



Premeditated, Organized and Impactful: Dating Violence as a Method of Committing Hate Crimes Against LGBTQ People in Russia

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Abstract

Purpose The purpose of the research is to identify and analyze the cases of dating violence among the hate crimes against LGBTQ people in Russia. Dating violence (attacks on LGBTQ people with the use of dating services) became a common method of committing hate crimes in Russia in the late 2010s and was enabled by the discriminatory policies of the state.

Method This research is part of a bigger project on anti-LGBTQ violence. The project generated a database of more than 1000 cases of such violence between 2010 and 2020 using court rulings as a primary source of data. The current research is a continuation of this effort, it is looking into a specific category of hate crime – premeditated attacks in order to analyze the cases of dating violence.

Results The research established that most of the cases in the category of premeditated attacks are cases of dating violence (239 out of 347). Most of those crimes (209) are cases of collective violence (committed by different anti-LGBTQ hate groups). There is evidence of the community impact in the incidents and in the agendas of the hate groups.

Conclusions The research adds to the theoretical model of the progression of prejudice and argues that dating violence represents a more developed form of violence against LGBTQ people. This is due to the three distinguishing features (premeditation, collective form, and community impact) that are present in the cases.

Keywords Dating violence · LGBTQ · Hate crimes · Discrimination

Introduction

Dating violence poses an especially serious problem in the context of anti-LGBTQ violence as it can be used as a method of a hate crime specific to this group of victims. Dating violence is a common problem among LGBTQ people (research with over 400 participants shows that 32.8% of respondents reported cases of dating violence (Yu et al., 2013)) and it has dangerous consequences as it leads to psychological problems, mental disorders, and suicide (Freedner et al., 2002). However, the research on LGBTQ dating violence is mostly concerned with the cases of dating violence in the context of an intimate relationship (Freedner et al., 2002; Dank et al., 2014; Kaukinen, 2014; Martin-Storey and Fromme, 2021) with no research

dedicated to studying dating violence as a method of committing hate crimes. In Russia, this method became common after 2013 and was closely connected with the activity of anti-LGBTQ hate groups (aka vigilante groups) that used the method of dating violence to commit hate crimes against LGBTQ victims. The most famous hate group was Occupy-Pedophilia, which at the peak of its activity was active in 40 different regions of Russia (Favarel-Garrigues, 2020, p. 314). The emergence of organized hate groups was part of an upward trend in hate crimes against LGBTQ people in Russia (probably the most extreme part of this trend), a problem that remains acute today.

This upward trend in the level of violence against LGBTQ people in Russia coincided with the introduction of discriminatory legislation (the so-called “gay propaganda law”). The current paper is part of a bigger research project that discussed how the introduction of this law affected the level of hate crimes against LGBTQ people (Katsuba, 2023; Kondakov, 2019, 2022). In order to elaborate on that, the most recent research project (Katsuba, 2023) generated a database with more than 1000 cases of crimes between 2010 and 2020, using the methodology from Kondakov (2019)

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based on one specific type of data – court rulings. This data showed that violence against LGBTQ people in Russia changed both quantitatively (more crimes occurred after 2013 on average per year) and qualitatively (the crimes are different in their character, new categories of crimes emerge, and more cases of extreme violence occur). The research proposed two categories – premeditated and not premeditated crimes and suggested that there is an increase in crimes that were organized and planned in advance with a purposeful selection of homosexual victims (premeditated attacks). The current paper analyzes this category further and provides an inquiry into a specific method of premeditated attacks – dating violence.

Dating violence is a specific method of committing hate crimes against LGBTQ people when perpetrators use dating services in order to select and target homosexual victims. This became a convenient tool that was used by hate groups. The research will look into the cases of dating violence in the database of hate crimes, using court rulings as the primary source of data. This will help to answer two research questions: what is the level of dating violence among all the premeditated attacks? What are the main characteristics of dating violence that distinguish these cases from other types of anti-LGBTQ hate crimes?

The research considers that when the method of dating violence is employed by the perpetrators, it represents a more developed form of violence against LGBTQ people – due to three distinguishing features. First, these crimes are always premeditated (planned and organized in advance with the usage of dating services as means of accessing the victims, rather than spontaneous and sporadic). Second, they are cases of collective violence (more often committed by groups of perpetrators rather than individuals). Third, these crimes have a so-called “community impact” (ODIHR, 2009, p.20), the perpetrators aim at the broader LGBTQ community and not the immediate victim only. They reach this goal before the attacks (by publishing their ideologies in books and manifestos) as well as after the attacks (by disseminating the videos of crimes on the Internet) to send a symbolic message to the community as a whole.

The paper uses the theoretical model of the progression of prejudice (based on Allport, 1954) to argue that dating violence as a method of committing hate crimes against LGBTQ people represents a more developed form of homophobic violence. The model argues that discrimination progresses into violence. The current paper adds to this stating that the influence of discriminatory legislation on the level of violence is better represented by a qualitative change rather than a quantitative increase – the fact that the crimes became more elaborate after 2013 is more illustrative than the fact that there are more crimes overall.

In order to answer the research questions, the paper will elaborate on the following. First, the definition of

dating violence as a specific method of committing hate crimes. Second, the idea of the progression of prejudice (from discrimination into violence) in order to articulate the idea that dating violence is a more developed form of violence against LGBTQ people. Third, the context of anti-LGBTQ hate crimes in Russia. Finally, the research will study the existing database of hate crimes in order to identify cases of dating violence among all the premeditated attacks and study their main characteristics and types.

Dating Violence – Definition and the Use as a Method of Committing Hate Crimes

Dating violence is defined as a pattern of behaviors in the context of an intimate relationship that “encompasses varying levels and types of abuse that can range from physical and sexual violence to forms of psychological and emotional abuse” (Dank et al., 2014, p. 846; Freedner et al., 2002; Mulford & Giordano, 2008). There is extensive research on dating violence in heterosexual relationships, but the research on dating violence among sexual minorities is limited (Martin-Storey & Fromme, 2021, p. 137). The existing contributions prove that dating violence is a common and serious problem, studying it quantitatively. Research shows a high percentage of dating violence among homosexuals – 44% ($n = 101$; Freedner et al, 2002), 32.8% ($n = 400$; Yu et al, 2013), and 42.8%, ($n = 229$; Dank et al, 2014). The research also shows that dating violence causes serious psychological and physical health consequences, such as sexual risk behavior and suicidality (Silverman et al., 2001), depression, anxiety, and substance use (Chiodo et al., 2012), posttraumatic stress disorder, and high-risk sexual behaviors (Connolly & Josephson, 2007). The aforementioned research projects were focused on dating violence in the context of an intimate relationship. No research endeavor explored dating violence as a specific method of committing hate crimes.

