer studies (based on the information from the website www.nts.uni.wroc.pl).

preparatory meetings for the March for Tolerance. The situation was similar in Poznan and Warsaw, where some activists organising marches would simultaneously be involved with local queer initiatives, such as “Subwersja” [Subversion], a festival of queer cinema in Warsaw that coincided with Warsaw prides between 2005 and 2007 or a conference on queering the concept of “camp” organised by Poznan-based feminist organisation Konsola in 2006. Furthermore, a significant minority of the research participants had direct experience of activism based on queer principles as they had a chance to participate in events organised by queer-identified groups internationally, such as queeruption in Tel-Aviv, Queer Zagreb or the Manchester Bent festival.⁷⁶ At the same time, as the definition of queer is far from fixed (Ostenfeld et al. 2004) it is necessary to trace the ways in which the activists involved in the marches defined this concept and how this understanding impacted on the identity deployment dilemmas analysed in this section. The following two quotes provide an illustrative example of the meanings associated with the term:

Agnieszka W.: It always goes according to the same model and you cannot skip over certain stages, even though they might take place much quicker ... so the sequence is always the same, there are, you know, first there are gays, lesbians, then there are voices, wait a minute, wait a minute, what about bisexuals, so we add a letter [to create the LGBT acronym] and then later transsexuals and transgender, so we add yet another letter, and then quite often I for intersexual, and then Q for queer or questioning, and this is how it always goes.

Inga: First of all, queer in general to me is a movement that, or a theory which is based on the idea that constructions of normal are problematic, so, you know, breaking boundaries and going across borders, and things like that. I think as a theory, you know, it's kind of focused, to think about things differently, but as a movement, which I think it is kind of actually in my mind in America it's ACT UP and all that, you know, when AIDS happened, queer way of thinking as the queer movement, Queer Nation,

⁷⁶ For more information about these events, see www.queeruption.org, www.queerzagreb.org and www.get-bent-manchester.com

reclaiming of the word queer and all that. ... I mean I think that queer is the next stage, the next advanced level [laughs] than LGBT rights, for me queer means something much more, much wider than just gay and lesbian movements.

Agnieszka's comment implies that the concept of queer evolved as an add-on to the liberation model of activism, represented by the LGBT acronym (Petchesky 2008). Furthermore, she suggests the nature of this development is rather fixed, where the starting point is activism based on (homo)sexual minorities and further groups (i.e. bisexuals and transsexual and transgender persons) are added to address possible exclusions. This understanding points to a complementary character of queer, where it stands for identities that lack representation within the model of LGBT activism. Interestingly, her explanation does not acknowledge that fact that queer evolved very much in opposition to the liberation model and it sought to deconstruct fixed identities such as gay or lesbian (Gamson 1995). Importantly, Agnieszka views the process through which the concept of "queer" evolved as rather inflexible, especially as she repeats "always" twice in her short comment. Furthermore, she implies that this rigid pattern is applicable to sexual minorities' movements worldwide. While she does not specifically mention the origin of this model, the US is the most likely source.

However, Inga's quote points to the US-based character of "queer" quite explicitly as she relies on the examples of radical queer activism connected with the AIDS epidemic in the States. In the same way as Agnieszka, Inga positions queer politics as the most evolved form of activism, however, her comment indicates a certain departure from the model of linear progress that appears in the previous quote. That is, in using phrases such as "next stage" or "next level" Inga suggests that queer activism represents a marked improvement over the more mainstream gay and lesbian movement. However, she does not really qualify why queer

activism should be superior to previous forms of organising, apart from hinting at the boundary-breaking character of the concept. Similarly to Agnieszka, she does not really focus on the ways in which queer critiques the concept of stable sexual identities upon which the claims of the LGBT movement have been based (Gamson 1995). Finally, Inga seems to conflate queer theory and queer activism, which is consistent with the way that the notion of queer is employed in Poland, where scholars use the concept quite holistically as a mixture of theory, art and activism (see for instance Basiuk 2000, Zurawiecki 2002, Kulpa 2004).⁷⁷ At the same time, this is quite a particular perception as in the US, where the concept originated, researchers point to separate (but largely parallel) trajectories for queer activism and queer theory (Watson 2005) or even hint at a rift between the academics and the queer activists (Wolfe 1997).

