Paragraph 175

A Comparative Study on Gay Life in East Germany, West Germany, and West Berlin

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Abstract

This paper introduces the gay cultural life of East and West Germany, mainly focusing on East and West Berlin, with a few outlooks from the capital. It makes a comparison between the firstly conservative than liberated West German society, the always sparkling and international West Berliner community, and the society supposedly suppressed by the socialist regime in East Germany.

I aim to confirm or reject the hypothesis that 45 years of different social conditioning and governing factors could not fundamentally change the lives and mechanisms of gay societies of the same roots on the two sides of the Wall, despite the merely different political ideological influences and legislation.

My research does not offer an ultimate answer and does not represent a full, generalizable picture of the observed era. It rather gives an insight, analyses certain interpretations and elaborates on some potential causal mechanisms, while offering alternative explanations for the observed phenomena.

It is as well an introductory, informative document and is willing to specify and define blind spots and further areas of research on this topic.
1. Introduction

In 1871, the German Criminal Code has defined homosexual acts between males as a crime. Paragraph 175, that included this decision, was only erased from the Criminal Code in 1994. In this period of more than a hundred years, homosexuality and LGBT people were prosecuted in many ways, on many levels – on the other hand, the law itself was also questioned multiple times. During the last years of the German Empire and in the Weimar Republic, Magnus Hirschfeld was a leading supporter of LGBT rights, founding the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee which argued against criminalization based on the thesis of the innate nature of homosexuality. Despite the fact that his petition was signed by 6,000 supporters, it has failed in the Reichstag. In the 1920’s, left-wing parties have also campaigned for the elimination of Paragraph 175, but right-wing powers have always defeated these initiatives. In the Nazi era, the law was strengthened in many dimensions, and the Gestapo were allowed to arrest people for homosexual acts even without proof or any supportive documentation. Most of them, at the end of their sentence were sent directly to concentration camps – which less than half of them survived.

After the Second World War, Germany has been divided into two parts, which were taken under different authorities and regulations. In the first years of West Germany, homosexual prosecution was practiced almost on the same level as before the War. In time, rules and execution were eased, but Paragraph 175 was only deleted way later, in 1994. In East Germany, the rules of Paragraph 175 were immediately eased to some extent and were deleted in 1957 (other rules still criminalized homosexual behaviour) after the establishment of the GDR, and homosexuality has been decriminalized in 1987, 7 years earlier than in West Germany. Despite these specifications, documentations and reminiscences tend to indicate that West German gays were more freed in their life and lifestyle, while East German gays were often chased and had a constant Sehnsucht for the West. After the reuniion of Germany and the deletion of Paragraph 175 in 1994, LGBT culture in Germany has publicly become one of the most lively and most inclusively extending throughout whole Europe.

My thesis deals most importantly with the period of the divided Germany. My perspective aims to observe the two sides of the Wall separately. On the one hand, besides the fact that West Germany represented a more „westernized”, modern way of social politics from the late 60’s, the society had, and still has to fight the stigmas
connected to the genocide of the Second World War, which involved prosecution of various minorities, including gay people. On the other hand, the GDR and socialist policies did not see individuality and diversity – including the aspects of sexuality – a favourable feature, accordingly LGBT communities were banned and socially unaccepted throughout most of the time of the regime.

Above circumstances suggest that these societies have developed significantly differently. But was 45 years of different social conditioning sufficient to blur the heritage of the common traditional and historical roots with respect to LGBT culture and the general approach to LGBT people?

This is the key question of my study, which I would like to find an answer for at the end of my research. Throughout the way, I would like to also present and get to know the LGBT culture and life of East and West Germany, especially as I found an extremely low amount of literature on the topic for West Germany, whereas East Germany has a lot of documentation and literature – I attempt to avoid this imbalance while investigating and interpreting the results.

Due to the nature of the topic, numerous sociological aspects will be observed and presented: sexuality, sexual revolution(s), Queer-theory, gender, prejudice, discrimination, social and political oppression, the significance of art, social conditioning, cultural and social norms, stigmatization, the situation of minorities, structure of communities, socio-economic status.

The thesis can be also considered as a case study on how suppressive regimes of hegemonic power – referring to the communist setup of East Germany – interact with emerging social pressure. I aim to discover and present whether social pressure towards social change on a certain issue is accelerating the weakening of suppression and intolerance, or vice versa: the possibilities of weakening hegemony give rise and room for social change to develop.

In addition to visiting museums and institutions in Berlin, I was also doing qualitative interviews on spot. My sample consists of 6 interviewees, who were living in Germany between the Second World War and the system changes – this means an age range of 45+ years. My subjects are gay men, who have been experiencing the LGBT life of both East and West Germany, and West Berlin. I am restricting my research to gay man, as lesbian women were usually not as chased and not as vulnerable because of
their sexuality in the concerning historical times. My interviewees were chosen to be well-educated in order to understand the aims of my study and provide with a multi-layer, rather narrative interview flow.

I did indeed look forward to the journey this research brought me on, as being part of the LGBT society I am very much interested in its historical aspects, especially in Germany, where I found the highest diversity and tolerance in an extremely lively environment. I also look forward to meet new people, listen to their stories, learn from them and document aspects that have not been documented yet.

2. Literature Review

2.1. An Introduction

The second half of the 20th century in the Western World was an extremely dense and active period in terms of social history: we could note for instance the fulfilment of feminist movements, a continuous discourse on the equality and integration of Afro-Americans in the United States, and the antecedents, the effects and consequences of antisemitism before, during and after the Second World War to the present. Undoubtedly, LGBT aspirations and culture as well had remarkable milestones in this era.

All these topics are ones that have a significant influence on how we perceive our environment in our everyday life and most importantly: how this perception shapes our individual evaluation and concept of society as a whole. Consequenting from the personal drivers that have an effect on how one’s identity is established, and then emplaced in a sociological aspect, the mentioned subjects – including homosexuality, especially intercepting with the history of the post-war Germany – have a great amount of literature from numerous professional and amateur authors, both often spiced with strong biases and different, sometimes conflicting interpretations, amongst which it is hard to coordinate and rationally distribute relevant and irrelevant, or correct and incorrect pieces of information.

2.2. A Social Historical Backbone
Thus, in order to build up a clear and credible picture of contemporary literature on the LGBT culture of East and West Germany, it is crucial to construct a wide but professional perspective, that is based on stable pillars of sociological theory. For this role, I have found a thorough study of The History of Sexuality by the French philosopher Michel Foucault, and The Homosexuality of Men and Women written by the German physician Magnus Hirschfeld essential. The former aims to provide with a universal historical overview on the dimensions of sexuality, while the latter zooms in a – for the observed era – contemporary but revolutional discourse on practiced homosexuality itself.

First of all, it is of paramount importance to note that The History of Sexuality is not uniquely focusing on the notion of homosexuality, although its findings and proposals are elementary bases of today’s gender- and queer-theory debates. The study consists of three volumes, written between 1976 and 1984.

The first volume argues that sexuality in general – in Western cultures – has been undermined, and changed its conceptual definition in the 17th century, and that it remained fairly unchanged until the beginning of the 20th century. The way it changed was, that the overall concept of sexuality and sexual life has been reduced to its one stereotypically evolutilonal function: reproduction. The narrowed perspective of considering sex only a biological asset of reproduction naturally consisted of regulating sexual behaviour to take effect only between the frameworks of marriage, and declared any manifestations of sexuality differing from the will of a married couple of a man and woman aiming to have children – such as homosexual acts - unnecessary and avoidable. From this conclusion, it was only a step to the invention of the concept of „sodomy”, and judge homosexual acts both socially and legally. It is also important to mention that the restriction of sexuality to its biological functions distanced sexuality from identity, which, according to Foucault, is an untrue inference. (Foucault, 2008)

We must bear in mind that there are multiple drivers of such sudden change in the trends of the overall perception of sexuality. In volume II Foucault states that the largest effect on society was made by the emergence of Judeo-Christianity. The most widespread interpretations of the Bible forbid and punish homosexuality, as well as it declares any sexual behaviour to be practiced in heterosexual marriage. Another aspect of the changing paradigms and the oppression of sexuality could be the appearance of the bourgeoisie. As opposed to the aristocratic order, members of the bourgeoisie earned
their position and wealth through hard work, which needed sacrifices and cut off on other activities in life – such as sexual activity. As members of the higher social strata were leading and constructing public taste and legislation, their opinion could be easily transferred to the whole population. Interconnecting to this theory, capitalism also comes to the picture, with its functionalist endeavours towards futurity: this aspect of Foucault’s research suggests that intentions for more efficient production and the elimination of unnecessary efforts – in the case of sexuality, human reproduction for more workforce – could also overshadow irreproductive ways of sexual behaviour, and could alienate sex as an act from a form of pleasure to a simple functionalist asset (Foucault, 2008).

In Foucault’s thoughts in the first volume, it is also remarkable how the notion of homosexuality developed in the 19th century, which had a two-sided effect on LGBT people. On the one hand, it had undeniably negative influence on their judgment: leaving the definition of sodomy only characterising a sexual act between same-sex individuals, the term „homosexual” has begun to label gays as a separate species, which involved treating homosexuality as a pathological condition of an individual, that, as such, emphasised the abnormality and treatability of this condition, not to mention the social exclusion it entailed. On the other hand, providing a categorical contour to homosexuality had a positive effect on homosexuals. By being labeled up, they could start to form a community and speak up against their oppression and misjudgement (Foucault, 2008).

