

## Sexology and the national Other in the Soviet Union

Dan Healey, University of Oxford  
(dan.healey@history.ox.ac.uk)

‘The history of Russia is the history of a country that colonizes itself’, wrote Vasilii Kliuchevskii, one of Imperial Russia’s most influential historians, in 1904.<sup>1</sup> To understand Soviet sexology’s approaches to ‘race, ethnicity, and nation’ we should start with Kliuchevskii’s observation about Russia and its special colonial path. In this pithy phrase he crystallised a whole school of historiography focused on the process of Russia’s self-creation through continual migration, borderland occupation, freebooting trade with, and eventual conquest of, neighbours. Such processes gradually absorbed peoples into an Empire, ‘Rossiia’, that distinguished between ethnic Great Russian identity (‘russkii’) and civic identification (‘rossiiskii’) – a distinction that remains critical in Russia today. Russian state-building adopted methods that treated Great Russians as ‘colonised’, most notably by the institution of serfdom, which prevailed from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, abolished only in 1861. At times peripheral subject nations – Finns, Poles, Georgians – were treated on better terms than Russians themselves.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to Europe’s great overseas empires, Russia was an expanding land empire straddling Europe and Asia that gobbled up Siberia by the mid-seventeenth century, and conquered Central Asia in the nineteenth century. The Russian Empire on the eve of revolution was a congeries of many dozens of

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I am grateful to Benjamin Kahan and Greta LaFleur for inviting me to *New Histories of Sexology: Genealogies of Race, Sex, Colonialism* (Yale University, 20-21 April 2018) and prompting me to write this article; Beans Velocci offered stimulating commentary on it at the conference. Many thanks to Susan Gross Solomon for her patient comments on the earliest draft of this article. Finally, thanks to Aleksandra Brokman and Rustam Alexander for letting me cite their excellent PhD theses.

<sup>1</sup> V. O. Kliuchevskii, *Kurs russkoi istorii*, Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1956, 1: 31, cited in Aleksandr Etkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience*, Cambridge: Polity, 2011, p67.

<sup>2</sup> Etkind, *Internal Colonization*, pp61-71; idem, ‘Internalising Colonialism: Intellectual Endeavours and Internal Affairs in Mid-Nineteenth Century Russia’, in *Convergence and Divergence: Russian and Eastern Europe into the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Peter J. S. Duncan, London: School of Slavonic and East European Studies, UCL, 2007, pp103-105.

ethnicities, some highly integrated European ‘nations’, and others scarcely imagined as communities. Joseph Stalin, the Bolshevik Party’s expert on the ‘nationalities question’, articulated a constructivist concept of nation in 1913 in his ‘Marxism and the national question’: the nation was a historically constituted community sharing a common language, customs, territory, and economic life. For Marxists ‘the nation’ was not primordial but historical, amenable to construction. The first Soviet census of 1926 counted and ‘created’ some 190 ethnic groups.<sup>3</sup> Soviet Marxists enthusiastically embraced ‘nationality’ and set out to channel the power of nationalism through a bewildering array of ‘affirmative action’ policies that multiplied territorial divisions, levels of local government, and languages of education. Bolsheviks provided illiterate societies with alphabets, grammars, and eventually national literary canons and even opera houses (presenting classical European and freshly invented national repertoires). Soviet nationalities policies – which of course fluctuated during the lifetime of Soviet power – were a feature of the USSR’s internal colonisation and its sprint to socialist modernity.<sup>4</sup>

Recent studies of the evolution of modern sexology have implicated overseas empires and colonialism in the construction of scientific understandings of sex. Almost no attempt has been made to apply this ‘colonial turn’ to histories of Soviet sexology, which are themselves in their infancy.<sup>5</sup> Historiographies of sexual science have focused their attention on western

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<sup>3</sup> Francine Hirsch, ‘The Soviet Union as a Work-in-Progress: Ethnographers and the Category Nationality in the 1926, 1937, and 1939 Censuses’ *Slavic Review* 56: 2, 1997, pp263-64.