Another quite remarkable example of how the research participants constructed the meanings of “queer” was in one of the meetings which I attended during my fieldwork at the end of October 2007. The event, entitled “Stonewall: history of US LGBTQ movement”, was part of the *pro:kreacje* (in Krakow) series devoted to exploring broadly defined queer issues and was co-organised by activists connected with the Krakow March for Tolerance. Julie, one of the march organisers, provided a supposedly exhaustive overview of the history of the US LGBT movement, starting from the Stonewall Riots and finishing with radical AIDS activism, with an emphasis on the expressions of queer anger (Gould 2002). Thus, Julie’s account strengthened the association of queer activism primarily with the style of aggressive visibility and radical political actions advocated by groups such as ACT UP or Queer Nation (Duggan 1992). Importantly, in her presentation

⁷⁷ Anecdotal evidence suggests that similar processes occur in the Balkans (see for instance the website www.queer.ba), but so far I have been unable to find any research that would support this claim.

(which she offered to do of her own accord), Julie chose not to include any information on the demise of ACT-UP or the struggles of the US LGBT movement within the past 15 years, such as issues around same-sex marriage legislation (Sullivan 1997) or the military policy of “don’t ask, don’t tell” (Britton and Williams 1995). These are quite interesting omissions, as Julie is American herself and before coming to Poland, she used to be active in the student LGBT movement in the US, and so was familiar with the scope of movement activities from the late 1990s. Overall, Julie’s presentation indicated an understanding of queer activism based on a construction of the US LGBT movement as a space of linear revolution towards which Poland should strive (Baer 2005). Similar ideas have also appeared in my earlier discussion of the interviews with Inga and Agnieszka W. (see page 220). This is not altogether surprising, since, as Baer claims, Polish activists and scholars alike very often compare the situation of sexual minorities in Poland with various periods of the development of the gay and lesbian movement in the West, in particular the US (Baer 2005). This vision is reinforced by Kochanowski, who in his text on the relevance of queer theory for the Polish LGBT movement in the context of public activism notes that:

We remain in our society on the level of the US in the fifties, that is on the level of wondering whether homosexuals have a right to exist in public space at all (Kochanowski 2004:123).

At the same time, both the narrative of linear progress as well as the juxtaposition of homophobic Poland versus the liberal West are quite problematic and will be explored in more detail later. After all, in the US protection of gay and lesbian rights is far from ideal, and for instance, there is no federal law forbidding

discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, while such a law has been in existence in Poland since 2004.⁷⁸

At the same time, the issues discussed in this section, that is, the US-centric understanding of the notion of queer and the association of queer activism with a radical repertoire as well as omissions regarding the emphasis of the queer movement on deconstructing identity are relevant to my analysis of the identity deployment dilemmas. I believe this understanding influenced both the construction of the dilemma and proposed strategies for its resolution. Thus, in the next section I aim to discuss the ways in which the activists critiqued the practice of the marches as not “queer enough” and expressed their frustration with identity for education deployment strategies. Later on, I problematise this critique and explore the ways in which the research participants attempted to tackle the tensions between opposing identity deployment strategies.

First of all, having discussed the prevalent understanding of the concept of “queer” in the context of Polish public activism, I now consider the ways in which the research participants positioned the marches as not measuring up to this idealised vision of queer activism, as evidenced in the quotes below:

Samuel: It [March for Tolerance] is not radical at all ... even if somebody wanted to, I mean, there isn't anything, if somebody wanted to connect that with some sort of radicalism, there are one, two, three thousand of people, they are shouting something, nobody undresses, which is a pity, nobody is carrying radical banners saying, like, I hate the Pope... it is just a regular march.

Inga: It [introducing the balloons during the March for Tolerance] was a celebration of our identity, not the attempt to kick somebody who is on the other side ... I don't know how that corresponds to queer anger; I do not think we've reached that stage. We are trying to show everybody that in

⁷⁸At the moment, the Polish Labour Code is the only legal act in Poland that mentions sexual orientation. The introduction of the anti-discrimination clause containing protection on the basis of sexual orientation, gender, race, disability etc. was part of an EU pre-accession requirement (Pogodzinska 2005).

reality we aren't that aggressive, right, I don't know, I mean, this is a little bit, a little bit filtered through in terms of which stage we are at, whether we want to be really so nice and show that we are not scary or whether we just need that so as not to compare ourselves to the All-Polish Youth; whether we really want to be queer and aggressive, I believe that this is all mixed up... I don't know, I think that there's this permanent conflict, I mean, if you look at it from the queer point of view, we should be just bad ... I don't know, organise some sort of almost terrorist actions [both laugh] but what happens here, I guess, is some sort of compromise.