Discourses and ideas of The History of Sexuality were groundbreaking and filling a serious niche in their age, providing completely new perspectives of sexuality, identity, and their relation to society. In this study, Foucault’s work is essential to give a historical and sociological context to the observation of LGBT people of Germany. His theories help to explain what dynamics lead to the criminalisation of homosexuality, and they shed a light on what kinds of social conditioning mechanisms built up the notion of homosexuality, that has become a strong traditional factor for the time we entered the 20th century. We must bear in mind, however, that in a modern, 21st century analysis, some of Foucault’s concepts do not stand anymore. The categorisation of homosexuality as a static, innate feature has been challenged already in the 20th century by Queer theory, in parallel with the emergence of gender studies. Queer theory, providing a fluidity and undefinability to sexuality and identity, thinking away from
labelling one’s sexual preferences or identity is an idea that conflicts and refutes some of Foucault’s views – as this will be indicated and detailed later on in this study (Kinsey, 1953). The separation of biological sex and gender as a social construct and the definition of transsexuality are ones that develop the views of Foucault on femininity, masculinity and homosexuality to a level that was not discovered or defined in his age. Feminist approaches have directly criticized his approach to empowerment: “A feminist analysis of power would dispute both Foucault's view that sexual identities should not form the basis for lesbian and gay struggles and third-wave Foucauldian feminists' assertion that the category of "women" should be displaced from the center of feminist politics.” (Monique Deveaux: Feminism and Empowerment, Feminist Studies, Vol. 20, No. 2, Women's Agency: Empowerment and the Limits of Resistance, 243)

Thus, while leaving his work as a universal base of any study connected to homosexual history, we need to stay critical and challenge his views with the latest sociological studies.

2.3. A Local Historical Research

In the German Empire, - in accordance with the mechanisms described and argued by Foucault - homosexual acts between males have been officially criminalised in 1871. Shortly after this time, Magnus Hirschfeld started his work, aiming to discover more about homosexuality, to help homosexual people, and to change the overall perception and notion of homosexuality within society. His work is especially important with relation to this study, as he was investigating and working on the German population. Amongst other functions that will be mentioned later in the study, the physician wrote The Homosexuality of Men and Women, published in 1914. In the first part of the book Hirschfeld built up a complicated system of categorisation of people into homosexual, bisexual and heterosexual classes, and he also divided sexual acts into different categories (e.g. mutual masturbation, oral sexual intercourse, anal sexual intercourse). Afterwards, he conducted a research with over 10,000 homosexual people, aiming to understand the nature and distribution of their sexual behaviour. The size of his study is incomparable to anything else of its age. His methodology of research was a great example to follow or to take ideas from for this study, as the research phase was taking place in the same geographical location, Berlin, and the exact topic and some questions were partly intercepting with his earlier concept. A significant note is, that from the size
of the sample, it would be evident to conclude that his methodology was rather qualitative, but au contraire, he conducted actual interviews with the participants. He also analysed the interviews in the first part and concludes with categories of different drivers of homosexual acts. According to Hirschfeld, homosexual behaviour is not always caused by an innate, unchangeable characteristic – conflicting to Foucault’s theories in Volume I, he widens the root causes and includes homoerotic acts between friends to his perspective under the term „pseudohomosexuality”. He also discovers examples of transvestitism, bisexuality and uses the term of hermaphroditism to describe his „patients”, shaping the LGBT dictionary of identities and sexual preferences (Hirschfeld, 2000).

In the second part, he is discussing homosexuality from a scientific approach, examining anthropological and zoological factors, opening the platform for evolutionary debates on homosexuality (Hirschfeld, 2000).

To conclude, The Homosexuality of Men and Women is an inevitable opus for this study, due to the fact that the research it is based on was conducted on the population of the same country, with similar criteria, only half a century earlier than the examined era of the study, providing a clear picture on homosexuals of the united Weimar Republic. Comparisons made between conclusions of this paper and Hirscheld’s studies give a great insight on how tendencies and perception of homosexuality were shaped during and between the Wars. One thing that is significant to point out is that Hirschfeld mixed men and women in his statistics, making it impossible to evaluate the two genders separately. Also, we must bear in mind that Hirschfeld had a strong bias in his evaluations. It is clearly visible that he was not fully able to apply the rule of social imagination, and as in his civil life he was member of the gay community and was also campaigning for the acceptance of homosexuality, some of his scientific implications can be considered one-sided or questionable.

2.4. An East German Context

After summarising the most relevant classic schools and studies connected to the main topic, we need to dig deeper in the literature of LGBT culture in East and West Germany. While collecting the literature describing exactly the observed era, it was crucial to find articles for both sides of the Wall, which could be easily compared and
which include information not only on cultural and everyday life topics, but also on legal and official regulations, and more importantly, on how the execution of these legislations of each governments worked out in practice.

A great source of information concerning the East German arrangements is an essay by Kyle Frackman, from the University of British Columbia. *Coming out of the Iron Closet: Contradiction in East German History and Film* was published in 2013 and is analysing the situation of gay people through the movie *Coming Out* by Heiner Carow. Frackman first provides with the theoric context: shares some of Foucault’s thoughts presented above, complementing it with the theory of power-relations in society. Overall, he concludes in accordance with Foucault’s thoughts that history and tradition has a strong effect on one’s existence, adding up to the predefined and innate biological values of a body: “The body is molded by a great many distinct regimes; it is broken down by the rhythms of work, rest, and holidays; it is poisoned by food or values, through eating habits or moral laws; it constructs resistances (“Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” by Michel Foucault 87)” (Frackman, 2013). This is a significant point which helps us to understand the sociological aim of my whole comparative study.

I find it challenging to contrast the East and West German gay society with the knowledge that despite the fact that legislation and official policies were merely different - providing differing direct social conditioning factors on both sides - bodies and communities of gay people of both sides were bearing the same scars of history: the one examined and documented by Hirschfeld in the early 20th century, and the one surviving - or, by chance, not surviving - the traumas of the Nazi regime and World War II.

After providing with Foucault’s ideological context to the study, Frackman aims to point out that gay life in general was extremely contradicting in East Germany. Homosexuality between males became criminalised in 1871 in the German Empire (he does not mention that this was put in effect under the infamous act of Paragraph 175). The essential part of Frackman’s reasoning is that gay policies and actions of the government were certainly ambivalent. After World War II, the socialists-led East Germany missed to re-implement these measurements in their legislation due to the fact that Paragraph 175 was modified by the Nazis in the 1930’s and its then current construction was attributed to them. Thus, homosexuality was decriminalised in East Germany legally from 1968. (Legislations and detailed timeline of the LGBT revolution
on both sides of the Wall will be discussed later on in this paper.) Decriminalisation of homosexuality can be considered as a propaganda move, he says, representing to the West modern ideologies and advanced thinking. In practice, homosexual aspirations and communities were banned and executed, and the Stasi drew special attention on them even in the early 1980’s. What the socialist system did not take into consideration was, that the advertisement of “consumer socialism” and “socialism without taboos” would bring individuality, and as such, homosexuality on the surface (Frackman, 2013).

The first Homosexual Interest Group was founded in 1974, meeting strong state opposition. Surprisingly, gay communities found shelter in the evangelist church, where different so-called “work-groups” were organized, as it was the only place which was not under strong state or secular supervision. It is needless to mention that these groups were still monitored and often sabotaged by the Stasi. In a book by Denis M. Sweet, The Church, the Stasi, and Socialist Integration: Three Stages of Lesbian and Gay Emancipation in the Former German Democratic Republic these mechanisms are expressed in a very detailed manner. The appearance of gay communities, bars, clubs and other meeting points and their oppression and sabotage by the Nazi accompanies the cultural life of the whole era in an action-reaction manner. As opposed to homosexuality coming to the surface it is important to note that homosexuality did not exist in official communication. One exception mentioned by Frackman and found by Sweet is, that “After East Germany signed the 1974 Helsinki Accords, however, which guaranteed the human right of applying to emigrate, “homosexuality” was secretly an acceptable reason for the approval of applications to emigrate to West Germany (Sweet, “The Church, the Stasi, and Socialist Integration” 353; cf. Pieper 65)”. From this information it is clearly visible that for the socialist state, the phenomenon of homosexuality was an uncomfortable and impracticable one, and in occasions they could eliminate representatives of this phenomenon, they indeed made use of the opportunity.

