

REPRODUCTIVE FUTURISM AND PARENTAL GLORY: THE PRIVILEGING OF
TRADITIONAL FAMILIES IN RUSSIA

BY
GAVIN KIRKWOOD

WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

Abstract

Russia is known for being extremely conservative and oppressive to the LGBTQ community (Wilkinson, 2014). Russian reproductive futurism, or the heteronormative privileging of traditional families, is evident in the popular televised “Order of Parental Glory” awards. These awards are given to parents who care for four or more children and are used as propaganda to convince citizens to get married and have children. These awards perpetuate conservatism and marginalize queer individuals. By building off the legacy of feminist communication scholar Kramarae (1981), this study gives an in-depth analysis of speeches given by Russian leaders at the “Order of Parental Glory” ceremonies. Through the analysis, themes emerged that showcase how reproductive futurism is reified in Russia and how these frames contribute to the muting of queer individuals. Implications for queer activism and the intersectionality of queer theory with communication theory are discussed.

Introduction

Russia is one of the harshest environments for queer people, especially in light of the deportation and imprisonment of gay men in the Russian republic of Chechnya (Washington Post, 2017). Russian officials justify the oppression of the LGBTQ community by explaining the traditional values they want to protect (Wilkinson, 2014). Russian reproductive futurism, or the State-sanctioned privileging of heteronormative families, is showcased in the popular “Order of Parental Glory” awards. At these televised award ceremonies, parents of four or more children are decorated and used as propaganda to increase the birth rate in the region (Elder, 2009). A content analysis of speeches given at the “Order of Parental Glory” ceremonies was conducted to show the relationship between Russian reproductive futurism and the silencing of queer people. This analysis illuminated how queer theory can work in tandem with communication theory to describe Russian queer experiences.

Literature Review

Reproductive Futurism

Lee Edelman (2004), first coined the term “reproductive futurism.” Edelman used the term to describe the ways that heteronormative cultures privilege couples who reproduce and their children over LGBTQ people who cannot reproduce. Edelman’s exact definition of reproductive futurism is a “ideological limit on political discourse as such, preserving in the process the absolute privilege of heteronormativity by rendering the unthinkable, by casting outside the political domain, the possibility of a queer resistance to this organizing principle of communal relations” (p. 2). Given this definition, reproductive futurism is present in many aspects of culture including pop culture and political agendas.

Reproductive futurism has been used to examine gender norms in literature. Devereux (2013) looked at reproductive futurism in the popular *Bridget Jones* books and film collection. Devereux commented on the ways in which literature and films geared towards single women are often just the prequel to stories about young mothers. Bridget Jones, as a character, was single and childless for most of the series but ended by having a child and transitioning into motherhood. Through the analysis, Devereux argued that “single women are queered by chick lit’s investment in reproductive futures” (p. 226). Devereux explained that reproductive futurism compels stories about women to end in child bearing/rearing as an ideal of fulfillment and personal happiness. Devereux broadened Edelman’s definition of queer individuals to include childless women; she speculated the ways in which the reproductive futurism in popular stories reinforces gender stereotypes and the oppression of women.

In addition to being an ideology for literary critiques, reproductive futurism provides a frame to interpret legislation and political action. Mason (2017) used reproductive futurism to analyze state and federal court rulings over same sex marriage in the United States. Mason identified two arguments where reproductive futurism frames worked against same sex marriage and two arguments where reproductive futurism frames worked in favor of same sex marriage. The frames used against same sex marriage were that heterosexual marriage is the optimal environment for children and that marriage is meant to incentivize reproduction (Mason, 2017). Both frames were used to support heteronormative values and marginalize love and commitment in queer relationships. The reproductive futurism frames that were in favor of same sex marriage were that queer parents can provide good homes for children and that opposing same sex marriage harms the children of gay relationships. Both these arguments are centered on children and the role that marriage plays in their development and well-being.

Mason's (2017) study on reproductive futurism frames in U.S. legislation was foundational because it proved that reproductive futurism could be used to analyze political action. While Mason's findings provided excellent context for queer struggles in the United States, foreign use of reproductive futurism in legislation is under-researched. This content analysis filled the gap by examining reproductive futurism frames in Russia, which is also a heavily influential nation in shaping world attitudes and human rights outcomes.