After all, even though the general public perceived gay and lesbian marches as quite controversial, as this chapter has demonstrated, the underlying message of the marches could be expressed as a desire towards inclusion and the willingness to stress sameness to the majority. The toned-down marches, as Samuel notes, avoided confrontation with the religious authorities and came nowhere near the radical actions of ACT-UP activists, such as for instance the disruption of communion services in New York's St Patrick's Cathedral in order to protest against the lack of response to the AIDS epidemic (Wolf 2002). Similarly, the deliberate attempt to create a peaceful image by distributing colourful balloons could not be further removed from the in-your-face tactics of Queer Nation. For instance, a former activist of San Francisco chapter described how during a demonstration against the homophobic preachers' group Prayer Warriors, the activists were "screaming and taunting those bigots" (Neville-Neal, 2005). At the same time, while Inga's earlier comment notes the disparity between the militant actions of queer groups and the relatively peaceful Polish gay and lesbian marches, nevertheless, she expresses some ambivalence towards that dichotomy. Thus, in the next paragraphs I will explore this ambivalence in more detail.

One way of analysing the contradictions between the group's affinity towards identity for critique strategies (i.e. queer politics) and practices rooted in identity for education strategies is to draw upon similar discussions (primarily) in

the US context. These debates view the conflict between strategies based on difference versus inclusion as a struggle inherent to the movement for sexual minorities' rights:

The debate between assimilationists and separatists [that is] internal political struggle over agendas of assimilation (emphasising sameness) and separation (emphasising difference) have been present since the inception of these movements, as they are in other movements. Queer marks a contemporary anti-assimilationist stance, in opposition to the mainstream inclusionary goals of the dominant gay-rights movement (Gamson 1995:401).

After all, at first glance, the fact that the activists categorically denied the possibility of ever having an event that would be the equivalent of what they saw as "oversexualised" Western Prides could be seen as an argument in favour of the argument that the Polish gay and lesbian movement is not "liberated enough" or not "developed enough". Similarly, it would be easy to write off the work of the activists as based on the rhetoric of "normalcy" that encouraged a rigid understanding of sexual identity. Furthermore, the discussions related to the participation of drag queens in public activist events or the exclusion of bisexuals and transgender members of the community, discussed earlier in this chapter, were in stark contrast to the idealised vision of queer activism (Mizielinska 2005). While this particular framework for the queer/identity dilemma seems to be well established in the literature of sexuality-based movements (see for instance Gamson 1995; Bernstein 1997 and 2005), at the same time, applying this model in the context of Polish gay and lesbian activism can be problematic. First of all, there is the risk of fixing the Polish gay and lesbian movement as possibly "not developed enough" (as in "not queer enough"). Secondly, this framework introduces the queer/assimilationist dichotomy and forces the researcher to categorically define the movement as either queer or identity-based, which is also an issue noted by other

scholars of non-Western LGBT movements (see for instance Currier 2007, Santos 2008). Furthermore, as I show in this chapter the “failure” to measure up to high standards of queer activism can be challenged when read in the context of quite a narrow interpretation of queer activism as equivalent to the radical politics of groups such as ACT-UP. Instead, I propose to let go of attempting to crystallise the movement’s strategic choices as belonging exclusively to either the identity politics or queer politics camp. Hopefully, this will allow me to explain the findings of my research – that is, the fact that the movement actors’ affinity with the identity for critique deployment strategies coexisted alongside their commitment to identity for education strategies. In problematising this queer/identity dilemma, I draw on Wolfe’s work in the context of the activism of the Irish Lesbian and Gay Organisation [ILGO] in New York, who have protested their exclusion from the St. Patrick’s Day Parade on the basis of not being “Irish enough” (Wolfe 1997, see also Smyth 2000, Marston 2002). Wolfe points out that at a first glance ILGO’s activism might seem to be based on the framework of an assimilationist agenda, where activists demanded acceptance on the basis of a rigidly understood identity. At the same time, as Wolfe argues, ILGO’s protest was an issue of significant relevance to the activists groups, an example of a highly politicised action. Thus, she stresses the need to engage with “political world-views that inform this process” (Wolfe 1997). Accordingly, the next section discusses the ways in which some activists expressed their critique of queer activism.