Hate crime is defined as a criminal act committed with a bias motive (which means that the perpetrator intentionally chooses the victim because of some protected characteristic) (ODIHR, 2009, p. 16). Therefore, there are 2 criteria of hate crime – a base offense (the act constitutes a criminal offense in a jurisdiction) and a bias motive. While the former is self-explanatory, the latter can be manifested in different ways. In some crimes, the very nature of the attack shows that it was motivated by bias, for example, the place for the attack can be chosen because it gives access to the targeted communities (e.g., a gay club) (ODIHR, 2009, p. 16). Cases of dating violence can qualify as hate crime, if there is a clear manifestation of bias, the perpetrators use dating services

to receive access to homosexual victims in the area and to purposefully select the target.

In Russia, dating violence is connected with the activity of organized hate groups (Favarel-Garrigues, 2020; Favarel-Garrigues & Shukan, 2019; Kasra, 2017; Podgor-nova, 2014). These groups employed this method to commit hate crimes against LGBTQ people. Favarel-Garrigues (2020) described these crimes as following the same scenario. A profile of a young man (a “bait”) is created on a dating website or an app. The profile is then used to contact homosexual victims offering them to arrange a date. Usually, the “bait” meets the future victim on a presumed date and they have some time to talk. Then at some moment, a group of perpetrators (usually 5–7 people) appears at the scene. They interrogate the victim (this includes verbal and physical attacks) while filming all their actions. The videos are later disseminated on the Internet. This qualifies as dating violence since the parties meet under the pretext of dating, and the goal of dating (or intimacy) is presumed by the victim (for the perpetrators the goal is to commit a crime).

Cases of dating violence satisfy two criteria of hate crime set forth by the ODIHR (criminal acts committed with a bias motive). The base offense most commonly includes such criminal acts as robbery with violence, theft, misappropriation, and assault. The manifestation of bias comes from two elements – premeditation (the crimes are planned in advance with the intent to specifically attack a homosexual target), and a collective form of this violence (committed by organized hate groups with specified homophobic agendas).

One additional feature of hate crimes is the so-called “community impact”. According to Perry (2001), the ultimate purpose of hate crime is “to send a symbolic message to the community as a whole and to create an atmosphere of hostility and fear” (Perry, 2001, p. 10). This will lead to an impact on the community that shares the characteristic of the victim, “other members of the community can feel not only at risk of a future attack, they may experience attack as if they were themselves the victim” (ODIHR, 2009, p.20). The immediate victim in that sense is interchangeable and it is the community itself that is being targeted by the perpetrators. What kind of symbolic message is there? In cases of dating violence, there are 2 common ways to affect the community – before the attacks (through destructive agendas, books and manifestos where the hate groups outline their hatred towards LGBTQ people) as well as after the crimes (through videos of the attacks that are disseminated on the Internet to reach a broader audience). Therefore, in cases of dating violence there is evidence of a community impact – when the perpetrators target the community, rather than the immediate victims.

To summarize, dating violence represents a specific method of committing hate crimes. The cases of dating violence have qualifying features of hate crimes (criminal

offenses committed with bias motives). As a method, it has distinguishing features – premeditation, which includes a purposeful selection of the victim, the collective form (crimes are mostly committed by collective actors and hate groups), and the community impact (targeting the LGBTQ community as a whole). Because of these distinguishing features, dating violence represents a more developed form of violence against LGBTQ people, and the fact that the violence progressed into this form can be attributed to the discriminatory policies of the state. In that sense, there is an effect of the “gay propaganda law” on the level of dating violence as a method of hate crime.

Dating Violence as a More Developed Form of Violence Against LGBTQ People

The emergence of dating violence as a method of committing hate crimes against LGBTQ people in Russia is part of an upward trend in homophobic violence. Overall, hate crimes against LGBTQ people are on the rise in Russia and it is associated with the introduction of discriminatory legislation, the so-called “gay propaganda law” (Katsuba, 2023; Kondakov, 2019, 2022). This piece of legislation restricted freedom of expression for LGBTQ community, which resulted in a blanket ban (any neutral to positive LGBTQ-related expressions are prohibited as “gay propaganda”). This legislation was seen to be discriminatory against LGBTQ people as a social group (Bayev and Others v. Russia, 2017) and is a case of institutionalized discrimination which can increase the level of violence toward minority groups. In that sense, discrimination, and violence are seen as parts of the same progression (Allport, 1954; Perry, 2001; Staub, 1989; Valentino, 2005). Violence against LGBTQ people in Russia is partially produced by the introduction of discriminatory legal norms. But this violence can also vary in its forms (from less serious to more developed ones). Dating violence is a more developed form of it, the rise of this method is associated with the further deterioration of the already marginalized status of the LGBTQ community in Russia. This effect is one of the consequences of the introduction of discriminatory legislation.

The Progression of Prejudice

The connection between discriminatory policies of the state and the level of hate crimes against discriminated groups becomes visible when the two are presented as parts of the same process. The progression of prejudice is a theoretical model that can be traced back to the Allport scale of the manifestation of prejudice in society (1954). Allport scale described the progression in 4 steps – verbal rejection (includes antilocution (hate speech) and avoidance),

discrimination (by way of introducing discriminatory policies), physical attack (violence against the group), and finally, extermination, with discrimination being a decisive step on the way to violence (Allport, 1954, p. 58). Allport's model describes different stages of prejudice towards groups of people in society. The model appears to be linear, but in fact, all stages can be present in society at the same time. In that sense, the most important takeaway of the Allport scale is that "the activity on one level makes the transition to a new level easier" (Allport, 1954, p. 15). In that sense, discrimination (as well as some level of violence) always exists in society, but the increase in the level of discrimination (for example by introducing discriminatory legislation) will trigger a subsequent increase in violence. As I will show in the next section, this model can explain a similar process in relation to the "gay propaganda law" in Russia.

More contemporary authors develop similar ideas regarding the progression from discrimination into violence. Herek et al. (2007) for example pointed out that the representation of violence and discrimination as connected parts shows that hate crimes are systematic symbolic acts of bias-motivated violence, which grow naturally as extensions of racism, sexism, and homophobia and product of discriminatory legislation through which stigma is expressed and reinforced. Discriminatory laws are "enacted and enforced to systematically deny stigmatized outgroups access to resources and benefits" (Herek et al., 2007, p. 181). Perry (2001) discussed this process in relation to sexuality. Identities can be constructed based on sexuality and therefore, hierarchies of identities can be constructed as well. The hierarchical distribution of power is done by disadvantaging sexual minorities through means of discrimination. Then, the marginalized status of the minorities serves as a factor that can increase the number of hate crimes (ODIHR, 2009), which will be justified as they are "already deemed deviant and inferior" (Perry, 2001, p. 56). Therefore, discrimination progresses into a hate crime against marginalized sexual minorities that "emerges as a resource for doing a difference and punishing those doing a difference inappropriately" and is aimed at "limiting the privileges of the groups to maintain the superiority of other groups" (Perry, 2001, p. 55).