<sup>4</sup> Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*. Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2001; Yuri Slezkine, ‘The Soviet Union as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism’, in *Stalinism: New Directions*, edited by Sheila Fitzpatrick, London & New York: Routledge, 2000; on musical nationalism in Central Asia under Soviet power see Marina Frolova-Walker, ‘“National in Form, Socialist in Content”: Musical Nation-Building in the Soviet Republics’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 51: 2, 1998, pp331-71; Elif Kale-Lostuvali, ‘Varieties of Musical Nationalism in Soviet Uzbekistan’, *Central Asian Survey* 26: 4, 2007, pp539-58.

<sup>5</sup> An important exception discussed below is Benjamin Kahan, ‘Conjectures on the Sexual World-System’ *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 23: 3, 2017, pp327-57. On the opportunities and dangers of applying postcolonial perspectives to Soviet history, see Adeeb Khalid, ‘Introduction: Locating the (Post-) Colonial in Soviet History’, *Central Asian Survey* 26: 4, 2007, pp465-73.

European science and its encounters with overseas colonial subjects.<sup>6</sup> In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, ideas about ‘civilised’ sexual norms were generated by anthropologists, psychiatrists, physicians, and an array of social and biological experts in their encounters with the ‘primitive’ Other in the colonial periphery. Sexology sorted humanity into developed and underdeveloped peoples as it proclaimed its modern, scientific, and secularised credentials. Sexology studying Asian, African, Middle Eastern, and Oceanic peoples classified sex-related rituals, practices, and cultures according to Eurocentric and orientalist frameworks. The ‘exotic’ overseas Other told western Europeans and north Americans what their sexual selves allegedly had been, and worryingly, what they might still become without medical, psychiatric, criminological, or other expert interventions. At stake was often the differentiation of ‘white’ races from Others, determined by sciences of ‘race’ such as eugenics and human biology.

Russian and Soviet sexology imagined Russianness and the Other in different terms from the ones used by Western European sexologists. To apply the ‘colonial turn’ to Russian and Soviet sexology we have to begin by defining this country’s distinctive ‘sexology’. In this article I read Russian and Soviet ‘sexology’ expansively, to include many medical, social-science, and legal forms of expertise that take us some distance from the classic pre-1933 German model of sexual science. That model ‘constituted a truly interdisciplinary field, interlinking the professionalizing disciplines of human psychology, psychoanalysis,

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<sup>6</sup> Some representative titles include: Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995; idem, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*. Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2002; Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. New York; London: Routledge, 1995; Lucy Bland, and Laura Doan, eds. *Sexology in Culture: Labelling Bodies and Desires*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998; Sabine Frühstück, *Colonizing Sex: Sexology and Social Control in Modern Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003; Heike Bauer, *The Hirschfeld Archives: Violence, Death, and Modern Queer Culture*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2017; idem, *Sexology and Translation: Cultural and Scientific Encounters across the Modern World*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2015; Howard Chiang, *After Eunuchs: Science, Medicine, and the Transformations of Sex in Modern China*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018; idem, *Transgender China*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

endocrinology, ethnography, biotypology, anthropology, criminology, and physiology, as well as knowledge produced in literature, art, folk practices, and social activism.<sup>7</sup> The richness of German sexologies with their many divergent proponents advocating different interdisciplinary blends and research agendas contrasts with Russian and later Soviet analogues.<sup>8</sup> The Russian Empire's scientific infrastructure was underdeveloped compared to German and French institutions. Scientists, many trained in France and Germany, clustered in a few major university cities. Sexology as a self-proclaimed interdisciplinary field was weakly developed in late Imperial Russia: there were influential endocrinologists and eugenics experts, some psychiatrists specialising in sexual pathologies, a small but energetic psychoanalytic movement, physicians conducting large-scale surveys of sexual behaviour, and the first shoots of a popular advice literature on sex.<sup>9</sup> The Russian Orthodox Church and other recognised confessions did little to modernise their understandings of sexuality, and religious norms prevailed in a predominantly peasant society.<sup>10</sup> The First World War however loosened religion's hold on patriarchal familial bonds and accelerated transformations in sexual behaviour and cultures in a way that made the 'sexual revolution' a fact on the ground even before the Bolsheviks seized power.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Veronika Fuechtner, Douglas E. Haynes, and Ryan M. Jones, 'Introduction: Toward a Global History of Sexual Science: Movements, Networks, and Deployments', in *A Global History of Sexual Science, 1880-1960*, edited by Veronika Fuechtner, Douglas E. Haynes and Ryan M. Jones. Oakland: University of California Press, 2018, p5.