Another crucial and niche-filling viewpoint of the essay is the declaration of why homosexual women are often left out from these specifications - Frackman himself is also mentioning mostly men in his analysis. He correctly concludes that most historic aspirations on banning, punishing or eliminating were exclusively against men, and were mostly not influencing lesbianism. He quotes two lesbian activists from 1990, Christina Schenk and Marina Körzendörfer, who state that lesbians are disregarded
besides gays the way women are disregarded besides men, and that the knowledge gained about gay men anyway does not help to know more about lesbian women as they are different socio-psychologically (Frackman, 2013). In my view, this is a completely wrong conclusion. The lack of legal prosecution on lesbianism lies in the fact that lesbianism is significantly less visible in everyday life, than male homosexuality. Its reasons lie in the setup of patriarchal society, where homoerotic acts between women are fetishised, and the same acts between men since the 17th century (referring back to Foucault and *The History of Sexuality*) are regarded as the defilement of dominant masculinity. Also, as official, famous, influential characters were usually men, their private life was more visible and detectable, as opposed to women, whose traditional gender roles kept them in the background. Accordingly, for a long time, lesbianism remained unknown for the public. We also have to mention that the statement of Schenk and Körzendörfer from 1990 on how women and men are different either sociologically or psychologically is a strong opposition of any contemporary finding or fundamental foundation of gender-based studies.

The essay of Frackman has a strong philosophical background, which is in correlation with the paradigms and courses lines of this study. Its analysis based on the movie *Coming Out* helps us to develop on overall picture on how homosexuality was handled in East Germany and references a great amount of literature to look for additional information on each segments of these issues. It is an excellent starting point for anyone who is interested in the topic and has to orient themselves into more specific subtopics. However, its historic documentation is lacking important milestones (such as Paragraph 175, or the phases of decriminalisation of homosexuality) and some of its ideas can be questioned from a 2019 point of view - despite the fact that the essay was written very recently, in 2013.

Denis M. Sweet from Bates College was mentioned in connection with the previous literature. For this study, his work *A Literature of “Truth”: Writing by Gay Men in East Germany*, published in 1998 is a great input to observed policies of the East German state on homosexuality in the latter days of the socialist system, in the late 1980’s. It is significant to differentiate the last years of the regime from the earlier ones, as policies and approach to this topic has significantly changed.

Especially from the second half of the decade, starting from 1987-88, LGBT related works such as movies, publications, medical literature were to some extent permitted
and advertised. This was extremely contradictory to the official statements of the socialist party, still existing and being advertised in the early 1980’s. One reason for this sudden about-turn is that the emerging gay right movements of the West has reached the socialist bloc, placing an increasing internal/external pressure towards more permissive legislation and official communication, making it impossible to handle the topic as non-existent or taboo.

As for examples of publications and media works, Sweet mentions the movie Coming out, which was a huge milestone in gay right fights (Sweet, 1998).

A longer, detailed analysis is included from a work of Ulrich Berkes, *Eine Schlimme Liebe (A Nasty Love)* which is an openly homosexual writing in diary form, which is recalling and is relating to the poems of Isidore Ducasse, a 19th century French poet, writing mainly about homosexuality. Sweet proceeds with lengthy analysis of the diary. From the perspective of our study, the remarkable message of his article is that besides the described pressure caused by the rise of LGBT interest groups, the promotion of homosexuality was an actual interest of the socialist state to catch up with the West and represent socialist policies in a better, more modern color, and that Berkes finds a great amount of the published literature heavily biased and manipulated. In these works, he argues, lifeway of protagonists are often presented in a way that in the pre-socialist era, before and during World War II, they were forced to hide or fight their identity, but the socialist government has released them from their tribulation with its policies on total integration of everyone to the community. In personal interviews with homosexuals, Sweet seems to discover manipulated, or maybe artificially added threads in these writings directly promoting the socialist state. He quotes from the interview collection of Jürgen Lenke, *Ganz Normal Anders (Quite Normal but Different)* amongst others, for example, as following: “I was politically educated enough to know that such things were impossible under the new conditions. It didn’t go without conflicts, but living was no longer highly dangerous” - contrasting the socialist policies on homosexuality to the fascist policies of the Nazi era (Lemke, 1990).

On the other hand, Sweet suggests that the promotion and acceptance of homosexuality in the late 1980’s was not only an asset of socialist propaganda, but it was also based on completely fake presentation of the reality. He lays stress on the fact that informers of the Stasi were still placed in gay communities, informing the state constantly on their current situation and conspiracies, and supporter lists and attendees
of gay church groups were reported to the secret police. He contrasts the public advertisement of tolerance and support to the reports of members of a working group, Lesbians of the Church, who had several difficulties in organising events or commemorations as a group, and were also exposed to heavy persecution, including verbal and physical humiliation (Sweet, 1998).

The points of Sweet are significant for everyone studying this subject from multiple perspectives: it is of paramount importance to be aware that some of the literature - even personal interviews, by chance - can be manipulated, and researchers have to handle them with an appropriate level of criticism. We also must bear in mind that while interviewing homosexual individuals from this era, they might have been part of the Stasi informer network, which fact they might not reveal due to a feeling of shame or fear of judgement. Thus, we need to be very careful with questions on reporting and the secret police. Just as personal interviews, official communication of the socialist party has to be also questioned, as seen through the reports of the Lesbians of the Church, reality could be presented in an alternative way. This is a niche field of interview that needed and needs to be investigated through more personal interviews with East German homosexuals, in order to have a clear picture of the actual reality of their everyday life including their security, persecution or acceptance.

However, we need to declare that Sweet does not build on factual knowledge regarding the socialist manipulation of LGBT publications and he only suggests that these had happened. Thus, while reusing this information we always need to bear in mind not to handle this information gained without any criticism as the proven, true reality.

2.5. **Sexual Revolution and AIDS in West Germany**

While seeking material for any research interested in this topic, it is impossible not to immediately realize that East Germany - probably due to its controversial policies and hyped and often researched socialist system order - has a great amount of literature on LGBT aspects, as opposed to West Germany, that has very few documented literature to be found. It became also an aim of this study to shed light and explore more of the former West German gay scene through interviews and other forms of research.
In general it can be said that as West Germany was not isolated from the rest of Western Europe and the United States, thus, with information and ideologies spreading around internationally, the country was not excluded from the circulation of gender revolution, or feminist and gay right movements - as opposed to East Germany, that had a ban on these aspirations and its civilians were often not even aware of the current sociological happenings of the World. Gay life in general was less threatening, more open, and consequently was a hotbed of perspectival improvement.

Homosexuality was decriminalised in West Germany in 1969, although consent age was marked at a minimum of 21 years (then in 1973 to 18 years), as opposed to heterosexual acts, where consent could be given from 14 years of age. Thus, equality was not fully achieved and criminalisation of homosexual acts were slightly included in legislation and were finally abolished and rights were equalised only in the 1990’s (as a side note, later than in East Germany). Of course, early partly decriminalisation indicate a much more open and freer society than the one on the other side of the Wall. An article by Craig Griffiths, *Sex, Shame, and West German Gay Liberation*, written in 2016, explains that West German homosexuals had significantly different problems than the ones described above concerning East German gays. Unfortunately the author does not give permission to directly cite from his work, but a brief summary of its points relevant to this study is definitely useful.

As for one of his essential points, he mentions multiple internal conflicts within the gay community. One of them being the opposition of “homophiles” to “gays”, which is a debate that - as per my experiences - can be witnessed even in contemporary daily discussions. According to the ones identifying themselves as “homophiles”, labeling ourselves as “gay” (or in the context, “schwule”) is a way of instant discrimination of the self, and an unnecessary labeling that prevents total integration to society. Au contraire, ones identifying as “gays” joined the gay pride movements’ ideologies, arriving to Europe with all the topics of sexual liberation and revolution. These groups declared that homosexuals should be proud of their identity and have to be coming out of the closet to show themselves as homosexuals in public.

Griffith also opines that leftist movements, gay liberation, and the general sexual revolution of the 1970’s contributed to the emergence of interest groups of different sexual minorities strongly associated with the gay community, resulting in more increasing disputes within the community. One of these groups are pedophiles. The rise
of their community can be considered as a renaissance of Ancient Greek culture, where experienced and wealthy middle-aged men sought partners amongst very young (10-18 years old) boys. From the side of the older party, the interest was rather sexual, but the younger partner could also benefit from the relationship in multiple aspects: not only were they in existential security but they could also learn from a more experienced person both sexually and intellectually.

The problem here is that of course the notion of “consent” cannot be clearly declared from a young boy before or during puberty, as numerous manipulating factors and complexes can be interfering with his straight will. As mentioned before, minimum age of consent of male to male sexual intercourse was legally set as 21, then as 18 years of age, but pedophile interest groups were publicly fighting for its abolishment in the name of sexual revolution and free rights. According to Griffith, observing the gay newspapers of the age, nude photos of young boys have taken over the considered-to-be general gay public taste. On the one hand, LGBT groups were supporting these aspirations partly due to solidarity and partly due to the fact that many members of the gay society were involved in practices connected to intergenerational sexual desire, on the other hand, more conservative - or rational, to say - gays worried that publicity of a direct connection, nevertheless, an equation mark between homosexuality and pedophilia does not necessarily improve the judgment of LGBT people. These concerns were grounded and supported by the fact that according to Griffith there were multiple noted occasions of gay men losing their job or being discriminated negatively just because they were - most likely mistakenly - associated with pedophilia.