Russia

Russia is known for its extreme conservatism, commitment to traditional values, and marginalization of the LGBTQ community (Wilkinson, 2014). These factors make it an excellent case study for investigating overt forms of reproductive futurism, as reproductive futurism is concerned with the ways traditional families are elevated by their government (Edelman, 2004). Reproductive futurism is also concerned with the ways LGBTQ communities are marginalized or threatened by the privileging of traditional family units (Edelman, 2004). While many scholars have addressed the human rights concerns for LGBTQ people in Russia, there has not been a study that analyzed the reproductive futurism frames used in Russian culture. This study filled a gap in evaluating the reproductive futurism factors that contribute to inequality for LGBTQ Russian citizens.

Conservative Values

Wilkinson (2014) has explained the way that traditional values and oppression of LGBTQ individuals operate in Russia. To put it simply, in Russia LGBTQ rights are not considered human rights (Wilkinson, 2014). There are multiple legislative examples where LGBTQ individuals have been oppressed in an effort to protect heteronormative values. Wilkinson (2014) explained that Russian law makes provisions against homosexual propaganda

to protect minors, but that “non-heterosexual and gender variance propaganda” is defined by authorities. This means that in Russia Gay Pride parades are not allowed, same sex displays of affection are policed, and distributing any information about homosexuality or gender identity is punishable by law (Dolgov, 2013; Wilkinson, 2014). Gender and sexuality is policed in Russia in ways that average Americans can barely imagine.

Recently, LGBTQ issues have been a further concern in Chechnya, a federal subject of Russia (The Washington Post, 2017). There have been reports of Chechnya’s leader, Ramzan Kadyrov, ordering that gay citizens be rounded up and put in labor camps. Back in April of 2017 as many as a 100 men were kidnapped and forced into a camp and up to three men were murdered. Kadyrov has justified the attacks by explaining that gay men are not considered citizens of Chechnya and should have been expelled from the state by family members. As men are rounded up and expelled in gay genocide, Kadyrov has cited the traditional values that need to be protected (The Washington Post, 2017). It is clear that around the world, reproductive futurism is not only silencing queer people, it is costing them their lives.

Unlike LGBTQ human rights that are devalued and ignored by the Russian government, traditional families are a major concern for Russian officials (Elder, 2009). Traditionally, Russia has valued traditional families and promoted parenthood. Joseph Stalin started a Motherhood Glory award for Russian mothers who adopted or birthed 10 or more children (Elder, 2009). There was a period after Stalin’s reign where parenthood awards ceased and were seen as oppressive to women and reflective of antiquated values. Starting in 2009, the “Order of Parental Glory” awards were reinstated under former Russian President Medvedev’s administration. This award was reinstated due to low birth rates in the region and dismal health outcomes that projected a smaller Russian population in the near future. Elder (2009), a correspondent in

Moscow, reported on the first “Order of Parental Glory” award ceremony mentioning that each winning family received State funding monthly. The awards were televised and supplemented by public service announcements reminding Russian citizens of their duty to have children. While “Order of Parental Glory” award winners only technically need to have four children, many of the families had upwards of seven children.

Edelman (2004) explained reproductive futurism is often motivated by a desire to protect children from queer influences and the desire to promote heteronormative values. While the examples of reproductive futurism Edelman addressed mentioned the oppression of LGBTQ people, the overt forms of Russian LGBTQ oppression in the name of conservative values make for clearer examples. In Russia, beating, killing, and silencing LGBTQ people is a normal part of protecting traditional heteronormative values (Wilkinson, 2014). In addition to the harsh treatment of LGBTQ people, it is rare to see examples where parenthood is promoted so aggressively by government in our modern world (Elder, 2009). The intersectionality of extreme conservatism and oppression of LGBTQ people make Russia an excellent setting for this content analysis.