Critical engagements with queer concepts

According to Iza, one of the March for Equality organisers, having to “perform as a lesbian”, i.e. subscribing to a fixed sexual identity and act accordingly in public, was a source of frustrations, some of which have been examined in this chapter.

However, according to her, an important element of the public activist project was working with “the society as it is” and communicating effectively:

Well, if it [the term queer] appeared, it was more in conversations between us, but I believe if we were to try and explain queer to the media, then the media would have to tackle something which is really difficult for them.

Thus, on the one hand, the activists might have embraced the concept of queer on an intra-movement level. On the other hand, they still engaged critically with the notion and questioned its practicality in the context of public activism in Poland. As Poletta and Jasper point out, while some activists may see destabilising a collective identity as an important goal in and of itself, others may understandably see it as a threat to group unity or as confusing to the public (Polletta and Jasper 2001). Furthermore, Iza’s comment stresses yet another aspect of the disjoint between the movement’s theoretical embrace of queer principles and the practical engagement with identity for education deployment strategies, that is, the emphasis on reaching out to the media. After all, her main concern seems to be that the concept of “queer” would become an insurmountable obstacle for the success of movement-media interactions. On top of that, other research participants mentioned their discomfort with what they perceived as the elitist character of queer politics. For instance, Krzysiek, one of the organisers of the Warsaw Pride argued against going in the direction of what he saw as “a very difficult anthropological and philosophical discussion”. He worried that this route could result in the movement disintegrating into an over-intellectualised academic dispute, a situation which some critics of queer theory have described as “prancing and squatting on the academic stage” (Berlant and Warner 1995:348). Similarly, Marta A. pointed to the incompatibility of the term “queer” with Polish reality, arguing that, “this isn’t the language you should be using in Poland, because people don’t understand that”. Likewise, a

number of research participants believed that it would be hard to gain acceptance for a stigmatised identity if they used the notion of “queer”, as the use of this concept could alienate both the immediate beneficiaries, that is, gay and lesbian individuals as well as the potential allies. Thus, it could jeopardise the main goal of the public activism project which was to enhance gay and lesbian visibility and attract as many supporters as possible. Finally, as demonstrated in Chapter 6, a significant majority of research participants had a strong emotional commitment to that particular goal. Last but not least, as I discuss elsewhere, the costs of participating in activism were high, in financial and emotional terms.

Furthermore, some activists pointed out that the context in which marches and prides took place and the level of protests they provoked meant that these events were perhaps “radical enough”:

Inga: Such forms [i.e. marches] of showing that there are a lot of us, that we cannot be ignored, that we also have a right to public space and we do not intend to apologise to anybody for the fact that we exist ... I do not know whether it is radical enough, but at least it is more radical than pretending that, right, that we are ideal, that we are living in such a way as the society expects of us.

Moreover, because of the activities of gay and lesbian groups in contemporary Poland, homosexuality has entered the public arena and become a socio-political issue. Given that until the late 1990s homosexuality was muted or mentioned solely as a “distant and dangerous curiosity”, as Sypniewski and Warkocki argue, its current visibility constitutes a transgression against heterosexuality (Sypniewski and Warkocki 2004:7). The subdued visibility and the strategy of “nice teddy bears”, which a number of activists referred to earlier with some frustration, could nevertheless help to dispel the myths and reclaim subjectivity for the movement. The following example illustrates the necessity of the existence of a distinct group

of lesbian and gay citizens: when in 2002 Campaign Against Homophobia attempted to sue a Polish bishop for saying that homosexuality is like a plague and homosexuals should not be allowed to work as schoolteachers, the summons was dismissed because, according to the judge, there was no such social group as homosexuals whose rights had been violated (Baer 2006).

The above example stresses once again the particular nature of Polish homophobia, based on a cluster of religious, legal and societal norms. Even though a detailed analysis of these homophobic mechanisms remains outside of the scope of this thesis, it has to be noted that the vehemence with which right-wing authorities organised themselves against gay and lesbian marches is quite peculiar to the Polish context, and to a certain extent, the Eastern European context in general (Renkin 2009). It has to be noted, though, that Christian Right groups in the US, which ideologically resemble Polish far-right parties, will occasionally stage protests against prides or use images from these events in order to demonstrate the “perverse” character of sexual minorities (Herman 1997), as mentioned in Chapter 2. However, these protests are rarely violent and they do not mobilise hundreds of representatives of the right-wing organisations, as is the case of Poland. Furthermore, US Christian Right Groups seem to place most emphasis politically on targeting legal initiatives such as the same-sex civil partnership (Fetner 2001) rather than organising protests against events such as the Gay Prides. As already indicated in Chapter 2, a relevant element of Bernstein’s framework is the assertion that political circumstances bear relevance to movement identity deployment strategies (Bernstein 2005). Thus, the political context in which gay and lesbian marches in Poland take place is relevant for a discussion which I undertake in the next section of whether these events are “queer enough”.