Another emerging subcultural group originating from homosexuality was sadomasochism. The reason it is significant to mention this point is, that the author discovers a correlation between the paramount significance of sadomasochism in West German gay society and the Nazi dictatorship and legislation. He argues that - as a tragic sort of cultural heritage - the gay society that was humiliated, prosecuted, tortured, and oppressed by the Nazi executions, is now subconsciously trying to process their collective traumas with internally fetishising them. He reports an extreme confession as an example of an individual who states to masturbate while fantasising about SS soldiers torturing his body. We need to handle the whole idea with criticism, but undeniably, until today, fetishism and sadomasochism is an essential part of the gay
culture in Germany, with more practitioners, supporters and events - advertised and undertaken very openly - than anywhere else around the World.

Griffith also attributes a negative effect to the appearance and opening of gay clubs adjusting to the ideologies of free sexuality: dark rooms, open cruising areas and other openly sex-positive meeting points, he says, intensify the overall belief - both from external, heterosexual and internal, homosexual parties - that gay men are not likely to engage in long relationships and are generally not interested in the intellectual spheres, and are only interested in sexuality.

The reasoning of Griffith provides us with a detailed insight on what problems the LGBT community of West Berlin had to face on the one hand originating from its extreme liberal environment, on the other hand, from its dark and irreversible past traumas. However, it is inevitable to notice that his statements are not supported by elaboration of sociological and psychological principles, thus it gives us an impression of semi-professionalism. It would have been great do draw the line that sado-masochism is not considered as a pathological condition in the 21st century, but pedophilia is. We also must bear in mind, that despite the very dramatic picture it paints on the internal feuds and issues of the gay community, we should not forget that West Germans still lived in a significantly more supportive and open-minded society while East German gay communities were hiding in church working groups fearing sabotage and legal consequences could only dream about.

An aspect that is not mentioned by Griffith is, however, that before 1969, homosexuals of West Germany suffered from the post-war remains of Nazi legislation. This is a perspective that is presented in the first half of Political Activism and AIDS Activism Among Gay Men in Berlin, written by Michael Bochow. According to Bochow, until 1969, 50 000 homosexuals were persecuted in West Germany. It is also remarkable that as opposed to Jewish victims, homosexual victims of concentration camps received no compensation from the state afterwards, furthermore, their time spent in the camps was deducted from their pension funds. Under these circumstances, gay people were the most likely to commit suicide from the whole society.

Bochow describes in detail how student activist groups incorporated homosexuality amongst other reasons of protest in 1967: young people influenced by the liberal Western ideologies stood up against the conservative atmosphere of West Germany. Most judges and high position officials were still the ones that earlier served the Nazi
ideologies, and most bases of legislation were also a heritage of pre-World War policies.

With the success of the aspirations to clear out the conservative and narrow-minded policies and public taste, the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality, West German society became less and less homophobic. In addition to the aspects mentioned by Griffith, Bochow emphasises that West Germany had a so outstandingly rich gay cultural life, that it was attracting many international tourist to West Berlin and the bigger West German cities.

The exponential rise of liberal and supportive LGBT environment was suddenly stopped in 1983, shortly after the first cases of HIV infection and AIDS have been diagnosed. Firstly, apolitical interest groups launched the initial organisation of AIDS-Hilfe in West Germany, that was after reactively financially supported by a fortunately liberalist state health policy. The article does not mention how the spread of AIDS set back the acceptance of LGBT people in West Germany, despite the fact that it is an important aspect of LGBT history on an international level. Almost everywhere around the World, AIDS was identified with homosexuality, was called the “gay plague”, and segregated many completely harmless gay to social exclusion - simply due to the lack of information on transmission of HIV. (These statements will be explained in details and supported by factual information within the evaluation of individual interviews.) The article contrasts that on the contrary, East Germany was not heavily affected by the AIDS boost of the late 1980’s. Bochow finds that the characteristics of tourism were merely different in East Germany, not significantly involving connection with people - including sexuality -, was rather focusing on sight-seeing and cultural activities, resulting in the fact that infections were not brought in the country by tourists.

It was also one fortunate side effect of East Germany’s less developed gay life that in lack of meeting points, clubs, and open discussions on sexuality, HIV practically did not have a proper platform to spread around. Of course, in a slower manner it has appeared in the communist areas, and the first AIDS help groups were organised by the Church.

Bochow’s article gives a great contrast to Griffith in terms of the post-war situation of homosexuals in West Germany, and is providing a detailed explanation on the process of shift from conservatism and homophobia through liberalism and general tolerance. It is unfortunate, however, that he does not mention in depth how this
tolerance was partly broken down with the spread of HIV due to the misinterpretation of the virus and lack of information or state communication.

The books and articles analysed satisfied all the functions that were dedicated to them: we got to understand what philosophic, historic, and theoretic background homosexuality has in Central and Western Europe. It is now coherently presented how everyday life was different in East and West Germany, what legislations gave framework to LGBT initiatives to exist - or not to. We have also discovered what are the niche subject for each topic that need to be further investigated either by individual interviews or bibliographical research.

3. **Research Methodology**

In studies where researchers are interested in objective data to support a hypothesis, a well-planned quantitative data collection in an ideal case provides with the sufficient amount of rationalised information that drives to a clear conclusion.

However, my topic requires a more complex research with results that cannot be objectified. Conducting research on an abstract topic is always complex and can be controversial. The reason for that is that narrative perspectives of memories, feelings and experiences have to be handled in an interpretivist way, within their context, with reservations, with an understanding of the background of the actual dynamics of the society within which the research is conducted. Also, these factors require a high level of empathy and emotional intelligence.

For a comprehensive understanding of the context of my study, I was doing research in libraries and museums for data, articles and historical documentations on its subject, comparing conflicting information, evaluating its reliability and was creating a literature review that includes all the verified and valuable information. In this document, all resources should be noted, and all citations should be punctually quoted and marked for the trackability of data.

My research consisted of 6 qualitative interviews with German gay men, with questions concerning their experiences on LGBT life and culture in West and East Germany, and in West Berlin. The aim was to compare their circumstances on both sides of the Wall, and get to a conclusion of whether it was significantly different under differing social conditioning and governing factors. Later, the research got extended by
an interview with and expert on this topic, Judit Takács, who drew a global framework around the picture of Germany and helped understanding the social processes of the 20th century through various aspects. To recap 6 interviews were conducted with gay men and in addition, for further clarifications, two experts were interviewed.

The ethics of the research can be questioned and examined on multiple points of the Code of Ethics of the International Sociological Association. First of all, some may wonder why only gay men are involved in the study. This decision is due to the fact that historically women suffered less from homophobia, partly because of the fetishisation of lesbianism and partly of the less visibility on lesbian sexual behaviour. Prosecution on all parts of Germany was as well mostly concentrating on homosexual men.

It was also essential for me as a researcher to ensure that I did not involve myself emotionally in the data gathering process. As experiences and thoughts of my interviewees were sometimes easily relatable to my life experiences, I had to somewhat distance myself from the personal context in order to maintain the appropriate and neutral engagement level between the participants and myself. Of course, my strategies did not always succeed, but personal involvement helped gaining more information and personal experiences.

In the beginning, participants were told that their participation was voluntary, moreover, that they may decline to answer any of my questions. The latter could be important at questions that might have brought up emotional or more private information that the participant would not share, or would not talk about.

Anonymity is always of paramount importance with regards to any kind of researches, but there can be more factors appearing connected to this topic that determines strictly its significance: some people may not have come out as homosexual publicly, or might have private medical conditions (such as HIV, AIDS) that some of the questions reveal, and publication of such information would be unethical, and would even influence the life of the individual in a negative way.

Finally, as long narrative interviews are conducted, recording of the sessions was useful for me for further evaluation, but this had to be also confirmed with each and every participant.

All this information is marked, explained, and asked for consent in the Informed Letter and Consent Form of the study (See Appendix).

Due to the above described reasons in the beginning, qualitative interviews were used for this topic. The interviews consisted of 30-35 questions, some of them
depending on answers of previous questions. In the beginning, in order to gather basic information and warm up the interviewee, I arranged statistical questions on age, occupation, etc. While continuing, the questions lead deeper into personal experiences of LGBT life, communities, living in mass society as a homosexual, then turning to experiences on political and legal aspects, partnerships and HIV. As some of these subtopics are sensitive and extremely private, it was essential, to ensure on the one hand a private environment for the interviews, on the other hand, a supportive atmosphere from my side. Preferably in the home of the interviewees, in a separate room - which also gave comfort and confidence. These factors were useful, as my goal was to reach a flow in which the questions are only guiding the conversation which should be a rather narrative storytelling of the interviewees. In order to increase the confidence and gain the trust of the interviewee, it was advisable for me as researcher to slightly introduce my involvement in the topic, and the reasons for my interest, creating a common context that increases sympathy and understanding on both sides. However, again, criteria on objective and neutral interview conditions must be kept.

I found it important to notify the interviewee once my questions were asked and encourage him to add anything that he might find relevant to the topic. The strength of this research approach is, that – in an ideal scenario - information gathered cannot be misinterpreted of misunderstood. With an empathetic and understanding approach, any contextual nuance can be seen and perceived through narratives, as opposed to a dry, informative, statistical analysis. This ensures a great basis for an interpretivist evaluation afterwards. Systematic errors are also hard to make, as interviews are performed after each other, one by one, giving the possibility that after realising that some questions are not in order, or not relevant as much as thought before, can be changed or cancelled for the next interviews. Also, as reflections and awareness was constant in me throughout the whole interview progress, small details could be changed mid-interview, if questions were already answered or were losing their relevance.