Therefore, there is a common idea in the literature of a progression of prejudice, that represents discrimination and violence as parts of the same scale with discrimination being an important mechanism that enables the increase of violence towards the discriminated minority group. However, the "physical violence" category can be divided into two parts—premeditated and not premeditated. I add this to the Allportian theoretical model and argue that the violence that is produced by institutionalized discrimination varies in its forms and can progress from less serious to more developed ones. There is a difference between isolated violent acts of

random individuals and premeditated actions of organized hate groups. Staub (1989) had a similar view that organized violence (and not overall violence) is a specific marker that reflects existing institutional forms of bias (institutionalized discrimination). Therefore, in a similar manner, as prejudice progresses from one form into another, violence develops into more serious forms, from spontaneous and isolated cases of violence committed by separate individuals to premeditated and systematic serial crimes, committed by organized groups. Dating violence belongs to the latter category because it has three distinguishing features that I will describe in the following subsection.

Dating Violence as a Further Step on the Progression of Violence: Three Distinguishing Features

I argue that dating violence represents a further step on the progression of violence and a more developed form of violence due to (1) premeditation, (2) the collective form, and (3) the community impact. The progression into this form of violence is also connected to discrimination and the introduction of discriminatory policies by the state—Harff (2007) suggested that "when persecution or elimination of certain groups in society is encouraged by the official ideology of the elite in power, the likelihood of a conflict transitioning into mass murder is significantly higher" (Harff, 2007, p. 63). Organized and premeditated form of violence, although not as widespread, represents a more significant danger for the marginalized group (Levin & McDevitt, 2009). Specifically, the actions of hate groups are "destructive for many reasons including the perpetuation of prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination against individuals based simply on group membership <...> it has a ripple effect in society and opens the door to increased societal violence committed by both hate group members and non-members against individuals within specific target groups" (Woolf & Hulsizer, 2004, p. 42). The emergence of premeditated organized crimes (including cases of dating violence) signifies a qualitative change in the level of violence against LGBTQ people produced by the "gay propaganda law". When such form of violence emerges in the society, the next step in the progression would be state-sponsored violence against the group, mass atrocities and an attempt to exterminate.

Additionally there is also the connection between discrimination and dating violence specifically. Martin-Storey and Fromme (2021) argued that discrimination is a mediating factor that explains a higher percentage of dating violence among sexual minorities. "discrimination or patterns of negative individual and institutional-level treatment of a group <...> is linked with a greater vulnerability for intimate partner violence" (Martin-Storey & Fromme, 2021, p. 135). I take this argument further

to say that discrimination does not only affect the level of dating violence but it is also able to create conditions where it can be used as a specific method of hate crime and facilitate the progression of violence against the group. As a method, it is described by using the following three characteristics.

1. Premeditation

Article 30 of the Russian Criminal Code describes premeditation of crime as acts aimed at acquiring means of committing a crime, the search for accomplices in a crime, conspiracy to commit a crime, or other deliberate creation of conditions for the commission of a crime (Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, 2023). In the previous research (Katsuba, 2023), premeditated crimes were included in a separate category of hate crimes against LGBTQ people and defined as “crimes that are planned in advance with a purposeful selection of a homosexual victim <...> and committed with preparation” (p.19). Since cases of dating violence which are attributed to the activity of homophobic hate groups, with the victims being targeted through dating apps or websites, those cases are included in the category of premeditated crimes. The current research paper will further analyze hate crime incidents in the category of premeditated crimes to see the number of cases of dating violence in it.

2. Collective form

The second characteristic of the cases of dating violence is the fact that they are cases of organized crime, committed by various hate groups. Tilly (2003) defines collective violence using three criteria: they (i) inflict physical damage on persons and/or objects; (ii) involve at least two perpetrators of damage; and (iii) result at least in part from coordination among persons who perform the damaging acts (Tilly, 2003). There are also definitions of hate groups in the literature. Ryan and Leeson (2011) defined them as “organizations of individuals whose beliefs or practices attack or malign an entire class of people, typically for their immutable characteristics, such as race or sexual orientation, but sometimes for their mutable ones, such as religious beliefs” (Ryan & Leeson, 2011, p. 256). Federal Bureau of Investigation proposed a similar working definition of hate groups as organizations with a “primary purpose to promote animosity, hostility, and malice against persons belonging to a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or ethnicity/national origin which differs from that of the members of the organization” (“Hate Crime Data Collection Guidelines and Training Manual”, 2022). The current paper will adopt the definitions of collective violence

and hate groups to analyze cases of dating violence and see if they satisfy the criteria mentioned in the literature.

3. Community Impact

Community impact is described by the ODIHR as the negative effect of hate crime that goes further and affects the community that shares the characteristic of the victim. The community may be frightened, intimidated, and at risk of future attack (ODIHR, 2009, p. 20). As I mentioned earlier, in cases of dating violence, there is an element of filming the attacks and disseminating the videos on the Internet, targeting the LGBTQ community itself, rather than the immediate victim only. Kasra (2017) suggests that Occupy Pedophilia (and other hate groups) used visibility as a weapon against the victims – “the videos that were filmed and disseminated by them are used to intimidate anyone who may have been watching and violating social rules they deemed as sacrosanct” (Kasra, 2017, p. 185). The dissemination of the videos depicting the victims engaging in humiliating tasks “further dehumanizes and relentlessly shames the photographed victims” (Kasra, 2017, p. 185). This, as Butler (2007) noted, works “to extend the scene in time, to keep the scene going, again and again, promising a further visual consumption of the sadistic pleasure after the event” (Butler, 2007, p. 961) and potentially as long as the videos are available.

Favarel-Garrigues and Shukan (2019), Favarel-Garrigues (2020) connected the activity of Occupy Pedophilia (as well as other vigilante groups that use visibility as a weapon) to the tradition of the “involvement of Soviet citizens against crime (the ‘druzhinniki’), [...] taking the law into their own hands, these rule enforcers also echo practices of ‘samosud’ (self-justice) which have also been observed during the post-Soviet era” (Favarel-Garrigues & Shukan, 2019, p. 6). Kasra (2017) suggest a similar idea of “taking law in your hands”, claiming that the mechanism adopted by Occupy Pedophilia used a mechanism of discipline and punishment, similar with the conventional law enforcement. The basic function of social regulation provided by the law informs the citizens about accepted and prohibited forms of behavior so that they can adjust their actions towards that. The symbolic message conveyed by the followers of Occupy Pedophilia makes “the act of torture visibly known to institute a system of power-knowledge about the consequences of being openly gay in Russia” which is “aimed to teach others how to enforce homophobic values and at the same time coerce homosexual viewers into regulating their own behavior through their terror of being caught, photographed, and viewed themselves” (Kasra, 2017, p. 184). This mechanism illustrates the community impact of dating violence and manifests itself in the videos of the attacks that are disseminated on the Internet as well as the agendas of the hate groups.