Compromises and coalitions: On being queer enough

Furthermore, apart from engaging critically with the concept of “queer”, the research participants also sought reasonable compromises. As Samuel admitted, despite all the problems connected with incorporating queer politics, the concept still held significant relevance for the movement: “we are trying to get queered... we do feel a certain affinity with the concept”.

On the basis of my research, I argue that the affinity with the concepts of the identity for critique strategies was mostly realised in the context of alliances formed thanks to the marches, especially in the context of the March of Equality. For example, Kinga argued that the principles of queer politics were present in the way that the event in Poznan was organised, where the emphasis was put on involving members of the local activist community, including groups representing such diverse constituents as feminists, anarchists and deaf people. The coalitional aspect of the Marches of Equality in 2006 and 2007 was apparent already in the preparatory phase. Moreover, the coalitional aspect of these demonstrations went beyond the mechanical addition of token representatives of the local minority groups, as they in fact became fully-fledged members of the organising team. The organising team made it clear that all the decisions made in connection with the demonstrations were consensual, even if the diverse backgrounds of the activists and sometimes clashing approaches to organising led to pent-up frustration and heated discussions. As Monika admitted, one of these clashes centred around understandings of sexuality:

In general, the anarchists were very involved and really wanted to offer their support but I think they were also very heavily influenced by all these hostile media campaigns [against the March of Equality] ... and so for the first two months we were mulling over one and the same argument, where the anarchists kept saying that they do not want anyone with a feather up their ass, as they put it.

Nevertheless, the lasting result was increased cohesion between various local groups, which further exemplified a successful example of upholding queer principles. Ferens, referring to the notion of queer coalitional politics, describes the Poznan March of Equality as a “queer moment” arguing that “in the face of a crisis, like the crisis of civil society in Poland, we may start pushing our imaginations harder, asking what connects us to other social groups, and taking joint responsibility for the well-being of those groups” (Ferens 2006). This sentiment is also present in the following quote by Marta J., another March of Equality organiser, who added that the event was meant to be:

[A] gesture of solidarity with people who are in some way excluded, do not feel at home in Poland ... in general everybody who does not belong to the group of white, heterosexual males, who are educated, smart, handsome and able-bodied.

This quote reiterates the research participants’ understanding of the dominant construction of citizenship in Poland, where white, presumably middle class heterosexual males are the only ones who can meet the exclusionary criteria and everyone else remains on the margins (Mizielinska 2001). Once again, the space of marches becomes one where temporarily the organisers and participants alike are able to carve out new definitions of citizenship and belonging (Johnston 2007). Marta’s reference to the march as a “gesture of solidarity” also ties in with my earlier discussion of the affinity that the activists demonstrated for Solidarity principles such as democracy, participation and equality (Mason 1989). As I pointed out in Chapter 6, the narrative of the Polish 1980s movement narrative was crucial with regards to understanding the meaning of public gay and lesbian activism. I believe this attempt at creating a more inclusive event is relevant even if these efforts went largely unnoticed beyond the circle of local activists. For

instance, the media reporting on the 2007 March chose to ignore the coalitional aspect of the event and instead announced that, “colourful homosexuals are planning to take over Poznan” (PAP 2007a). Finally, this section has also demonstrated the complexity of the affinity to queer principles, just as the affinity to the Solidarity legacy was hardly straightforward. It has also demonstrated that in a way, the commitment to “queer principles” – understood as coalitional politics – bore links to a more local narrative, that of the Solidarity legacy. I believe that this is a potentially useful opening into alternative ways of narrating the dominant stories of LGBT movements, which is a theme that I will take further in the conclusion.