A weakness of the research is that it is not representative. As every interview took approximately 30 to 60 minutes, and I had to travel abroad to conduct them properly, only a very limited amount of information could be gathered. Also, as my interviewees were requested to recommend further interviewees to this project due to my restricted access to the observed community, it is possible that participants will be chosen from the same, or very similar social strata, therefore not authentically reflecting a full picture of the German gay society of the late 20th century. Hence, my interviews
often include questions that requests the interviewee to also try to remember conditions of other weak ties of theirs from the era, especially if they had knowledge on significantly different experiences of people in some issues.

A further opportunity of the research is, to discover the spread of HIV in the 1980’s in Europe. A complex question was included in the interview regarding this, but after my first interview experiences it was visible that there were significant differences in spreading of HIV between West and East Germany, and in West Berlin. An aspect for this could be, that the virus reached Germany from West Europe and the U.S., and in globalised countries it was spreading fast due to travel possibilities, international business and in general, due to the more liberalism and liquidity of society. On the other hand, HIV spreading around in East Germany was not as significant in the 1980’s. It has been a real threat after the collapse of the Wall and the system changes, when the Second World has rejoin the circulation of world economy and society. Such comparison - which is given in my study - could lead to surprising discoveries, not directly related to the original study topic.

As per the threats of the study, I cannot find any perspectives which would influence society, the participants or myself in a negative way. All feedbacks so far are positive.

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Summary

Following the methodological overview of my research, let us have a closer look on its exact environment and the data gathered. All six interviews were recorded in Berlin, two in November, 2018, and four of them in February, 2019. Most of the sessions were held in private homes of the interviewees, with an exception of a gay bar which was ran by the interviewee himself. In general it can be said that all participants were happy to take part in the study and were enthusiastic to vivify their memories. All of them gave consent to voice recording, which gave me confidence and exclusive attention to the conversation. Three sessions were held in English, two in German with the help of a translator, and one in Hungarian. The table below represents the information of the interviewees with fictional names that will be used throughout the paper.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>West Berlin</td>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>East Germany</td>
<td>Hochschule</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aaron</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>Brazilian and German</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Brazil, then West Berlin</td>
<td>Hochschule</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umberto</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>West Germany, then West Berlin</td>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>Divorced, in a relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>East Germany, then West Berlin</td>
<td>Hochschule</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zachary</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Budapest, then West Berlin</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The age of the interviewees varied from 58 years to 81. One of them is divorced (a heterosexual marriage) but is currently in a long term homosexual relationship, two of them are legally married in a homosexual relationship. The remaining three of the subjects are currently single. All of them define themselves as gay. With one exception, all participants have been enrolled in tertiary education and completed either Hochschule or Universität. Between 1945 and 1990, James lived only in East Germany and East Berlin, Michael moved from East Berlin to West Berlin in 1986, John was born in West Berlin and always lived there except for the period of the Second World War, Aaron moved to West Berlin from Brazil in 1969, Umberto was raised in West Germany and later he moved to West Berlin and has lived there since - with a 6 years pause of living in France -, and Zachary moved to West Berlin from Budapest in 1984. Almost all participants from West Berlin reported that they have been visiting East Berlin often - which provided me with an indepth understanding of the differences in gay life between the two sides of the city.

In general, it can be concluded that these men remembering back to their lives, overall had no major issues connected to, or originating from their sexual orientation. Most of the conversations had the same, nostalgic manner when it came to questions on their everyday life, work and entertainment activities, independently from their place of
residence. It is of paramount importance, however, to be critical towards such interpretations. While zooming in and discussing particular topics more in-depth and in details, it almost always turned out that by ruling out the lustrum of positive memories, we may shed light on darker segments of their past.

4.2. **Offering a Structural Setup**

If we intend to structure, how and on how many levels these gay men needed to fight for tolerance and acceptance in their everyday life on the individual level - just as any given sexual minority in any given time of modern history - we need to categorize the different social environments in which the individual interacts with others. First, there is the family, with whom we have primary relations, which setting cannot be changed. We also have a home which is placed within a narrow physical environment (neighborhood, block of flats, village) that is not usually interchangeable, but has a huge effect on our daily life. Then we have school and workplace, which environments are also somewhat dependent on our physical location. Concerning tertiary education and workplace, one does already have a certain level of choice or selection, not to mention that professional interests and mindsets might overlap and indicate a similar worldview, but there is still an obligation of cooperation with people we would not cooperate with otherwise. With spontaneous relations such as friendship, we are easier to maneuver as a friend circle is usually chosen to be a group of like-minded people. But gay people need to fight their micro-coming outs on all the other platforms, always pre-negotiating the reactions and their potential consequences on their daily life. I am presenting the results of my research along with this framework.

4.3. **Being Gay in Germany - Family and Education**

Analysing the results from this perspective, we immediately see how family is one of the most important segments of one’s acceptance as a homosexual individual. A typology we can conclude is that most subjects did have issues in their family originating from their sexual orientation, regardless if they were raised in West Germany, West Berlin, East Germany - or in case of the two immigrants - Brazil or Hungary. Only one respondent, Michael gave a neutral answer to the question on his coming out to his family. The most common coping mechanism for such situations in the family was simply not to talk about it openly, although they admitted that the relatives “"[they] noticed time by time"” (John). A rather complex extreme for this
phenomenon can be discovered in the response of Umberto, raised in the countryside of West Germany:

"(...) Even there we did not talk about it. I think it was an agreement between my parents and me: I don't talk about the time of Hitler with them, and they don't talk about me being gay. I now have the impression that it was like this. We never talked about those two things. It was quite a part of our lives and we tolerated it and accepted it like this."

One could argue that this dynamic is an impeccable representation of the internal social pressure of the late 60’s of West Germany. As mentioned in connection with the Bochow article, student movements emerging in 1967 in West Germany had a primary aim to implement liberal, westernized values to the West German society that was still drowning in the conservative, obscurantist remains of Nazi ideologies. Outside of Germany, we may simply credit this to the global paradigm shift from modernity towards postmodernity, but Germany and especially West Germany, in this case bears more hidden layers of the process. The quoted setup is an astounding social construct, which is hardly constructive at either end: the old generation is aware of their irreversible and unforgivable sins of fascism, and - partly understandably - they do not want to talk about these memories. (What could they say?) On the other hand, they are still living in a world of conservative values. In this environment, homosexuality is still a sin, which they cannot comprehend or accept. The younger generation demands answers and explanation for the Nazi era and does not want to live under the weight of the sins of the previous generation. In case of this homosexual son, the contract is evident. I am not demanding answers, you are not demanding answers. A status quo that does not lead to development.

Umberto also reports that as he realized his sexuality relatively late, at the age of 26, he already had a family and they also represented a passive approach to his coming out: "he [the son] knows that I am gay, his mother knew that I was gay, without that we talked about, that was a very special point in my life".

Michael from West Berlin did not come out to his family either and he described the reasons as follows: "[the family was] very conservative, in a social way they were very simple (...) my father had a very negative conception of homosexual people (...) homosexual people do not succeed in life (...) in a business career". Revelation of such statements from close family members have a more significant effect on one’s life than we would expect. Despite the fact that Michael reported that he had “mentors” within
the gay community, who introduced and socialised him to the gay community, the weight of his actual parent’s statement did not seem to ease. While inquiring if he had any insecurity in his life originating from his sexuality, he said: “I had doubt if I could be a teacher”. Later, he admits how much help it gave him that in the public school of West Berlin where he was working, his colleagues supported him in this matter. He mentioned that working with high school students was sometimes difficult with being gay because “at a certain age, they realize it really fast”. He evoked an incident where his colleagues, without ever talking about his sexual orientation, protected him from an inconvenient situation: [one of his colleagues said:] "please be aware that on the blackboard it is written Mr. P. is gay (...) and this was a good sign, because I was prepared”.

Continuing with experiences connected to high schools, we may notice from the sample that classic examples of school bullies are absent. Some may say that the modern school bully is an invention of the 21st century. While cruelty of children is not a modern phenomenon, we must admit that on one hand the Internet and the appearance of cyberbullying is an accelerating factor for such insults. One could also argue that as these men came out to themselves as gay reportedly late (most of them after the age of 19), they did not have that much chance for sexual orientation-related bully in high school. 21st century kids, who - due to weakening social constraints, conservativity, and increasing accessibility to role models and stories over media and the Internet - come out as early as at 13-16, and on average 17 years of age (Stonewall Survey, 2017).

Respondents involved in tertiary education already give insight to a more open community. Those completing Hochschule in East Berlin said that they generally had a more accepting and more gay-focused atmosphere because of their choice of studies: James studied design, Michael studied to be decorator. He reports that “who went studying to be a decorator [as a boy], that was gay. There was no problem with that [there].” Their friends from university also knew their sexual orientation, and they already started to develop their gay community network - we will see later how and where these contacts were born. In general it can be said, that the choice of studies helped a lot for them to place themselves in an environment where they had no serious issues in relation to their sexuality.