To summarize, I use the theoretical framework of the progression of prejudice to argue that there is an influence of a discriminatory legal norm on the level of dating violence. I see dating violence as a more developed form of violence against LGBTQ people because of three characteristics described above. These three features differentiate dating violence from isolated acts of random individuals and characterize it as a systematic problem that highlights the influence of discriminatory legislation much more than the overall level of hate crimes. In the analysis section, I will apply these three criteria to the cases of dating violence in the database.

The Context of Hate Crimes Against LGBTQ People in Russia (2010–2020)

The problem of hate crimes against LGBTQ people is acute in Russia. In this section, I will apply the theoretical model of the progression of prejudice to this problem. The 4 major steps on this progression (Verbal rejection, Discrimination, Physical attack, and Extermination) are analyzed in the literature and their key aspects are the following.

Verbal rejection of the LGBTQ community was a part of negative political discourse in the mid-late 2000s. This included an increasing number of negative statements from officials as well as legal initiatives that were aimed at limiting the rights of LGBTQ citizens or reintroducing criminal liability for homosexual intercourse. Particularly, Healey (2017) discussed different legal initiatives for the protection of morals that were proposed around 2002 and targeted LGBTQ people among others. The discourse surrounding those legal initiatives included such comments as “society is undergoing a pathological mutation”, “the sexual despoliation of children is destroying the gene pool of the nation”, “seducers of children are guilty of spreading HIV infection, moral vices, and the destruction of all us ourselves as a nation” (Healey, 2017, p. 134). This discourse resulted in a number of draft bills “to restore Stalin’s 1934 ban on homosexuality <...> the law against sodomy and pederasty is needed to facilitate the fight against venereal diseases and AIDS and would save the Russian nation from the population decline” (Healey, 2017, p. 134). Eremin and Petrovich-Belkin (2022) note that such drafts were proposed in 2003, 2004, and 2006. Although all three times were unsuccessful, “the anti-gay rhetoric found its way to the government level” (Eremin & Petrovich-Belkin, 2022, p. 300).

Discrimination through legal means began in 2006 with the first regional “gay propaganda” bill. Between 2006 and 2013 the “gay propaganda law” was enacted in 13 (out of 83) regions of Russia (Johnson, 2015, p. 41). The regional laws preceded and made it easier to enact the federal “gay propaganda law” in 2013. The “gay propaganda law” is a

ensorship legislation that introduced fines for “promoting non-traditional sexual relationships”. The discriminatory nature of the law in question was outlined by the ECtHR in *Bayev and Others v Russia* (2017). The Court’s decision in *Bayev* was largely ignored by the authorities, the law is still being actively enforced – “in 2013–2021 there have been 117 cases of implementing the “gay propaganda law,” 36 of them resulted in convictions” (Katsuba, 2023, p. 3). Moreover, in November 2022, a set of new laws was enacted that introduced new restrictions, related to the “gay propaganda” and equalized homosexuality and pedophilia (“Prinyaty zakonoproekty o zashite traditsionnykh tsennostey,” n.d.). The newly enacted laws include a ban on the “promotion of non-traditional sexual relations and pedophilia” (technically equalizing the two terms) as well as “calls for gender reassignment”. Therefore, institutional discrimination continues to progress in Russia.

Physical Violence 1: Quantitative Increase Hate crimes against LGBTQ people in Russia existed before 2013, but the level of violence increased significantly after the introduction of the discriminatory legislation. The increase was recorded in the following year (Kondakov, 2019), and remained on a higher level throughout the decade (Katsuba, 2023). Figure 1 summarizes the findings for the level of physical violence against LGBTQ people.

The data shows an increasing trend in the number of hate crimes against LGBTQ people after 2013 (the year when the “gay propaganda law” entered into force). The numbers remained at a higher level until the end of the decade. In 2014 for example, the number of crimes was three times higher than in 2010 (138 compared to 46). Between 2010 and 2020 the research managed to identify 1056 hate crimes committed against 853 individuals with 365 fatalities (Katsuba, 2023, p. 17).

Physical Violence 2: Qualitative Change Additionally, except the quantitative increase, there had been a qualitative change in the hate crimes against LGBTQ people in Russia, which includes two factors—more cases of extreme violence, and more cases in the category of premeditated crimes. The research shows that “there had been consistently more premeditated attacks for 6 consecutive years (2014–2019) <...> moreover, 3 years in a row it was a predominant category of hate crime against LGBTQ people in Russia (2017, 2018, 2019). It means that a specific type of hate crime was enabled after 2013 and has a long-lasting effect that only ceased at the end of the decade. For a period of time, most of the hate crimes against LGBTQ people were the ones that were committed with preparation, including a purposeful selection of a homosexual target” (Katsuba, 2023, p. 21). Figure 2 summarizes this.

Fig. 1 Number of hate crimes against LGBTQ people in Russia (2010–2020) (Source: Katsuba, 2023)