Conclusion

The concept of collective identity captures the “unity of individuals, events, and ideas” in a social movement context (Gongaware 2003:486). In this chapter, I have looked at how this unity was established in the context of Polish gay and lesbian public activism and how it manifested itself in the pursuit of identity for education. I examined the dilemmas and tensions resulting from the movement’s strong grounding in strategies which emphasise similarity with the mainstream values and practices. I also included a discussion of the emotional impact of monitoring the boundaries of the group in an attempt to control its representation and distance themselves from right-wing opponents. On a related note, I looked at how this emphasis on “normalcy” and enhanced visibility is connected with efforts of gaining full citizenship and achieving rights to public assembly and representation. Specifically, I examined the efforts of the movement actors to re-signify the gay and lesbian subject as “normal” through prides and marches.

Remaining within the theoretical framework of identity deployment, I investigated the tensions between reliance on identity for education strategies and declared affinity to the principles of identity for critique on the part of the activists. In analysing these contradictions, I focused on the concepts of queer politics as a contested element of the Polish gay and lesbian movement identity. Accordingly, I contextualised the understanding of the queer project that the research participants subscribed to in order to make sense of what they perceived as the movement's "failure" to meet the ideals of queer politics. Finally, I problematised this narrow understanding of queer politics as a way of resolving the identity for the education/critique dilemma and pointed out ways in which they could be "queer enough". The next chapter will weave together various threads which have surfaced throughout this thesis – visibility, emotions, citizenship. It will also provide an overview of the contributions, implications and limitations of this thesis as well as possible future directions.

CHAPTER 8

Conclusion

This thesis has looked at gay and lesbian marches and pride parades in Poland, exploring these public encounters within Bernstein's identity deployment framework, where activists and their values and practices themselves become contested terrains. This chapter revisits the journey across these "contested terrains", focusing on the contributions, implications and limitations of my research.

As this thesis has demonstrated, issues of visibility and representation were of particular relevance to gay and lesbian public activism. By relying on visibility strategies, the activists asserted their rights as (sexual) citizens in public spaces. Moreover, through these quite often confrontational encounters, the activists were openly defying the attempts of the right-wing opponents to protect the public sphere from being "polluted" by the mere sight of gays and lesbians. After all, homophobic images were a recurrent theme in the opponents' discourse, which tends to portray gay and lesbian marches as gatherings of "deviants" and "perverts". Importantly, as this thesis demonstrates, the activists relied on visibility tactics in order to stress their similarity to the mainstream and to emphasise the "normalcy" of sexual minorities. Furthermore, the activists' concern with the public image has also been discussed in the context of their engagement with the media, where journalistic representations were quite often biased and focused on actual or expected conflict between the marchers and their opponents.

At the same time, this research problematises visibility as a strategy and points out that the effort to construct and control the representation of sexual minorities in the context of public activism to a large extent relied on exclusions. Furthermore, I pointed out some problematic aspects of the visibility strategy together with potential dangers of sometimes unwanted exposure both to activists

and gay and lesbian individuals in general. Moreover, I addressed the concerns over the normalising power of identity deployment tactics, also in terms of the emotional implications of this strategy and related ideological tensions. A central site of these tensions was the conflict between identity for education and identity for critique strategies, i.e. tactics suppressing or emphasising difference from the mainstream in the context of public activism.

In the context of that ideological conflict, I focused on the activists' engagement with the queer project, demonstrating that they worked with a rather fixed understanding which equated queer activism with radical, in-your face demonstrations. In my effort to problematise the queer/identity dilemma (Gamson 1995) as well as the notion of the queer project as an unattainable ideal, I explored examples of more critical engagements with the concept. Accordingly, I suggested ways in which public activist events in Poland were perhaps "queer enough". For instance, even in those seemingly non-radical public encounters, Polish activists found an outlet for the expression of extremely powerful emotions, including anger. These emotions may not have been equivalent to the image held by the informants of idealised "queer anger" (Gould 2001), manifested in radical ACT UP actions. Nevertheless, as this thesis has indicated, this emotional context was hugely empowering for research participants and served as proof that anger can be expressed in a number of different ways. Thus, I believe that this discussion could perhaps be taken further and become a foundation for similar analyses related to the impact of the queer project on other Eastern European LGBT movements.