Respondents completing higher education in West Berlin said that at university, regardless of their fields of studies, they had several openly gay classmates, and they were more concentrated in certain extracurricular activities, such as theatre groups.
Aaron, who moved to Berlin from Brazil to study tourism contrasts his experiences to Brazil: "I felt very free here (...) I had no problem (...) In Brazil I always had to hide".

### 4.4. Suppressed Gay Life in East Berlin

Of course, the most part of the interviews consisted of the adult experiences of the interviewees, including workplace experiences and entertainment. Here, we can observe significant differences between the life in East and West Berlin. Referring back to the literature discussed earlier, we must understand that legally, homosexuality was decriminalized earlier in East Germany, accordingly its legal background was less strict than in West Germany and West Berlin, but still, homosexuality as a type of otherness was not welcome by the conformist ideologies of communism, and as such, was closely monitored and controlled.

James worked in East Berlin as a designer, he reports that he never in his life came out at his workplace, despite the fact that the artist environment could have provided him with a more diverse and understanding atmosphere. He mentions that from his clothes it was obvious that he was gay, and regardless of his secrecy, he did suffer negative consequences: "I was employed (...) and there were bad remarks (...) in meinen act (...) all the other colleagues were asked about their opinion and one said that I think J. is homosexual (...) because of my clothes". In the socialist regime - just as in Hungary at that time - the state police - in East Germany: the Stasi - had a file on each and every citizen with all information and data that could come useful in the future. Sexual orientation was one of the categories recorded. We can also see from the quotation that the work environment was not supportive and empathetic with the privacy of James on his putative sexual orientation, but reported him at first chance.

In contrast to this, Michael, working in East Berlin implies that besides of the general supressivity of the regime, he did not have any issues specifically due to his homosexuality. He admits, however, that at the newspaper where he worked, he had a fortunately supportive environment.

But where did these people go in East Berlin to make contact and to entertain themselves in a safer environment? The most popular venues for gay men to initiate contact were the so called outside cruising areas, which meant mainly public parks and toilets. Here, the emphasis was mainly on sexual contact in an unofficial, but relatively safe environment. These areas were controlled by the police, but as visible from the
insight of one subject, the practical part of these raids and controls were less strict and
official: “The cruising areas, they were controlled by the police, they knew everything,
but they just checked the IDs and let us go (...) they looked for criminals (...) once I met
a policeman while cruising (...) until he put his pistol, his gun on the table, I didn’t know
he was a policeman (...) he was in charge in civilian clothes.” (James). This story gives
us a perspective on how platforms where homosexuality appeared were managed by the
Stasi. The aim was control and insight - as represented by the literature on evangelist
church groups - and not direct intervention. This is also confirmed by Umberto, who
traveled to East Berlin often: “There was no big influence of DDR government to the
gay scene. They let them do what they felt like. Don’t know whether it was tolerance or
comfortability.” Zachary reports likewise: “In the East, we can say that it
[homosexuality] was not forbidden, rather they [the state] did not prefer to notice it, but
it was not prosecuted.”

What else did the East Berliner gay scene consist of? From the narratives of
Michael: “In Prenzlauer Berg there were nice bars. There was one for example (...) for
mostly leather [fetish] young guys. A corner away from this, there was Café Nord,
where you could dance, (...) and one called SM. For all of them, you needed to go
underground.” The nightlife of East Berlin appeared tempting for some of the West
Berliner interviewees as well, although not necessarily because of its diversity: “You
had to change 25 West Marks against East Marks. It was 30 times the worth. It was very
very cheap to live in East Germany (...) You were forbidden to take money from the East
to the West and it was nearly impossible to spend (...) was difficult to keep a balance
between being a big spender arrogantly and “what should I do with the money?” “
(Umberto).

As officially there was no room for activism and intellectual discussions within
the gay community either, as mentioned in the literature, gays found an alternative way
to organise and found platforms within the Evangelical church. Umberto recalls an
efficient cooperation between the West Berliner gay organisations and helping groups
and the East Berliner Evangelical church: “The church, especially the Evangelical
church played a big big role in this movements (...) the church groups, the gay groups
were very very organised in the Evangelical church in East Berlin and that was a kinda
shelter for the gay people in East Berlin. And so, we had a lot of meetings by church
there, they invited us to come there and also to support also by money gay scene in East
Berlin”. Not only did the West Berliner gay associations supported the Eastern working
groups by knowledge share and exchange, but also with financial support, he reported. The question may arise that what might have been the reason for the DDR to allow such initiatives - they must have been aware of such activism, as they reportedly had Stasi agents within these communities - and I was also offered a potential explanation: “I think the Eastern government was quite thankful for all the coming of gay people because they brought money.” The flow of West Berliner gay people to East - as also discussed in the previous paragraph - thus, may have been tolerated due to monetary reasons. It is crucial to note that the dominance of outside cruising indicates the unofficial nature of the gay scene, moreover, the narrative states that the official bars were mostly placed in an underground environment. Intellectual gay communities organised secretly in the Evangelical church groups also indicate a suppressed environment. This difference of officiality and openness only catch one’s eye if contrasting this to the sparkling gay life of West Berlin.

From narratives of the interviewees of East Berlin, it was fairly unexpected that in contrast to the literature, they remember that they had no major issues originating from their sexuality and they report in general a supportive and tolerant atmosphere - with a few exceptions - in a strict communist dictatorship. While presenting this contradiction to a psychologist, I was offered potential alternative explanations.

On one hand, the psychologist says, based on findings of Batcho (2007), nostalgia is a key factor with this issue. Its bittersweet retrospectivity - which is fundamentally positive – which tends to connect its roots of interpretation to the narratives of individuals of a surrounding subculture, as a way of bonding while creating a collective memory of the past. These memories are often altered by the potentially different interpretation of others. East and West Germany was reunited after the fall of the iron curtain, and these East Berliner men reportedly mixed with West Berliner gays - living in the same city - and are living in a mixed atmosphere since. It is thus possible, that recollections of East Berliner elderly gays are altered by the memories of West Berliners, that are by default more positive, tolerant and lively concerning liberty of gay life, than of those from the East. A common nostalgic reflection of a separate past, therefore, may provide with a feeling of belonging in the present.

In contrast though the psychologist states, from a social psychological perspective, a positive distortion of the past - amongst numerous different factors - can
be caused by certain coping mechanisms in relation to danger. In an oppressed society, where one’s homosexual identity is unfavoured by the authorities, it is nearly impossible for a person to constantly face the feeling of danger due to the fundamental properties of his identity. Consequently, the feeling of danger is altered, eased, even demolished. An example for this can be the above described memory of the man, who took home an undercover policeman while cruising: from the recollection of this memory, fear and sense of danger was completely missing, only a sign of neutral surprise or shock was expressed, while rationally thinking and empathising, such a situation may result in active panic and fear.

Finally and more simplistically, one cannot correlate their well-being and feeling of freedom legitimately to ones of other parts of the world in a society of no or limited line of site on the aspirations of the student movements, sexual revolution and gay liberation, and in general, the environment of the West. East Berliner gays saw that compared to other parts of the Soviet bloc, they had plenty of rope. This is supported by the narration of Zachary, who moved to West Berlin from Budapest in 1984, as he says, before moving they frequently visited East Berlin, “to buy shoes and to make love”. The communist state consciously restricted the incoming information from the West, thus, civilians could not realize the absurdity and cruelty of the system - since they were living in it as their natural habitat.

4.5. The Lively Atmosphere of West Berlin

We have already gotten an insight earlier to the atmosphere of West Berlin from the interview of John, the ex-high school teacher, who was protected by his colleagues in front of his students. All of the West Berliner subjects reported consistently that at their workplace they had no issues with their sexual orientation despite the fact that most of them were officially out. A potential contrast of the public sector and the private sector could be, that while all interviewees working in the private sector were out, John, the only person working in the public sector, never came out officially, although he said their colleagues were certainly aware of his sexual orientation, it was just never a topic of discussion.

It is instantly visible from the recollections that West Berlin had a special place in German gay life, outstanding all the other West German, already liberalised cities. Zachary reasons this phenomenon with the following circumstances: “West Berlin was very popular amongst gay youngsters. Military age young men were not inducted in
West Berlin (...) this was an agreement after the War. A lot of homosexual men came here from West Germany in order to not go to the army (...) so it was very concentrated”.

Outside of the workplaces, the West Berliner gay scene was pictured strikingly by Zachary: “West Berlin (...) it was like a (...) big gay family locked in a castle surrounded by a wall. Everyone knew everyone, and everyone knew when and where to go if you wanted to get to know a certain person” - “And was it good that everyone knew everyone?” - “Of course, until everyone was new”. This quotation already introduces the most positive and the most negative aspect of the scene. Another reminiscence – from Umberto - goes as: "we have had a lot of luck to be in Berlin, also because of the situation with the war. We had a special status here, it was always called the island of the positively mad people. Really, Berlin was a must have not only for gay but for positively crazy people”.

While inquiring on what kind of gay communities did these people go to, each of them shed light on a different segment of the scene: The bars and clubs had a large variety, and were offering meeting places for different age ranges, fetishes, intellectual and social levels. Besides the bars, subjects mention private parties, saunas, theatre groups, an emerging drag scene, and numerous officially registered social work groups. Outside cruising is also visible, although only as one means of a meeting platform for casual sex amongst others.