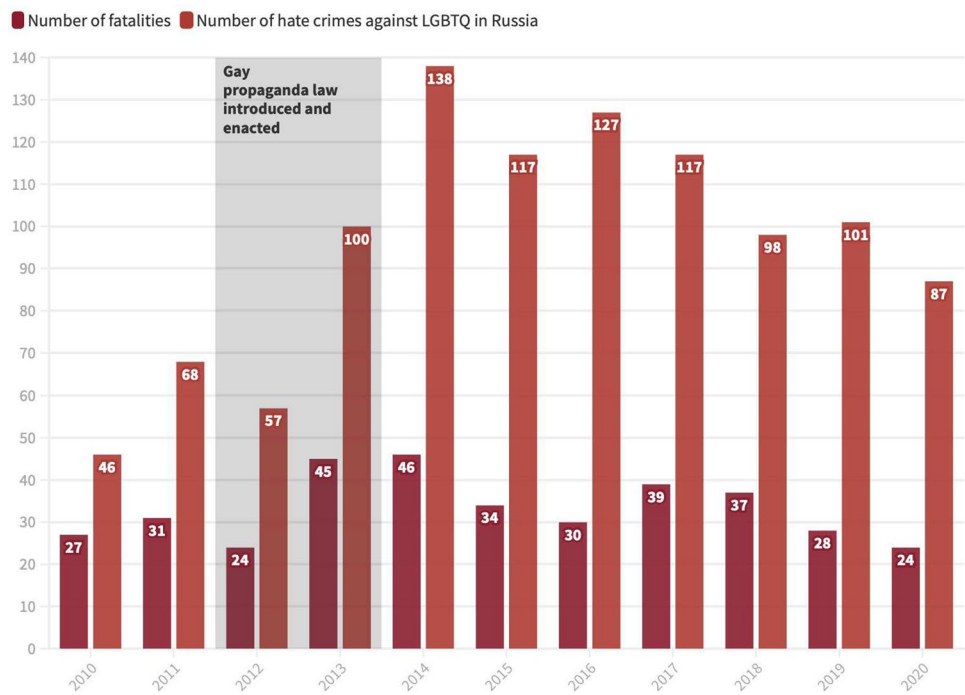
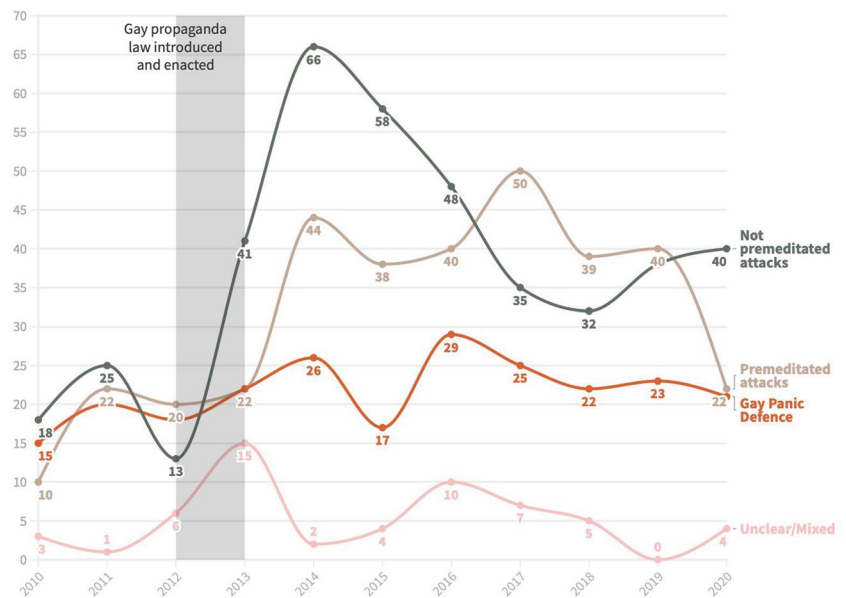


Fig. 2 Hate crimes against LGBTQ people in Russia by category (Source: Katsuba, 2023)



Therefore, the “physical attack” step on the progression of prejudice can be further divided into premeditated and not premeditated crime. Not premeditated crimes are committed without preparation, without purposeful targeting of the victim, spontaneously, they often are attributed to random individual actors and are not systematic. This category was the most prevalent category in LGBTQ hate crimes in Russia in 2013–2016. The category of premeditated crimes includes crimes that are committed with preparation, with a purposeful choice of the victim, organized and systematic.

This category was the most prevalent in 2017–2019. Dating violence always falls into the latter category. Not all premeditated attacks would be cases of dating violence, therefore the task of the current research is to study this category further. The influence of the “gay propaganda law” on the quantitative change in the number of hate crimes might be disputable since it can be described as a case of correlation rather than causation. However, the qualitative change (crimes becoming more specific and more illustrative) strengthens the link between discriminatory policy and the

rise of violence against the discriminated group and makes the progression of hate crimes more apparent.

Extermination Systematic and institutionalized violence with the aim of extermination of the group occurred in Russia in the late 2010s. Examples include the “gay purges” in Chechnya in 2017 – systematic authorized persecution of LGBTQ community in the region that resulted in around 100 people being detained on suspicion of being gay and at least 3 dying (“Novaya Gazeta”, 2017). Another wave of “gay purges” happened in late 2018 when 40 people were detained and 2 killed (Russian LGBT Network, 2019). Unlike previous stages, very little is known about those incidents.

Therefore, the context of hate crime against LGBTQ people in Russia can be described by using the theoretical model of progression of prejudice with all major steps being apparent. Verbal rejection of LGBTQ people (early 2000s), institutionalized discrimination (second half of 2000s – early 2010s), quantitative rise in violence (2013–2015), qualitative change in violence (2016–2019), an attempt to exterminate the group in specific regions (2017, 2019).

Data Description and the Interpretation of the Results

Overall Description

The first task of the research is to establish how many cases of dating violence are in the database. In order to do that, I studied the category of premeditated attacks and introduced

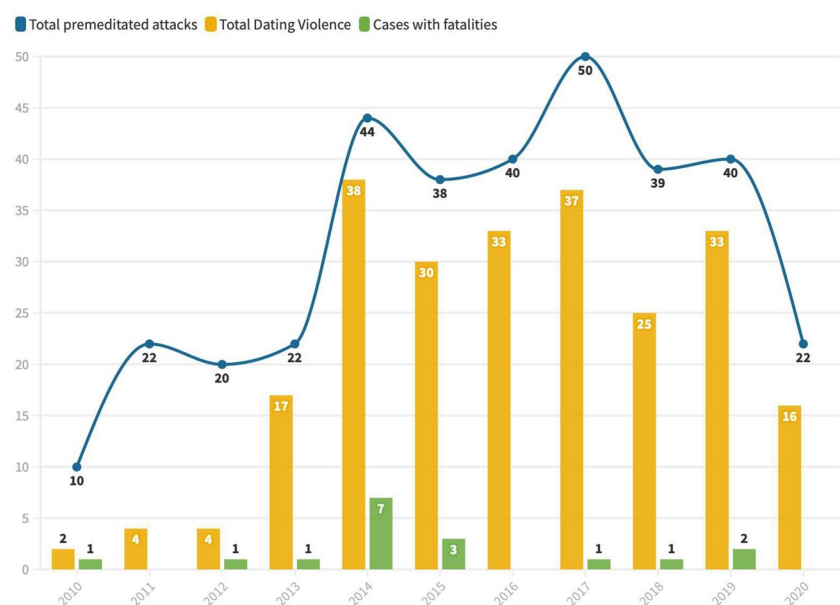
one more criterion. In order to qualify as dating violence, the hate crime should be committed in a dating setting. This does not necessarily mean that the perpetrators use dating apps or websites, but there should be an element of the dating context included (the perpetrator and the victim presumably meet for a date). The category of premeditated attacks contained 347 hate crime incidents in total. By applying this criterion, the research was able to identify 239 cases of dating violence, which amounted to 69% of all the premeditated attacks and 23% of all the hate crime incidents recorded in the database (1059).

Figure 3 shows the dynamics of premeditated attacks and specifically dating violence between 2010 and 2020. There is a noticeable change in the overall category of premeditated attacks after 2013, but the change is especially apparent in the case of dating violence. This method of hate crimes was barely used before 2013 (only 2 cases in 2010), while from 2013 onwards those cases constitute the majority of the overall premeditated attacks (38 cases in 2014). The data shows the emergence of both qualitatively different crimes (those that are planned in advance) and a specific method of those hate crimes (dating violence). This illustrates a qualitative change in the crimes against LGBTQ people that was produced by the introduction of discriminatory legislation in 2013.