My research has also demonstrated how in their efforts to construct "normal" gay and lesbian citizens, the activists attempted to construct the marches as a-religious, rather than anti-religious. That is, in principle, they were careful to

avoid any associations of the marches with a direct attack on the religious authorities and for instance set the dates of the events with accordance to the Catholic calendar. This did not mean that the organisers managed to avoid confrontations with the religious authorities or that they were hoping to avoid these confrontations at all. As I pointed out, apart from the rather extreme case of cancelling the 2005 March for Tolerance discussed in Chapter 5, research participants persevered in organising the marches. After all, withdrawing from public space altogether would have been a much more successful strategy to prevent the wrath of the Catholic institutions. At the same time, this strategy of indirect confrontation was rather inconsistent with the ideological affinity with the queer project and in particular expressed preference for direct queer actions in the US context which tackled church-based homophobia. Secondly, as discussed in Chapter 2, an overwhelming majority of Poles are Catholic and by default, the majority of the research participants would have been brought up in that tradition, even if at the time of the interviews they no longer considered themselves to be affiliated with the Church. Although explaining the status of religion as absent, its presence within the movement has been outside the scope of the theoretical model applied in this thesis, yet I believe this is an area that warrants further research.

While this thesis has relied extensively on Bernstein's identity deployment framework, there are certain elements of that framework that I either chose to critique or expand. One such element was Bernstein's application of the identity deployment paradigm to non-US based gay and lesbian movements. According to her, identity deployment strategies are transmitted in a top-down way from the Global North to non-Western societies. Furthermore, within this framework there is an implicit assumption that the Western model is a primary one and non-Western

gay and lesbian movements are merely its offshoots (Bernstein 2005). By extension, within this context, Polish gay and lesbian marches could be analysed primarily in terms of their deficiencies and how they do (not) conform to the Western model. As I critique this aspect of Bernstein's framework, I am joining the scholarly work that calls for subverting the Anglo-American dominance with regards to gay and lesbian movement research (Binnie 2004), especially as studies of gay and lesbian public activism have primarily focused on groups in North America and Western Europe (Taylor et al. 2002). At the same time, I do not suggest that such studies should in any way be abandoned or that they are redundant. Rather, I believe it would be worthwhile to stop seeing non-Western movements as imperfect copies of Western ones and instead to continue paying more attention to the ways in which the two interact and influence each other.

Furthermore, this thesis has hinted at the international aspect of gay and lesbian public activism in Poland and for instance indicated that international actors were involved both in supporting these events (as was the case of the 2005 Warsaw Pride, mentioned in Chapter 5) and opposing them (here I am referring to the involvement of Blood and Honour and its Redwatch website, discussed in Chapter 7). At the same time, I was unable to follow up on this aspect of Polish marches more extensively, as this would have been beyond my research capacity or the scope of this thesis. However, I believe that future work adopting a more transnational slant would further our understanding of the processes involved in public activism. That is, for instance, prospective research could answer questions regarding the ways in which representatives of Western (mostly European) LGBT movements, who already participate in Polish gay and lesbian marches, respond to these events. On a related note, such research could explore whether these

organisers of Western parades have been influenced in their identity deployment strategies by the contested nature of public activist events in Poland and elsewhere in Eastern Europe. Finally, a critical engagement with Bernstein's top-down model opens up possibilities for a different way of narrating LGBT-related activism in Poland. Accordingly, this thesis has proposed to consider the engagement with the Solidarity narrative as such an alternative route where I discussed how the emotional context enabled the activists to incorporate a "local" ideology of citizenship-based organising; that is, the 1980s Polish opposition movement. And in this way I contribute to theoretical research focusing on Eastern European sexual citizenship (Tereskinas 2002, Takacs 2005, Kuhar 2006).

This thesis has also explored the link between visibility and issues of agency. In view of the controversies raised by the marches, including instances of bans and/or attacks it would be easy to portray these public encounters in terms of an overwhelming imbalance of the power between the activists and their opponents. As pointed out in Chapter 4, a number of scholars have actually adopted this approach and analyse gay and lesbian marches as a reflection of Poland's "illiberal politics" (O'Dwyer and Schwartz 2006, 2007) and a general disregard for human rights (Selinger 2008). As already discussed, these scholarly accounts tend to universalise the experiences of pride organisers and participants alike as powerless victims. Of course, my intention in writing this thesis was not to dismiss the extent of homophobic violence occurring in the context of public activism in Poland. At the same time, exclusively discussing marches as sites of homophobic violence is not only disempowering, but could also come very close to the simplistic narratives adopted by the media, described in Chapter 5 as "faggots having a fight with the fascists". In challenging the belief that marches can only be sites of victimisation, I

have asked questions that do not focus exclusively on issues of discrimination. Therefore, I explored the efforts of the movement to change the dominant representations of sexual minorities based on negative stereotypes and to replace them with a more positive message. At the same time, my choice to focus on activists' perspectives and activists' agency is further linked to issues of power in research relationships as well as researcher positionality. Accordingly, this thesis has explored the complexities of my "insider" status, including related ethical challenges, since I shared with the research participants not only the same language but also previous activist experience.