<sup>8</sup> For a mapping of the German field see Susan Gross Solomon, 'Soviet Social Hygienists and Sexology after the Revolution: Dynamics of "Capture" at Home and Abroad', *Ab Imperio*, 4, 2014, pp109-12.

<sup>9</sup> See e.g., Laura Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-De-Siècle Russia*. Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1992; Beer, *Renovating Russia*; Irina Sirotkina, *Diagnosing Literary Genius: A Cultural History of Psychiatry in Russia, 1880-1930*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002; Alexander Etkind, *Eros of the Impossible: The History of Psychoanalysis in Russia*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1997; Martin Miller, *Freud and the Bolsheviks: Psychoanalysis in Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1998; Nikolai Kremmentsov, 'The Strength of a Loosely Defined Movement: Eugenics and Medicine in Imperial Russia', *Medical History* 59: 1, 2015, pp6-31.

<sup>10</sup> Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness*, says almost nothing about churchmen's contributions to debates on sex; the "holy man" Rasputin was iconic for his sermonising and promiscuity, and not alone as a late-Imperial celebrity preacher; see Boris Kolonitskii, *"Tragicheskaiia Erotika": Obrazy imperatorskoi sem'i v gody Pervoi Mirovoi voiny*. Moscow Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Dan Healey, 'Love and Death: Transforming Sexualities in Russia, 1914-1922', in *Cultural History of Russia in the Great War and Revolution, 1914-22, Book 2: Political Culture, Identities, Mentalities, and Memories*,

If German and French sexologists built arguments about sexual science in part on observations about overseas colonial peoples and ‘racial’ distinctions, the Russian reception of European sexology was filtered through habits laid down in the creation of a land empire where colonisation might have little to do with ‘race’. Race has been a particularly ineffable category in the Russian imagination. The Russians knew that they saw ‘race’ differently from their European neighbours.<sup>12</sup> There were indeed some ‘racially’ distinctive ‘small peoples of the North’ (such as the Yakuts, Nenets, Evenki), but these were remote, isolated, and primitive.<sup>13</sup> Russian experts were more compelled by categories of ‘ethnicity’ (seeing numerous ethnicities and language groups around them), and ‘nation’ (which, they worried, Russia could not quite ever be, unlike say France).<sup>14</sup> Habits of ‘internal colonisation’ led Great Russians to ‘colonise themselves’, and while experts saw few major racial Others in their empire, except perhaps the Jews, it was often ‘the Russian people’ (*narod*) which commanded ethnographers’ attention and the dreams of reformers and social scientists.<sup>15</sup> After the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, when the world’s first socialist state embarked on its project of modernisation, it inherited these dispositions about race, ethnicity, and nation, and it reckoned with an enduring anxiety to measure itself against Europeanness.

How, then, was Soviet sexology shaped by Soviet approaches to race, ethnicity, and nation? Answering this question would require a book-length study, and fresh archival work by a team of researchers commanding at least fifteen languages between them. This article

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edited by Murray Frame, Boris Kolonitskii, Steven G. Marks and Melissa K. Stockdale. Bloomington: Slavica, 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Francine Hirsch, ‘Race without the Practice of Racial Politics’ *Slavic Review* 61: 1, 2002, pp30-43; Amir Weiner, ‘Nothing but Certainty’ *Slavic Review* 61: 1, 2002, pp44-53; David Rainbow, ed. *Ideologies of Race: Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union in Global Context*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2019.

<sup>13</sup> Yuri Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North*. Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1994.

<sup>14</sup> Marina Mogilner, *Homo Imperii: A History of Physical Anthropology in Russia*. Lincoln, NB: UNP - Nebraska, 2014; Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire, 1552-1917*. London: HarperCollins, 1997.