The research analyzed the cases of dating violence in terms of the types of offenses according to the Criminal Code. This allows seeing what kind of offenses the category of dating violence consists of using the official terminology of the legislation.

Based on the respective articles of the Criminal Code that were applied in the case, I apply the following categories: Crimes Against Life and Health (Criminal Code

Fig. 3 Cases of dating violence in the database of hate crimes against LGBTQ



Chapter 16, the following articles: 105 (Murder), 111, 112, 115 (Intentional Infliction of Injury), 119 (Threat of Murder)), and Crimes Against Property (Criminal Code Chapter 21, the following articles: 158 (Theft), 159 (Swindling), 160 (Misappropriation), 161 (Robbery), 162 (Robbery with Violence), 163 (Extortion), 167 (Willful Destruction or Damage of Property)).

First distinguishing Feature: Premeditation

The research used an operationalized definition of premeditation as “acts aimed at acquiring means of committing a crime, the search for accomplices in a crime, conspiracy to commit a crime, or other deliberate creation of conditions for the commission of a crime” (Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, 2023, art. 30). In cases of dating violence, premeditation is apparent in the very nature of the attack. The perpetrators use dating services in order to target queer victims. In the rulings, the courts describe the aspects of premeditation in detail, including specifically outlining the usage of dating services as means of accessing the victims.

[facts established by the Court] NAME6 offered NAME7 to participate in the attack on persons of non-traditional sexual orientation, in order to seize their property. In order to do this, they created a page on the website www.gaycity.ru and posted a photo of an unknown young man that they found on the Internet. They began to receive messages from people of non-traditional sexual orientation with proposals for a meeting. NAME6 looked through them, choosing a possible victim. The perpetrators counted on the fact that the homosexuals, whom they would attack, would not turn to law enforcement agencies, as they would be ashamed to admit their sexual orientation to strangers. Ruling 1-3/2013 Butyrsky District Court, Moscow

In the above excerpt, there is evidence of searching for accomplices in crime (one of the perpetrators proposed the idea to others), creating the conditions for committing the crime (creating a profile on a dating website with the intent to find a potential victim), as well as a purposeful choice of the victim.

In premeditated crimes, bias is manifested in the discriminatory selection of victims. In the above, the perpetrators specifically chose to target LGBTQ people “to steal the property” without any indication of hostile feelings towards victims. This characterizes the motive as related to the discriminatory selection of the victim. In the discriminatory selection model, the emotional element (hatred or enmity) is absent and the crime is committed “because of” the protected characteristic. This includes crimes (most commonly robberies) committed against “easy targets”, that were

chosen based on the fact that they are vulnerable and less likely to report such incidents to the police.

However, there are crimes that were premeditated with the manifestation of hostility toward LGBTQ people. In the hostility model, the offender must have committed the offense because of hostility or hatred based on one of the protected characteristics (ODIHR, 2009, p. 47), which is similar to the popular conception of hate crime. This model requires evidence that the offender demonstrated or acted out of enmity towards the victim, which can be found in court rulings. Below are two examples of cases of dating violence in which the perpetrators committed premeditated crimes out of hostility towards LGBTQ people.

[facts established by the Court] NAME1 accessed the webpage “Gays of Krasnogorsk”, and found Victim N1 there, and in the course of communication learned from the latter that he was looking for a meeting with a young man to enter into an intimate relationship. Being an ardent opponent of sexual minorities, NAME1 decided to punish Victim N1 for these actions. Ruling 1-200/2017, Krasnogorsky City Court, Moscow Oblast

These examples are cases of the hostility model. The perpetrators indicated their hostile feelings toward the victim’s sexuality by stating that they are “opponents of sexual minorities” or by intending to “punish” the victim for being homosexual.

To sum up, there are indications of premeditation in cases of dating violence. This includes creating conditions for committing the crime, searching for accomplices and crime, and acquiring means of committing crimes (setting up profiles on dating services). There are two main models of how the bias is manifested – it can be either hostility towards the group or a discriminatory selection.

Second Distinguishing Feature: Collective Violence

The research used 3 criteria of collective violence: (1) two or more perpetrators, who (2) act in coordination with each other, and the actions of which (3) result in committing a criminal offense. Therefore, the research studied the cases of dating violence in order to establish the main actors. In the vast majority (205 cases, 85%) the crimes were committed by organized groups. Most of the groups emerged around 2013 and have more or less similar ways of committing crimes, they “lure gay men and teenage boys on the pretext of a fake date and humiliate and often physically abuse them” (Podgornova, 2014), a typical incident is described in the following example.

[from the testimony of the defendant] The defendant stated that his friend NAME1 told him about an unusual way to earn money, by “hunting” people with

non-traditional sexual orientation. NAME1 told him that he found the victim on the Internet and asked the defendant to join. It seemed to him to be an easy way to make money, so he agreed. <...> When they arrived at a designated place, they saw the victim waiting for them. Immediately NAME1 attacked the victim, hitting him in the face. The victim fell on the ground and the others then joined in and started beating the victim. At some point, the defendant stopped them when he saw that the victim was being severely beaten. He gave the victim water to drink and to wash his face, and then started recording a video, talking to him and asking him why he was a person of non-traditional sexual orientation. The defendant did not beat him again, but the others continued to beat him occasionally. Eventually, the victim lost consciousness, the defendant thought he was faking and left him. One of the attackers dragged the victim into the bushes. The defendant learned that the victim died from the police on August 3, 2017.

Ruling 01-007/2019 Moscow

In the above example, the court described the formation of the organized hate group for the purpose of attacking the homosexual victim. In some cases, the hate groups were formed for one specific crime and were dissolved after. However, there are cases of serial hate groups that committed multiple crimes against a number of victims. For example, a hate group in Moscow that was active in 2013–2014 committed crimes against 8 victims. All victims were targeted through the means of dating apps, robbed, beaten, and at least 3 of them were killed. In total there are 5 hate groups with a victim count of more than 5 (Fig. 4).

Figure 5 illustrates the main types of perpetrators. The data proves that dating violence is most commonly a case of organized violence. Out of all the organized groups, Occupy Pedophilia is the most active one (34 cases in total). It is distinguished from other hate groups since it had branches and imitators in a number of regions across Russia, as well as a well-known brand name, a well-defined ideology communicated by a charismatic leader, and finally – a well-functioning organizational structure.

The cases of hate crimes committed by Occupy Pedophilia are easy to identify in the database since the name of this hate group is well-known and is usually specifically mentioned in the court rulings and the perpetrators talk about the agenda and the purpose of the group in their testimonies.