The most iconic place of all was SchwuZ, which still exists today, it is one of the most essential pillars of socialisation for Berliner gay life. On their website, we may find a manifesto of theirs giving an insight to the emerging gay scene of the late ‘70’s: “(...) arose the SchwulenZentrum in June of 1977 as a self-managed communication organization. Work groups came together here to discuss emancipatory topics, actions were planned and many new projects such as the city magazine Siegessäule, the bookstore Prinz Eisenherz, the Schwulenberatung and the first CSD in 1979 were started. There was partying and celebration as well: Gay parties, film evenings and the café at SchwuZ attracted a larger and larger group of friends.”

While SchwuZ is located in Neukölln, most of the West Berliner gay scene was located in Scöneberg, around Nollendorfplatz, just as it is today. The rainbow-coloured lighting of the dome of the U-Bahn station catches the eye immediately.

During the second half of the ‘80’s, however, a fusion of gay and heterosexual club scenes commenced, and started to shape and lead the nightlife of Berlin to a
direction where it is now. "This time there was also a kind of liberation of the club scene (...) a lot of clubs where there was a kind of majority of gay people which were inside, they were not clubs especially for gays, but the clubs which existed were full of gay people (...) just as now." (Umberto). The extremely mixed and diverse club scene of Berlin is still one of the most inviting factors for lovers of numerous alternative subcultures.

Umberto runs a gay bar near Nollendorfplatz and has done so for almost 30 years now and he was member of the community from much earlier. Throughout the whole interview, he represented a noticeably objective perspective, mentioning that the lively gay scene of the ‘70’s in West Berlin was not a fully legitimate representation of the whole era after the Second World War, and also not one of the West German countryside: “At the end of the 60’s there was some unsureness and there were some police[mens] who tried to be very looking for that the law will be kept. And 175 paragraph said you are forbidden to sit knee by knee, or to dance man by man (...) but it was not a problem in Berlin and in bigger towns like Hamburg, Cologne, Munich... but in the little towns and villages it was, even after the Paragraph was eliminated a problem (...) sometimes still today”. He recalled stories on the different atmosphere of the West German countryside as follows: "When I went with my [boy]friend home in a little town [in West Germany] yeah, there was sometimes when we have been in a normal bar, because there are no gay bars, yeah, I knew all the people and the people knew me, and they were not encouraged enough for to criticize our being gay, they had to accept it, I talked to them (...) one day in a little normal bar there were some people which knew me and they were like "[pointing figures] he has a boyfriend" and I was like: go everybody home, beat your woman and let me be what I am”.

He also mentioned, as opposed to the other participants that reported no or minor insults in West Berlin directed to their sexual orientation, that even after the fall of the Wall, the gay community had conflicts with authorities. It is important to remember that as indicated earlier in the literature, Paragraph 175 was fully deleted from the law in 1994. Thus the police had some remaining official platforms to doom gay communities, although the suspected intention of theirs was something different, according to the interviewee: "On the 21 February 1992 there was a so-called razzia, like in elder times (...) they came in beating everybody. I went to the court and defended myself and the scene for such things, that it never happens again that the police so much might to leave their frustration in the gay scene (...) they took the argumentation of “we are just
looking for criminals” for to disturb a little bit the gay scene”. He argues that the gay scene was officially not insulted because of homosexual activities per se, but because it was believed to be a hotbed for criminal activities. This is a controversial topic in a sense that as visible in this precedent, innocent gay people were harmed, but on the other hand, we must admit that prostitution and drug use were very much widespread within the community, according to narratives.

Connected to this notion, a small outlook from the observed era is that the fall of the Wall did not affect the West Berliner gay scene in a positive manner, as overheard from the dialogues of Aaron: "sometimes you hear at the bars it happens (...) the boys from Romania (...) they steal and do nothing, they go to toilet with you, but "don’t touch me" (...) and they charge money for it". He argues that migrants from Romania and Albania flowing into Berlin after the fall of the Wall diluted the gay community and caused a certain level of uncertainty. These men were not homosexual, but targeted the typically elderly gay people offering sexual services and drugs for money, which services often did not bring real value and on top of that, they sometimes robbed the victim.

4.6. The AIDS Crisis

A more significant and tragic event destroying not only the West Berliner but the international gay scene was the appearance of AIDS, starting to threat in 1983. The quoted literature has already drawn a picture on how East and West German government treated the illness, and suggested an unintentional function of the Wall as a stopping effect for the virus to reach the Eastern bloc. While conducting the interviews in Berlin, I was offered multiple additional layers concerning the dynamics of the AIDS crisis, from personal perspectives.

Umberto was one of the founding members of the then AIDS prevention centre Mann-o-Meter. He was actively participating in the prevention, which was, he said, supported by the government: "In the beginning, [Mann-o-Meter was] a quite private initiation, but sponsored also (...) by the money for AIDS prevention [from the government], so the concentration of Mann-o-Meter and the funds for the existence came from the AIDS-money (...) the West German government reacted quite positive in the beginning. (...) it was even for the government quite normal that in Berlin there are a lot of gays".
It is quite clear from the literature and the recollections of the other interviewees that the West German government had a professional approach to this crisis. But how did the West Berliner gay community react? Zachary said: “Amongst gays, AIDS was first handled as this was coming from America, which is far, so we were not interested. When the first wave of diseases appeared (...) and Rock Hudson died, the first official AIDS death (...) then people started to take care.”

Respondents from West Berlin also indicate that as West Berlin was an extremely closed community, AIDS was spreading around super fast. Lack of information was a crucial negative factor in the beginning, just as all over the Western world. Fortunately, prevention and information campaigns of multiple organisations similar to Mann-o-Meter were proactively restricting the possibilities of transmission later on, but West Berliner gay communities suffered strikingly high losses, agreed by all interviewees.

Au contraire, questions on the situation of East Berlin generated more divided answers. One modality of the situation is that the East German government did not admit AIDS being spread around in the Eastern bloc: “East German government thought (...) the virus will not pass the Wall. They made an un-information publicity and said AIDS does not exist in the real socialism. (...) It was later published. The Wall was not something the virus said “hey I cannot pass by”, it was just silence.” (Umberto). A recall of James painted a similar picture: “It was not published (...) we were not allowed to watch television”. A consequence of the lack of information was a general level of uncertainty within the community: “Everybody was afraid in the East if he felt the [medical] problem to talk about because they did not have anybody to whom to talk.” (Umberto).

Opposing to these argumentations, some other respondents did admit that even in reality, AIDS was less of an issue in the East, agreeing to the earlier quoted literature. Michael mentioned that they only knew about AIDS from the gay tourists coming from West Berlin to East Berlin, and they have only talked about these issues in private. Safe sex was also not widespread, which resulted in a rather shocking phenomenon in the interaction of East and West Berliner gay people via tourism.

Michael reported that while in West Berlin, AIDS prevention was already at a peak and the community had an extreme pressure and a general distrust within the community, East Berlin, with less infections, and more importantly with less information, was a place of opportunity for West Berliners to have sex without
protection, in general to proceed with the kind of free sexual behavior that got cut in West Berlin due to AIDS, and also without being afraid of receiving the virus: “What was in the DDR, through this tourism is, that they came from West to East Berlin in the GDR, (...) you can not rule out that someone has been friends with someone and has sexual contact. (...) At some point that is already clear, you [the East Berliners] do not ask “how old are you?”, “how are you?” and “who do you fuck?”” Terminology used for this phenomenon and recalled by three of the interviewees was “frisch fleisch”, meaning fresh meat, and a key phrase in the recollection of Michael was gruesomely naturalist: “Frisch fleisch bedeutet, dass wir noch nicht krank waren” which translates as: “Fresh meat meant, that we are not sick”. A potential connotation and further area of research on this so called sex tourism is, that it raises the question how significant the role and responsibility of these West Berliner gay men - performing unprotected sex with East Berliners - was in introducing and spreading HIV within the Eastern bloc.

Besides of the disease and its medical consequences themselves, AIDS had another significant destructive factor for the gay scene. The effect in fact did not differ significantly on the two sides of the Wall - some may argue that it is identical around the Globe - , it was just the already described supposedly retentive effect of the iron curtain that drew some differences in the timelines of the sociological mechanisms.

The destructive factor is the stigmatization of gay people with AIDS. All interviewees agreed that the threat of AIDS was identified with the gay community and it broke down levels of tolerance from the surrounding society. John shared a personal story: "My sister in law (...) if we met and we kissed she did not kiss like this, very near (...) she was afraid to get infected because I was gay (...) and other people too". Umberto, working on AIDS prevention confirmed the same from a professional perspective: "In the beginning of the time of AIDS, it was very specified and a very dangerous situation of stigmatization of gay people”. This approach seemed to disappear later, but widening the gap and marginalizing gay society, proclaiming and scapegoating them for the appearance of HIV and AIDS was a cruel psychological factor adding up to the already destroyed, scared and mortified community on the level of mental health.