<sup>15</sup> Etkind, ‘Internalising Colonialism’, pp109-116; Daniel Beer, *Renovating Russia: The Human Sciences and the Fate of Liberal Modernity, 1880-1930*. Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2008. On the Jews as a ‘universal Other’ to the Russians, seemingly ubiquitous and visible, see Mogilner, *Homo Imperii*, p249.

cannot be that study but offers instead a chronological survey of the points of interface between sexology and ‘race, ethnicity, and nation’ in Soviet thinking between 1917 and 1991. My object is to discern communist influences on the pre-existing Imperial Russian inheritance, hence the periodisation from the launch of the Bolshevik coup to the collapse of the Soviet ‘empire’. I divide the article into two sections: the first considers early socialist sexology as a contributor to the construction of the ‘New Soviet Man and Woman’ before the Second World War; the second examines post-war developments in sexology that were more closely attuned to demographic and implicitly Russocentric anxieties. Many of my examples draw on Soviet debates about homosexuality, sexual maturity, and the ideal Soviet sexual subject; but I also rely upon recent scholarship on the history of sexual sciences for the region.

I argue that in the emerging global system of sexual sciences, Russian and Soviet ‘sexologists’ felt themselves to lie on what Benjamin Kahan terms the ‘semi-periphery’, engaged with ‘core’ producers of sexual knowledge in western Europe (Germany, Austria, France) and at the same time aware that their science lacked the authority it apparently enjoyed in ‘core’ countries.<sup>16</sup> Russian and Soviet science attempted to assert its expertise in an authoritarian political environment that left little space for the liberal subject governed by disciplinary knowledge; and the rule of law tradition was weak before 1917 and rejected by Bolsheviks thereafter. In Imperial Russia religion governed sexual knowledge; in the Soviet Union, communist ideology would play an increasingly critical role in shaping permitted discourses. Soviet sexologists’ inability to dominate the field of knowledge about sexuality led them to an ‘unruly appropriation’ of European sexological ideas as experts tried to carve out disciplinary realms.<sup>17</sup> Russians and Soviets measured themselves as located somewhere

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<sup>16</sup> Kahan, ‘Conjectures on the Sexual World-System’, pp344-47.

<sup>17</sup> See, Fuechtner et al., ‘Introduction’, p3.

between ‘Asian’ backwardness and an idealised ‘European’ destination. The measuring stick might acquire a ‘red’ socialist colour but the act of self-assessment against Europe or ‘the West’ was always present. It offered critics the chance to see Soviet society and sexuality as ‘backward’, but paradoxically, experts and ideologues could also paint the USSR as ‘advanced’ in sexual terms, as a ‘young’ vigorous proletarian society ahead of ‘old’ European ‘bourgeois’ mores. Nevertheless, reconciling socialism with ethnic, national, and biological difference proved a persistent worry for Soviet sexology as I argue in the second section on the post-war era. The Party was reluctant to set down a ‘political line’ on the tasks and purposes of Soviet sexology; and there was little Soviet transnational influence on the more historically rooted and culturally integrated branches of socialist Eastern European sexology. As development proceeded across the USSR, sexology seemed to confirm that sexual behaviour remained persistently distinctive between ethnic and national groups.

### *The New Soviet Man and Woman of the 1920s and 1930s*

Ideas of the ‘new person’ who would develop their full potential under socialism had circulated in Russia since the 1860s, when novels celebrated the future of women’s emancipation in a Crystal-Palace dream sequence (Nikolai Chernyshevsky’s *What is to be Done?*, 1863), or contrasted the feckless Russian male with his purposeful German alter-ego (Nikolai Goncharov, *Oblomov*, 1859). Both landmark novels – like Pushkin’s *Eugene Onegin* before them (1833) – measured the Russian present critically against a European ideal, thought to be available in the present (Oblomov had only to get up off his sofa) or in the

future if ‘new people’ built a palace of socialism. Russian gender was to be refashioned after a European model.<sup>18</sup>