Muted Group theory

In addition to reproductive futurism showcasing manifestations of heterosexual privilege, it also revealed the marginalization of LGBTQ individuals. Since reproductive futurism is a descriptive ideology, it was necessary to pair it with a communication theory for content analysis. Muted group theory has been used extensively to identify the struggles of marginalized minority groups and it offered the best theoretical perspective on this topic. Kramarae (1981; 2005) was the first communication scholar to apply muted group theory to the communication field, previously it has only been used by other social sciences. Kramarae explained “muted

group theory suggests that people attached or assigned to subordinate groups may have a lot to say, but they tend to have relatively little power to say it without getting into a lot of trouble” (p. 55). Kramarae added that muted group theory is useful in naming oppressed groups and identifying their oppressors. While the theory was first applied by feminist communication scholars to the struggles of women, Kramarae urged researchers to apply the theory more broadly on a global scale to describe the experiences of muted groups around the world. This study built off the legacy of feminist communication scholars and answered their call to give voice to oppressed peoples in all places.

One of the largest research gaps in queer communication and muted group theory is cross-cultural examples of queer muted groups. Aiello (2013) et al., asserted that queer research cannot be generalized across borders, as varied social pressures abroad shape the queer experience. A rare example of a cross-cultural look at a queer muted group included Bijie and Tang’s (2016) research on the pressures that gay men in China face when coming out. Bijie and Tang analyzed the ways that dominant discourse affected LGBTQ populations in China, using co-cultural theory. These researchers explained that co-cultural theory is related to muted group theory as co-cultural theory focuses on the ways that muted groups dialogue with dominant groups within a specific culture (Bijie & Tang, 2016). Bijie and Tang found that in China, a gay man’s decision to come out was influenced by Chinese cultural values such as family, marriage, and duty. These scholars urged communication researchers to explore queer experiences in non-Western contexts. This content analysis helped fill a gap in cross-cultural queer research by looking at the silencing of Russian queer citizens.

In addition to filling cross-cultural communication gaps, this is the first study to identify the relationship between reproductive futurism and muted group theory. Both theories deal with

dominant discourse and oppression of marginalized groups, but communication researchers have not attempted to link the two concepts. Reproductive futurism explains why dominant discourse favors heteronormative families (Edelman, 2004); in this way, it can be seen as a contributing factor in creating muted groups. This study reified muted group theory in looking at the ways queers are muted and marginalized because of the reproductive futurism ideology perpetuated by Russian officials today. The research questions include:

RQ1: How does the Russian “Order of Parental Glory” award promote reproductive futurism and heteronormative values?

RQ2: How does Russian reproductive futurism mute and marginalize queer communities?

Methodology

To answer the research questions, I conducted a content analysis of four public addresses, one from former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and three from current Russian President Vladimir Putin. The first piece used in the content analysis is Medvedev’s speech at the first “Order of Parental Glory” awards ceremony at the Kremlin in Moscow (Medvedev, 2009). The second speech used in the content analysis was a public address from Putin about state sponsored family policies including the “Order of Parental Glory” award given in Cherepovets (Putin, 2014). The last speeches used in the content analysis were the two addresses given by Putin at the 2014 and 2015 “Order of Parental Glory” award ceremonies, the former was held at Sochi and the latter was held at the Kremlin in Moscow. These speeches were chosen because they directly addressed the “Order of Parental Glory” award and social programs for traditional families in Russia.

Data were collected from publicly available documents from the Russian government. All of these speeches were transcribed into English by Russian government officials. Once the

speeches were transcribed they were available for public access on the Kremlin's website (<http://en.kremlin.ru>). I am not fluent in Russian, so I relied on the English transcriptions to conduct the content analysis. For communication researchers who do speak Russian, the recordings of these public addresses were also available on the Kremlin's website.

Data Analysis

To conduct the content analysis and discover emergent themes I used Owen's (1984) criteria for theme analysis. Owen's criteria include: recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness. While recurrence and repetition may seem similar, recurrence is when a theme is repeated with similar wording, while repetition refers to themes that occur with the same exact wording (Owen, 1984). During the content analysis themes emerged based on how often they were repeated or the forcefulness of the statement.