Being interrogated as a suspect CA stated that they are members of a social group Occupy Pedophilia, the members of which are against homosexuality. They earn money in the following way: they find people on social media who are prone to same-sex sexual relations, lure them into an apartment (thereby verifying their non-traditional sexual inclinations), and then film them and if this person offers money, take it from them.

Ruling 1-24/2017

In the above excerpt, the perpetrators mention the name of their hate group and briefly describe the nature of its activity as being “against homosexuality”. This aligns with the ideology of the group enshrined in its manifesto.

To summarize, the vast majority of dating violence incidents (85%) are cases of collective violence, that included two or more perpetrators. Moreover, the research identified 5

Fig. 4 Types of offenses

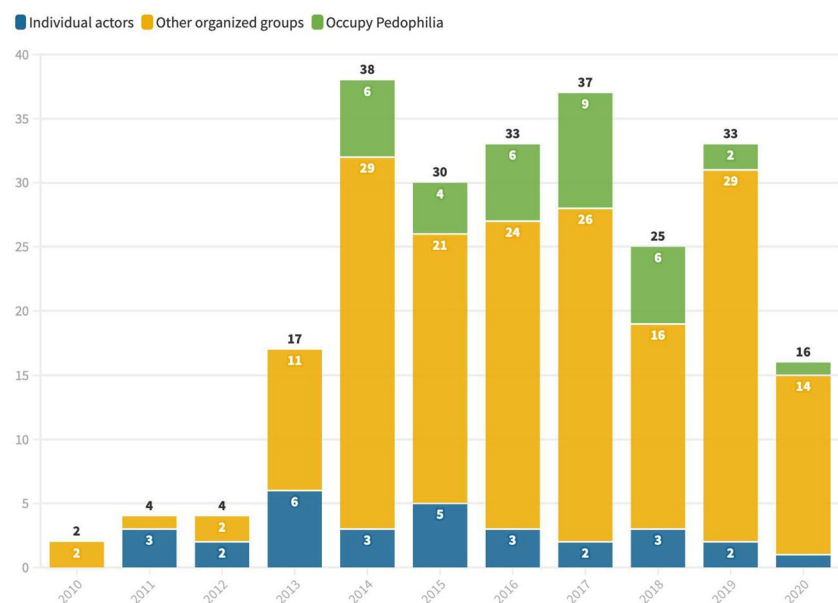
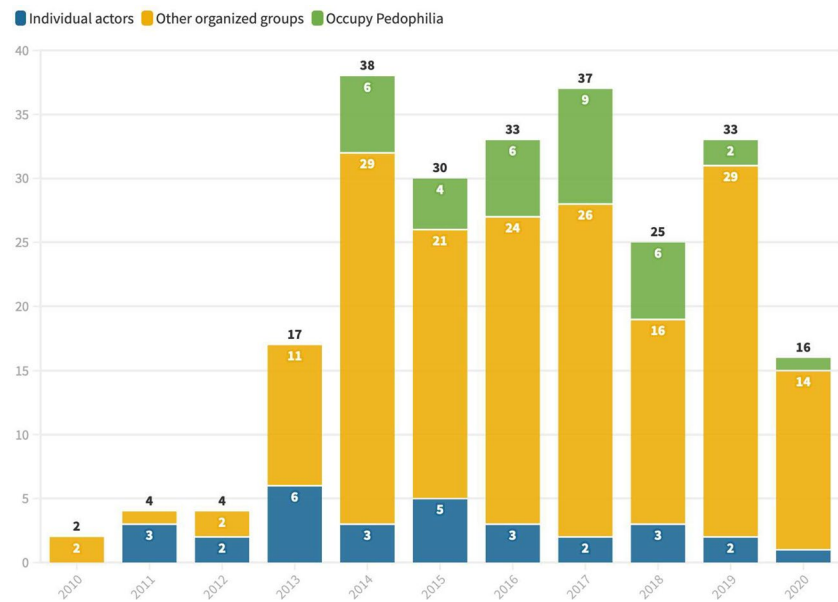


Fig. 5 Types of main perpetrators

hate groups that committed serial crimes against more than 5 victims each. Out of all the hate groups, Occupy Pedophilia is the most active one with 34 cases of hate crime in total.

Third Distinguishing Feature: the Community Impact

As outlined earlier, an additional characteristic of hate crimes is the community impact (when the community that shares the characteristic of the victim is being targeted, not the immediate victim only). The community impact can be observed in two ways: (1) through destructive agendas, books, and manifestos, that aim to “promote animosity, hostility, and malice against persons belonging to a sexual orientation that differs from the members of the hate groups” (Ryan & Leeson, 2011); (2) through videos of attacks that are disseminated on the Internet.

Hate groups are defined as groups of perpetrators that commit hate crimes against specific groups of people based on their protected characteristics. I will describe the community impact of the main hate group: Occupy Pedophilia. Occupy Pedophilia project was launched in 2012 by Maxim Martsinkevich, a.k.a. Tesak (‘hatchet’). Tesak and his movement started many projects fighting against the vices of Russian society: Occupy Narkophilia (against drug dealers), Occupy Alcophilia (against selling alcohol and cigarettes to minors), Occupy Gerontophilia (against male adolescent prostitution). At the peak of its activity, Occupy Pedophilia included branches in 22 cities in Russia and Ukraine under Tesak’s supervision (Podgornova, 2014) as well as numerous imitators (Favarel-Garrigues (2020) identified copycat movements in as many as 40 different regions of Russia (Favarel-Garrigues, 2020, p. 314)).

Community Impact of Occupy Pedophilia: (1) Before the Attacks—Destructive Agendas

Occupy pedophilia targeted the LGBTQ community in their manifesto. Tesak created an ideology defined as “sotsial-tutovizm”, which drew on Nietzschean philosophy as well as nationalist and far-right political agendas. He described “sotsial-tutovizm” as a “form of living in a dying society”. In his book “Restrukt” (listed as extremist material and prohibited for dissemination in Russia), Tesak describes himself and his social movement through analogy with a “tutovik”.

Tutovik is a type of mushroom that grows on weakened and dying trees. It takes root in them and destroys the trees that are already dying. It helps to clear the forest of the trees that are unfit and unsuitable to make way and clear the space [Tesak is referring to Chaga or *Inonotus obliquus*, which is a fungus, that is parasitic on trees]. We [Tesak and his followers, including Occupy Pedophilia] suggest that our society is like a forest. In which trees are all sorts of social constructs. Some of them are strong and healthy, while others are corrupt and unfit. Therefore, the task of the tutovik mushroom is to clean and renew society by killing what needs to die (Martsinkevitch, n.d.).