The stigmatization of gay people connected to AIDS was not only a threatening factor for the gay community, but was harmful to the heterosexual society as well, argued by Zachary: “Not gays always said, that this is a gay illness, only gays can get it. And later intensive information campaign showed that heterosexual can be just as
infected, but there was a time when homosexuals protected themselves better than straights and if I look at the statistics, the number of new infections changed and was much higher with heterosexuals than with homosexuals”. Thus, he argued, straight community - partly due to the lack of information again - put themselves in danger by distancing themselves from the phenomenon of AIDS and performing unprotected sex just as before, believing that their heterosexuality in itself protects them from the virus.

Most participants were directly involved in the AIDS crisis, with many personal losses. They admit, however, that now Germany has a very extensive network of AIDS Hilfe and the government is also proactively taking part in prevention, medical treatment and researches.

4.7. A Necessary Distinction

In the literature, a controversial topic appeared in connection with homosexuality: pedophilia. Although I intend to emphasize that pedophilia is a mental condition and is not connected to homosexuality neither psychologically nor socially, we must include this notion in the discussion for two reasons partly as already described in the literature review. Thus, interviewees were also requested to answer certain questions on this topic. The first connection between homosexual culture and pedophilia is one-sided. As witnessed in the literature, pedophile movements aimed to connect themselves to gay communities in order to gain more support for general acceptance. Secondly, a stigmatization of gay people is also visible here, the false association of pedophilia with homosexuality as a kind of intersectional, complex sexual degeneration where both homosexuality and pedophilia falsely represented an equally unethical and unhealthy behavior.

A coherent summary of both phenomena were confirmed and described by Umberto, working as a street worker and educating the gay community on current threats and issues: "I think in the beginning it was nearly as with the phenomenon of AIDS. It was also for the complete society a special thing (...) And it was projected to the gay scene. And that was not right. And activists saw it very early and said it’s not a question of gays, it’s a question of all the society. (...) In the beginning of the 70s there was a stream (...) where pedophile people tried to accept it as normal people (...) in the gay community there was a movement against pedophilie (...) pedophilian scene had other argumentations"."
Further extensions of this topic are intentionally excluded from this paper in order to minimize the potential association of such phenomena with homosexuality either consciously or subconsciously.

5. **Interview with an Expert - A Global Perspective**

While studying the literature and conducting the interviews, as well as evaluating and comparing the results, there were certain sociological subtopics that needed clarification or distinction, also from a global perspective. Thus, I invited an expert to clarify some of these notions. **Judit Takács** is a well-known sociologist, a gender scholar focusing on homosexuality, especially studying the situation of LGBT+ people in the Eastern bloc, especially in 20th century Hungary.

She offered a few perspectives connected to my research. Firstly, the notion of sexual revolution needed some further specifications. She argues that the term sexual revolution in this context, as such, is an ethnocentric, Western term. The sexual revolution affecting the examined sample of this research in the West German society is just one, starting in 1967, with the student movements, only in North America and Western Europe. Other sexual revolutions are appearing all over the World, such as in Russia in the 1920’s, but these initiatives received less attention and usually operate with different timelines.

We also elaborated whether etymologically sexual *revolution* refers to a rapid, revolutionary change and how this differs from gradualist ideologies, where real social change can only be reached via small steps (such as feminism(s) ).

She also specified what sexual revolution meant specifically for the LGBT+ society. We count the fights for LGBT+ rights and equality in the Western world to this era, which may also result in a liberation of certain attitudes connected to sexual orientation, not the liberation of sexual orientation in itself.

Judit explained how the legal and social environment connected to homosexuality interact with each other. Decriminalizing homosexuality is only one, although fundamental pillar for acceptance, and it only refers to legal emancipation and equality. It does not directly or necessarily influence the social emancipation of the LGBT+ individuals and subcultures, it may only propagate a message to the society, and may provide with a sort of guidance from an official sphere, forming the approach of the majority society.
A striving alternative explanation was offered by her on why homosexuality was criminalized mostly for men, and why women and lesbianism is less visible within society. She argues that the patriarchal social setup can be the root cause of such circumstances in the following form: biblically and traditionally, the seeds of men are the seeds of life, and as such, these should not be wasted or misused and should be kept for means of reproduction. Anal sex and homosexual intercourse between males violates and desecrates such functions. On the other hand, lesbianism and lesbian sexual intercourse were seen as not involving such “losses”, and while homosexual men were perceived as not useful for reproduction, lesbian women could still be impregnated by force.

She also draws attention to the fact that despite the legal invisibility of lesbian women, we must admit that in modern society, lesbian women represent an intersectional minority - first because of being a woman in a patriarchal social system, and secondly because of their sexual orientation - and as such, they might have a much worse overall situation within society, compared to gay men, not to mention potential additional intersectional factors such as ethnicity, disabilities, etc.

6. Conclusion

One of the main aims of this research was to gain insights to the gay scene of the divided Germany, in the period between the end of the Second World War and the reunion of the country. A thorough observation of the existing literature helped in identifying the key issues in connection with the topic. The aftermaths of the war and its effects on the West German community were explored, and different aspirations of the sexual revolution on the Western world, including West Germany and West Berlin were introduced. It was also described what effect did the socialist regime of the DDR have on the emergence of the gay community and what was the general environment in which these communities arised.

We have seen that West Berlin had extremely special circumstances within the country, and the lively international atmosphere caused by different legal and historical reasons, created an exceptionally accepting environment for the gay scene. Through the analysis of the interviews, I could support and question some of the statements of the literature. The narratives of the participants provided personal experiences and approaches which also shed light on more specific subtopics. Insights of experts from
the field of sociology and psychology supported the evaluation of data with potential alternative explanations and connected the field of research to a global framework.

Another important aim of this paper was to support or reject the hypothesis that 45 years of different social, legal and ideological environment could not shape the emergence of gay communities in significantly different ways. It was found that although in the examined time period, gay life was remarkably different on the two sides of the Wall, but I would argue that despite the observed differences, East Berlin still had a positive environment compared to the East German, or even the West German countryside, where general tolerance of diversity is sometimes still an unsettled feature.

As noted earlier I appreciate the size of the sample limits the generalisations this thesis can make. The thesis should be viewed as a scoping exercise laying the foundation for deeper research. The interviews pointed out further directions where I would be excited to move further, especially in the topic of AIDS, or the lively SM and fetish culture of the German gay community.
Appendix

Information Letter and Consent Form for Invitation to be Interviewed

24/10/2018

Dear ,

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I am conducting as part of my BA degree in the Institute of Social Sciences at the Corvinus University of Budapest. I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part of it.

This study will focus on the LGBT culture of East and West Germany and is aiming to understand the differences between LGBT life on the two sides of the Wall. Some of my questions are requesting private information and may bring up extremely emotional memories.

Participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately 15 to 30 minutes. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences by advising the researcher. With your permission, the interview will be voice-recorded but if you are unhappy with this I can make written notes. Only I and my examiners will have access to the recording. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any report resulting from this study, however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at +36 30 832 1128 or by e-mail at bendeguz.havasv@gmail.com. You can also contact my supervisor, Dr Andrew Ryder at andrew.ryder@uni-corvinus.hu.
I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Sincerely,
Bendegúz Havas V.

**Consent Form**

I have read the above information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Bendegúz Havas V. of the Department of Social Sciences at the Corvinus University of Budapest.

I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be voice recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses.

I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in the class hand-in and/or publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

___ YES ___ NO

I agree to have my interview voice recorded.

___ YES ___ NO
I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any class hand-in or publication that comes of this research.

___ YES ___ NO

Participant’s Name (please print) _____________________________

Participant’s Signature ____________________________________    Date

____________________

Researcher’s Signature ____________________________________    Date

____________________

The interview guide

(Consent to recording)
Age?
Sex?
Have you been living in the East or West Germany?
What is your highest education?

____________________

When did you come out to yourself?
Describe, how comfortable or how self-conscious were you with sexuality?
Did you come out to your family?
Did you come out to your friends?
Did you come out in school?
Did you come out at your workplace?
Did you work in the public or private sector? (only applicable for West Germany)
If any answer to the above questions is yes, please describe the reactions you got:


As per now, how would you define your sexual orientation?
Were you aware of any LGBT-related communities in this era?
Have you been part of any LGBT-related communities?

- If yes, how did you find these communities?
- If yes, what kind of community it was? (bars, clubs, private, cultural gatherings)
- If yes, what were your initial feelings about it?
- If yes and you were aware of these kind of gatherings but you have not joint, what was the reason for that?

How did you spot or get to know each other in general?
Have you had a feeling of insecurity in your daily life originating from your sexuality?

- If yes, what kind of feelings were they? Please describe

Were you aware of the exact legal background and policies on homosexuality?
Did you experience any kind of legal prosecution or harassment directly or indirectly? (friends, family, within community, on the street) Please describe every situation in detail
Could you turn to anyone for legal advice or help?
Did you have any contact with the police?
Did you have any contact person with the police or legal entities?
Are you aware of anyone who had to leave the country due to his or her sexual orientation?


Did you have the chance to have a partner in this era?
• If no, why:
• If yes:
  • Where did you meet?
  • How often did you meet?
  • Did you have the chance to cohabit?
    • If yes, how did it look like?

+1 What was the general approach to HIV/AIDS from the side of the government AND from the side of the society in the 80’s?
Bibliography