I also used in vivo coding in the transcripts to find emergent themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Using in vivo coding allowed me to identify and code emergent themes, using the same words and phrases from the speaker. Throughout the in vivo coding process, I utilized microscopic analysis to ensure I did not miss any possible themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Microanalysis was also used as a primary method to verify emergent themes. Strauss and Corbin (1998) explained, "Microscopic analysis obliges the researcher to examine the specifics of data." (p. 65). In the researcher role, microscopic analysis ensured that I did not miss any significant thematic findings.

Findings

Reproductive futurism is concerned about how heteronormativity is reified in a nation's politics and culture (Edelman, 2004). In recent years, Russia has been known for their extreme conservatism and harsh treatment of their LGBTQ constituents. Reproductive futurism is overt in

Russian legislation and political values. By examining the ways in which the Russian government privileges heterosexual families the connection between reproductive futurism and politics became clear in the content analysis.

In each public address for the “Order of Parental Glory” awards, former President Dmitry Medvedev and current President Vladimir Putin described parenthood and its value to individual parents and the nation as a whole. Themes emerged regarding the way parenthood was described by these leaders, these themes included: parenthood bringing personal glory, parenthood as an act of heroism, parenthood as a talent, and parenthood as exemplary citizenship. These themes reify the emphasis of personal legacy in reproductive futurism, where people believe that having children affect the way they are remembered after their death (Edelman, 2004). In addition to themes about parenthood’s relation to the individual, both Medvedev and Putin described the ways that parenthood was a contributing factor to the health of the entire nation. The communal benefits of parenthood included parenthood as a way to promote traditional moral values and parenthood as a means to naturally increase Russia’s population. These themes reinforce the preferential treatment that heterosexual parents receive from government, this was also a primary tenet of reproductive futurism (Edelman, 2004).

Parental Glory for the Individual

Medvedev and Putin described parenthood as an impressive accomplishment and explained that parenthood was the most important role in Russian society. Medvedev described parenthood as “humanity’s greatest mission” (Medvedev, 2009). For Medvedev, the absolute greatest and most fulfilling undertaking of a person was to become a parent. Putin echoed this sentiment to during the “Order of Parental Glory’s” 2015 ceremony by saying, “There is nothing more important than what you are doing” (Putin, 2015). Despite the myriad of activities a person

could be involved in, Putin explained that parenthood was the most important and honorable task. By describing parenthood as the most important job, both Medvedev and Putin reify reproductive futurism as a worldview that makes parenthood a necessity for personal fulfillment and happiness.

In addition to prioritizing parenthood as the most important role in Russian culture, Medvedev also explained how parenthood could bring glory to the individual, “I am sure that through your efforts they [children] will grow up to become independent, active and strong citizens of our great country. It is this that constitutes your parental glory” (Medvedev, 2009). In this ceremony, parents were glorified by their children. Ultimately the ceremony showed that a person’s legacy and glory lay in their ability to raise outstanding Russian citizens. The concept of parental glory affirmed the focus on personal legacy within reproductive futurism, where people are concerned with the way they are remembered after they die.

Parenthood was also described by these Russian officials as an act of heroism and a special talent. In 2015, Putin described the award winners as “heroes.” To Putin, the parents who decided to have large families were heroes who should be respected and imitated. Not only was parenthood described as an act of heroism, Putin called it a special talent:

How much strength, patience and talent this (parenthood) takes. This really does require a great amount of human attention, spirit, and talent. Human talent expresses itself in many different ways and takes many forms. You have a talent that perhaps many people lack (Putin, 2015).

Parenthood, especially parenting large families of four or more children, was seen as a special ability or skill. This skill referred both to the biological ability to have four or more children as well as the work it takes to raise children who could be adopted. By describing parenthood as a

special skill, Putin made parenting large families an aspiration for Russian citizens- this affirmed the reproductive futuristic worldview.

Lastly, the parents of large families were described as the best Russian parents. Medvedev opened his address for the award ceremony by stating, “It a sincere pleasure to welcome you and congratulate you on being decorated the best parents in our country” (Medvedev, 2009). Just as Putin described parenthood as a talent or act of heroism to aspire to, Medvedev made the distinction that the best parents were measured by their ability to have large families with four or more biological or adopted children. By using the award to decorate the “best” parents, the “Order of Parental Glory” award was a device that classified and ranked parents throughout the nation, with quantity of children being the most important factor for model parental citizenship.