In this manifesto, Tesak describes the agenda of his “social movement” which allows creating enmity towards specific social groups that are deemed “unfit”. Woolf and Hulsizer (2004) note that this kind of narrative is common for hate groups, it utilizes “a variety of psychosocial mechanisms” and “inaccurate perspectives of specific minority groups” to create hostility and to provide “the shortest

routes to an individual's sense of perceived stability through mechanisms such as scapegoating, just-world-thinking, ingroup-outgroup polarization, hedonic balancing” (Woolf & Hulsizer, 2004, p. 46). In his manifesto, the “dead trees” or “unfit social constructs” are supposed to represent all the societal groups that should be eliminated from society. Tesak specifically addresses homosexuality in his manifesto, stating that it “cannot be cured” and therefore needs to be exterminated:

Restrukt [a person who accepts the philosophy of “sotsial-tutovizm”] is heterosexual. In all his actions, he relies on the laws of nature, therefore he does not allow any tolerance for homosexuals. He hates them, like all other vices. However, this one, unlike some of the others, cannot be cured. There might be former smokers and former alcoholics, but there cannot be former faggots (Martsinkevitch, n.d.).

In the above example, Tesak uses a persuasive rhetorical narrative that is often used by hate groups. In that sense, “hate groups function similarly to cults in regards to recruitment and most importantly can provide a sense of belonging, identity, self-worth, safety, and direction”, which is particularly relevant in times of social, political, or economic crisis (Woolf & Hulsizer, 2004, p. 40). Moreover, Occupy Pedophilia was formed around the moral code of Restrukt. This kind of hate group is more likely than non-morality-based groups to exhibit “out-group hate” as a response to the built sense of belongingness. This means that these groups are potentially more dangerous than hate groups based solely on profit-making as the “attitudes rooted in morality have considerable motivational force or action potential in directing our behavior and are typically accompanied by strong emotions [...] the unique nature of morality suggests that outgroup negativity will play a central role” (Parker & Janoff-Bulman, 2013).

Community Impact of Occupy Pedophilia: (2) After The Attacks—videos

All branches of Occupy Pedophilia had a strong online presence, which allowed them to communicate the symbolic message and target the community. Podgornova (2014) mentioned that the VK page where the videos were published had almost 200,000 followers with more than 600 other VK pages with “Occupy Pedophilia” in their titles (Podgornova, 2014, p. 29). At the peak of their activity, there were over 150 videos of Occupy Pedophilia attacks available on the internet (Favarel-Garrigues, 2020, p. 314). Favarel-Garrigues (2020) analyzed the videos and described the number of torturous acts that constituted the symbolic element in the Occupy Pedophilia pranks.

The presumed paedophile is subjected to a filmed interrogation in which the microphone is replaced by a dildo or a toilet brush. Tesak asks him to identify himself, to hold his passport up to the screen, to indicate his address, to say whether or not he is married and if he has children. After the naming and shaming stage, the questions are then aimed at making the presumed paedophile admit his intentions in going to the date and, more generally, his sexual preferences: ‘are you a paedophile or a paederast?’ [...] “Congratulations, you have just completely ruined your life”, jokes Tesak while filming another of his prey lying motionless in his bathtub and being subjected to this pretence of an investigation. The presumed paedophile must often call close people in his life – his wife, children, brother or employer – and has to confess his guilt in front of the camera. His head is sometimes shaved or his hair dyed green. Homophobic and defamatory inscriptions are written on his forehead (‘Fuck LGBT’, or a rainbow flag). He is made to simulate fellatio with a dildo, and to prance around and sing silly songs. Sometimes he is filmed without any clothes on. He is slapped, shouted at and roughed up. The punishment known as ‘urotherapy’ is a common practice in all of Occupy Pedophilia’s videos and a hallmark of neo-Nazi vigilantes. It involves throwing urine in the prey’s face or making them drink it Favarel-Garrigues, 2020, p. 314).

In light of the above example, I reiterate Kasra’s (2017) suggestion that visibility is used here as a weapon against the victims. The videos are used to intimidate anyone who belongs to the same group (LGBTQ) and who may have been watching. The videos are publicly available, and they further harm and shame the victims, which extends the effects of hate crimes indefinitely.

Therefore, the community impact is present in the dating violence incidents committed by organized hate groups. The destructive agenda outlined in Tesak’s manifesto as well as numerous videos of tortures and acts of humiliation were available on the Internet, highlighting that the attacks’ purpose was to create hostility towards the group as a whole, not the immediate victims only.

Conclusion

When discussing the origins of mass violence, Staub (1989) indicated that authoritarian systems with institutionalized discrimination are more inclined to produce systematic persecution and violence against minority groups. Among other environmental and cultural origins of such mistreatment, the author mentioned economic problems, devaluing,

scapegoating, and diminishing others. The behavioral means of that is among others giving up self to a leader, adopting an ideology, and submitting to authority. Through those means, hate groups that are built on the premises of violence against specific minority groups are able to provide a sense of belonging, self-worth, and identity to their followers. The emergence of these hate groups signifies a mobilization of people, triggered by economic and social conditions and is connected with state policies.

In this context, organized hate groups are able to employ different means of committing hate crimes against minority groups. In the era of the “gay propaganda law” in Russia, one of those means became dating violence. It was used as a method of committing hate crimes against LGBTQ people since the dating services allowed acquiring access to potential victims and targeting LGBTQ people specifically. The data in the category of premeditated crime between 2010 and 2020 shows that the vast majority of the crimes (69%) are cases of dating violence. Moreover, this method is used in 23% of all hate crime incidents in Russia. The fact that this method became more common can be attributed to the influence of the discriminatory “gay propaganda law”. The data shows that there was an increase in the number of such cases – from 2 in 2010 to 38 in 2014.

The current research represents an inquiry into dating violence as a specific method of hate crime against LGBTQ people. The paper argued that dating violence represents a qualitative change in the level of anti-LGBTQ violence in Russia, which was partially enabled by the introduction of discriminatory legislation. The previous research of homophobic violence (Katsuba, 2023; Kondakov, 2019, 2022) established that there was an increase in the number of hate crime incidents against LGBTQ people after the “gay propaganda law” was introduced in 2013. The current research elaborated on this further, providing arguments for a qualitative change in hate crime incidents that also occurred after 2013. This change involved the emergence of dating violence as a specific type of hate crime.

The research argued that as a method of hate crime, dating violence has three distinguishing features – premeditation, collective form, and community impact. Cases of dating violence are cases of organized crime; the crimes are mostly committed by groups with a clear agenda and organizational structure; the crimes are always planned and prepared in advance with a purposeful selection of the target; the perpetrators aim at affecting the community as a whole, rather than the immediate victims only (before the attack – by destructive agendas, books and manifestos; after the attack – by disseminating videos of the incidents). Altogether, these three characteristics of dating violence distinguish it from all other types of hate crime, which allows putting it further on the progression of violence against LGBTQ

people, which signifies a qualitative change in this violence and strengthens the causal link between the discriminatory legislation and the violence against the discriminated group produced by it.

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Declarations

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