In reclaiming gay and lesbian marches as sites of agency and meaning I relied on the concept of sexual citizenship (Richardson 1998, Weeks 1998, Bell and Binnie 2002). Accordingly, this thesis looks at the marches as public encounters where the activists exercise their collective agency, and use prides as a tool to challenge the heterosexist constructions of citizenship in Poland. As I have shown, it was of crucial importance to the activists to be able to march in the city centre and be recognised as a legitimate group of sexual citizens. Thus, this thesis has looked at the attempts of the activists to re-code to whom the streets belong and, more generally, to challenge the re-appropriation of public space by the nationalist and fundamentalist Catholic right-wing.

Moreover, issues of visibility and specifically the visual character of the marches has been stressed through my methodological choices, that is, the choice to employ photo-elicitation methods and supplement some of the interviews with photographs produced by research participants. As mentioned in Chapter 3, in the process of the research design I identified a gap with regards to the use of visual sociology methods in social movements research. At the same time, it has to be

noted that my methodological contribution has been limited as due to logistic obstacles I had to scale down my original plan to base most (if not all) interviews on the photo-elicitation method. Nevertheless, even this limited engagement with visual methods has informed the data analysis process and I believe that future research could employ an even wider and more extensive range of visual methods. Importantly, as I explored the meanings that the photographs held for the research participants, I realised the strong relevance of marches for the emotional culture of the movement.

After all, the marches were not reducible to the sum of the strategic decisions taken by the activists, nor were they merely an exercise in public relations. As discussed throughout this thesis, public gay and lesbian events stirred up a heated controversy on the part of right-wing opponents. These controversies and instances of being denied access to public space had an emotional impact on the activists; accordingly, Chapter 6 has explored the relevance of emotions for mobilisation in the context of heightened emotions, the hugely unfavourable political climate and intensified protests. I specifically focused on emotions such as anger, fear and euphoria, examining the ways in which these sustained the activists' efforts and their belief that collective action is possible. I paid particular attention to the use of "revolutionary" narratives connected with the Polish Solidarity movement as a rationale for engaging in actions of civil disobedience following the bans of gay and lesbian events in 2005. Importantly, the focus on emotions generated in the context of public encounters has allowed me to broaden Bernstein's concept of the identity deployment framework, where the activists' values and practices are subject to debate. In the context of these debates, this thesis has explored the ways in which activists' attachments to various ideological projects –

that is, the queer project and the Solidarity project- generated strong emotions. Thus, this thesis has demonstrated that the exploration of emotions is crucial to understanding the processes of public activism and answering my central question of how and why marches became a central focus for the movement. More specifically, I believe it is a relevant theoretical contribution to research focusing on the emotions of activism (Goodwin et al. 2001, Gould, 2001, 2002; Flam and King 2005, Brown and Pickerril 2009), which could be successfully applied to the analysis of other identity-based movements.

For the most part, the public encounters discussed in this thesis were both transitional and transformative moments – after all, they never lasted for longer than a couple of hours yet at the same time had a profound effect on everybody involved. One such moment was the Poznan March for Equality in 2007, which simultaneously closes off the period under investigation in this thesis and at the same time marks the beginning of my analysis. As I observed the event, I remember a rather hopeful and upbeat atmosphere, with the organisers feeling stronger and more secure after the success of the previous year's demonstration, which took place without any major disturbances. The peaceful atmosphere stayed with us all throughout the march, even though somebody I was marching next to remarked that we were walking really quickly, as if we just wanted to get it over and done with. There was a palpable sense of relaxation as we made it to our destination; especially as, unlike the previous year there was no sign of the right-wing activists "protecting" Freedom Square from "promotion of deviation". In a way, especially in the context of the previous marches in Poznan and elsewhere in Poland, this felt like coming full circle, especially in view of the underlying message of the event: "The March of Equality goes on". Thus, this thesis has attempted to chart the

significance of the rather symbolic journey to Freedom Square and to unravel the meanings of the activists' involvement in moments of mobilisation, where the aim was to challenge the appropriation of public space and understandings of citizenship by the oppressive mainstream ideologies.

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