Parental Glory for the State

Medvedev and Putin explained that supporting parenthood was a primary objective of the Russian government (Medvedev, 2009; Putin, 2014; Putin, 2015). When explaining the benefits of parenthood, especially parenting large families, Medvedev and Putin cited parenthood as a primary way to protect and uphold traditional heteronormative moral values. Medvedev and Putin also spotlighted how parenting large families helps the Russian population increase and boosts the nation’s welfare, this connected to the preferential treatment that legislators give parents as described in reproductive futurism.

The first communal benefit of parenthood is that it protected traditional heteronormative moral values. When presenting the “Order of Parental Glory” awards, Putin mentioned that the winners “share a common understanding of the true values and a sense of mutual respect and love” (Putin, 2014). Putin distinguished traditional heteronormative values as the “true values”

for a prosperous nation. Later in the address Putin described large, traditional families as the “guarantee of our society’s moral health.” Heterosexual parents were seen as a primary part of the moral fabric of Russian society, where having children both protects the moral values and perpetuates the values for coming generations. In the following year, Putin congratulated the award winners for their, “outstanding contribution to preserving the family’s traditional foundations” (Putin, 2015). Parenthood reinforces heteronormative values and excludes the LGBTQ community from being considered moral people.

Another way the “Order of Parental Glory” award perpetuated heteronormativity was that it limited the definition of parenthood for only heterosexual couples. When parenthood was described in all four addresses, there was a reference to both fathers and mothers. An example of this is when Medvedev stated, “You have spent a long time now raising your own and adopted children, and giving them attention and a mother’s and father’s love and care” (Medvedev, 2009). Medvedev also went on to explain that the heterosexual union of women and men was so important that the “Order of Parental Glory” was the first Russian award to have male and female versions. These exclusive definitions of heteronormative parents and family units exclude LGBTQ individuals who may have children of their own or care for children of others.

In addition to parenthood being lauded as a great personal achievement, Russian officials explained that parenthood was essential for the country’s prosperity and well-being. Medvedev demonstrated how important supporting families was in his administration by explaining that the worldwide economic recession would not affect the funding for large families. At the 2009 “Order of Parental Glory” ceremony Medvedev stated, “I particularly want to stress that, despite the current financial difficulties the authorities will unfailingly carry out indexation and payment of benefits and fulfill all of their other social support commitments “(Medvedev, 2009). Despite

the severe worldwide economic recession in 2009, Medvedev explained that the government's financial support of large families would not falter. The priority of encouraging families to keep growing with the promise of State funding during economic difficulties showcased Medvedev's prioritization of family social welfare policies. This example also demonstrated the preferential treatment that heteronormative family units receive from their government because of reproductive futurism's presence in public discourse.

Each public address from Medvedev and Putin in this analysis mentioned how raising birthrates was a priority for their administration. Medvedev explained how State sponsorship of parenthood had a positive effect on raising the birthrate:

These measures have helped to bring about a recent increase in birth rate. Of course, there is still plenty of room for growth, but the increase is decent nonetheless. The birth rate rose the year before last, and again last year, and there were almost 4 percent more births over the first quarter of this year than during the same period last year (Medvedev, 2009).

Medvedev made it clear that increasing the birth rate was a primary goal of his social policies, as he mentioned that rate could improve. The focus on increasing birth rates also exemplified the way that reproductive futurism operates in government institutions, where prioritizing traditional family units is an unquestioned value for those in power.

Putin also emphasized increasing the birthrate in his speeches. In a Presidential address on family policies in 2014, Putin stated, "Putting in place the right conditions for an increase in births, protecting motherhood and childhood, and strengthening the family as an institution are priority social tasks for Russia" (Putin, 2014). To Putin, raising the birth rates was part of making traditional family values the center of Russian life. Putin referenced low birth rate being

a problem in the country, “Fewer people were born in the 1990s and this creates certain problems.” In Putin’s addresses during the “Order of Parental Glory” ceremonies in 2014 and 2015, Putin also specifically mentioned that birth rates were rising because of Russia’s family friendly policies and social services. Putin’s comments about Russia’s birth rate and family policies showed that reproductive futurism puts traditional families as the focus for government support and care.

Themes surrounding the ways that parents are celebrated and valued in the “Order of Parental Glory” public addresses give insight into the ways that reproductive futurism and heteronormativity work in tandem to exclude marginalized groups. Connections between these findings and past communication research give implications for researchers interested in queer issues or muted group theory.

Discussion

The first research question asked: How does the Russian “Order of Parental Glory” award promote reproductive futurism and heteronormative values? Themes from the content analysis showed that Medvedev and Putin reinforced reproductive futurism by describing parenthood as the most important job, an act of heroism, a special skill, and a model for Russian citizenship. The themes also showed that reproductive futurism was reinforced in Medvedev and Putin’s unquestioned priority of growing Russian families and perpetuating heteronormative moral values. These findings affirm Wilkinson’s (2014) research on how traditional values dominate Russian culture and discourse at the expense of queer individuals.

The content analysis findings also echoed Mason’s (2017) assertion that reproductive futurism frames exist in political discourse and messages from policy leaders can be analyzed using this form of queer theory. The findings from this study demonstrated that reproductive

futurism is not limited to the United States or Western European nations. Rather, reproductive futurism is pervasive across the world, with Russia being a site of some of the most overt connections between reproductive futurism in traditional values and the oppression of LGBTQ people.

The second research question asked: How does Russian reproductive futurism mute and marginalize queer communities? The themes revealed that Medvedev and Putin only referred to heterosexual parents and traditional families. The content analysis also revealed that parenthood was presented as a Russian value, something that LGBTQ individuals cannot aspire to—especially because same sex unions are not acknowledged by the Russian government (Wilkinson, 2014). These findings affirm Bijie and Tang’s (2016) claim that the specific cultural values in a nation have a direct effect on how queer groups are marginalized or silenced. This silencing can occur in subtle or overt ways. Valuing parenthood above all other roles marginalizes queer individuals because the State encourages something they cannot accomplish.

The findings from the content analysis also complemented Kramarae’s (1981) research on muted group theory and how dominant groups can silence others. This analysis builds off Kramarae’s rich legacy by exposing how reproductive futurism can allow groups to oppress and mute others. It is my hope that this study will inspire other communication researchers to study the relationship between reproductive futurism and muted group theory in other cultural contexts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the way that Medvedev (2009) and Putin (2014) describe parenthood at the “Order of Parental Glory” ceremonies reified reproductive futurism and marginalized queer people. When evaluating the way that the award affected the Russian LGBTQ community, it is

clear that reproductive futurism is a factor that contributed to their marginalization. This study has broader implications for the intersection of queer theory with communication theory. The analysis also has implications for queer activism across the globe, which includes getting to know a culture before working to change it.

Limitations and Future Directions

While this study helped fill some research gaps by looking at the relationship between reproductive futurism and muted group theory in an understudied region, there were some limitations. The main limitation is that I am not fluent in the Russian language, while the Kremlin provided excellent English translations there could be some cultural context missed because I did not study the speeches in their original language.

A future direction for this work is to continue exploring the affect that Russian reproductive futurism has on other marginalized groups. Devereux (2013) explained that childless women often are marginalized by reproductive futurism. Communication researchers interested in women's reproductive rights should continue exploring how Russia's traditional values and nationally televised "Order of Parental Glory" ceremony affects women who do not desire or cannot have children. Feminist communication researchers should also examine how the traditional family values upheld by the Russian government affect female career options in the region.

The widest reaching future direction is for communication scholars to keep looking at queer experiences cross culturally. Reproductive futurism and muted group theory operate differently depending on cultural context, so more research on the queer experience abroad would be extremely helpful in advancing queer communication research. The privileging of

heteronormativity has a profound effect on the queer experience and continuing this research can further theoretical understanding and create new avenues for activism across the globe.

Implications

This study has two major implications, a theoretical implication and an implication for queer activism. The first implication is that reproductive futurism can be seen as a factor that creates muted groups. Simply put, the heteronormative frames that privilege heterosexual families are used to marginalize LGBTQ individuals. Edelman first wrote about reproductive futurism in 2004, but reproductive futurism has mostly stayed within the confines of queer theory. Likewise, muted group theory does an excellent job at explaining who is silenced, but does not always capture all the factors that are a part of that silencing. Kramarae (1981) first used muted group theory in communication studies but had taken the theory from anthropology- this shows how permeable and interdisciplinary communication research can be. It is time for more intersectionality between queer theory and communication theory, in doing so communication researchers can study the queer experience more effectively.

The implication from this study for queer activism is that we need to understand a culture before we can change it. I knew that Russia was a hard place for queer individuals but before I started this project I had no idea how extreme conservative values in Russia were. The idea of the “Order of Parental Glory” awards seems like something that could be found in a dystopian novel, or some historical account of the second World War (after all, Stalin did start the tradition). But a national award does not appear without context, and deeply internalized heteronormativity and reproductive futurism now endangers Russian queer lives. To help activist efforts in Russia, activists from Western nations will have to completely rethink their approach, keeping the history, culture, and Russian government in mind.

Queer lives will continue to be at risk, until activists can pave the way for a more accepting and inclusive global society. Currently Russian LGBTQ individuals are in danger, most especially in Chechnya where they are being rounded up and executed. I will continue to participate in queer resistance and challenge heteronormative oppressors in every corner of the world. It is my hope that readers of this piece will also resist the reproductive frames that silence queer people and threaten queer lives.

References

- Aiello, G., Bakshi, S., Bilge, S., Hall, L., Johnston, L., Perez, K., & Chavez, K. (2013). Here, and not yet here: A dialogue at the intersection of queer, trans, and culture. *Journal of International & Intercultural Communication*, 6, 96-117. doi: 10.1080/17513057.2013.778155
- Bijie, B. & Tang, Lu. (2016). Chinese gay men's coming out narratives: Connecting social relationship to co-cultural theory. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 9 (4), 351-367. doi: 10.1080/17513057.2016.1142602
- Devereux, C. (2013). "Chosen representatives in the field of shagging": Bridget Jones, Britishness, and reproductive futurism. *Genre*, 46 (3), 213- 237.
- Dolgov, Anna (2013, December 5). LGBT activist fined for breaking "Gay Propaganda" law. *The Moscow Times*. Retrieved from <http://themoscowtimes.com/news/article/lgbt-activist-fined-for-breaking-gay-propaganda-law/490844.html#ixzz2nqB3xYU1>.
- Edelman, L. (2004) *No future: Queer theory and the death drive*. London, UK: Duke University Press.
- Elder, M. (2009, January 17). Russia awards 'order of parental glory' to prolific parents. *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/4279145/Russia-awards-order-of-parental-glory-to-prolific-parents.html>
- Kramarae, C. (1981). *Women and Men Speaking*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Kramarae, C. (2005). Muted group theory and communication: Asking dangerous questions. *Women and Language*, 28 (2), 55- 72.

- Mason, K. (2017). "Won't someone think of the children?": Reproductive futurism and same-sex marriage in US courts, 2003-2015. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 1-16. doi 10.1007/s13178-017-0279-8
- Medvedev, D. (2009, June 1). *Speech at ceremony awarding the Order of Parental Glory to parents of large families*. Retrieved from <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/4252>
- Owen, W.F. (1984). Interpretive themes in relational communication. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 70, 274-287.
- Putin, V. (2014, February 17). *State council presidium meeting on family, motherhood and childhood policy*. Retrieved from <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20265>
- Putin, V. (2014, June 2). *Vladimir Putin presented the Order of Parental Glory*. Retrieved from <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/45820>
- Putin, V. (2015, June 1). *Presentation of the Order of Parental Glory*. Retrieved from <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/49613>
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research. Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Washington Post Editorial Board (2017, April 6). Gay and terrified in Chechnya. *The Washington Post* [Online]. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/gay-and-terrified-in-chechnya/2017/04/09/b128822e-18a1-11e7-855e-4824bbb5d748_story.html?utm_term=.a8ededaa18fc

Wilkinson, C. (2014). Putting “traditional values” into practice: The rise and contestation of anti-homopropaganda laws in Russia. *Journal of Human Rights*, 13, 363-379. doi: 10.1080/14754835.2014.919218