When the Russian social democrats took the reins in October 1917, they promoted European socialism’s heritage of sexual politics: the emancipation of women, secularisation of marriage and divorce, decriminalisation of abortion and homosexuality, and drives to eradicate female prostitution with welfare and training. For some utopians, the family was to ‘wither away’ and the state would take over burdens of childcare and housework.<sup>19</sup> Bolsheviks themselves lived complex sexual lives, often combining radical anti-familialism with surprising sentimentality.<sup>20</sup> The Soviet state launched a political and cultural war against religion, lasting until the late 1980s, allowing religious leaders no purchase on the sexual question until the end of Communist rule. With the revolution the stage seemed set for a radical redefinition of sex.

Yet the Russian intelligentsia liked its radical politics desexualised, and the dominant tendency in the Bolshevik Party was ‘rationalising’ rather than ‘libertarian’. In fact, the institutionalisation of the ‘sexual revolution’ in Soviet politics led to the suppression of utopian sexual dreams. These dreams included an insistence on the revolutionary potential of pleasure, the liberating transformation of individual psychology through sexual exploration,

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<sup>18</sup> Richard Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism, 1860-1930*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978.

<sup>19</sup> On the Soviet sexual revolution and utopian dreams see Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993; Elizabeth A. Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade: Gender and Politics in Revolutionary Russia*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997; Eric Naiman, *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997; Dan Healey, ‘Bolshevik Medicine and Russia's Sexual Revolution’, in *Past and Present of Radical Sexual Politics. Working Papers. Fifth Meeting of the Seminar ‘Socialism and Sexuality’, Amsterdam, October 3-4, 2003*, edited by Gert Hekma, 69-79. Amsterdam: Mosse Foundation, 2004; Gregory Carleton, *Sexual Revolution in Bolshevik Russia*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005; S. I. Golod, *Chto bylo porokami, stalo npravami: Lektsii po sotsiologii seksual'nosti*. Moskva: Nauchno-izdatel'skii tsentr Lodomir, 2005; Frances Lee Bernstein, *The Dictatorship of Sex: Lifestyle Advice for the Soviet Masses*. DeKalb, Il.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2007; Ol'ga.Zdravomyslova, ‘Kak rozhdalsia “sovetskii patriarkhat”’. Grigorii Batkis o seksual'noi revoliutsii v Rossii’, *Demograficheskoe obozrenie* 4: 1, 2017, pp124-43.

<sup>20</sup> A detailed new discussion of early elite Bolshevik mores is found in Yuri Slezkine, *The House of Government: A Saga of the Russian Revolution*. Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017.

and the call for sexual experimentation in the here-and-now, all associated in socialist memory with Alexandra Kollontai. Instead, Vladimir Lenin argued that the New Soviet Person should sublimate their sexual desires to the project of building socialism. In a much publicised conversation with Clara Zetkin he cautioned that new forms of love relations could wait, and would only emerge spontaneously in life's 'superstructure' once the 'base' of economic relations was made socialist.<sup>21</sup> The Marxist-Leninist and later Stalinist 'rationalising' position on the 'sexual revolution' had complex transnational valences: sublimation for the goal of socialism made sense inside the USSR where the gains of the 'sexual revolution' were already fixed in law, and while debates continued over how to build socialism with the road ahead still dangerously obscure. Beyond the USSR and especially where Communist Parties vied for power with the bourgeoisie and nationalists in Germany, France, Spain, China, and elsewhere, the 'libertarian' aspirations of the 'sexual revolution' could be popular and were promoted enthusiastically.<sup>22</sup> One transmission belt for this translational shift was the left-leaning, campaigning World League for Sexual Reform (WLSR), led by physician and socialist Magnus Hirschfeld from his Institute for Sexology in Berlin.<sup>23</sup> The WLSR hailed Soviet legislation and lauded Soviet delegates at its conventions, but as Solomon reveals, it showed more interest in Soviet sexual politics than Soviet

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<sup>21</sup> For the conversation see Clara Zetkin, *Lenin on the Woman Question*. New York: International Publishers, 1934; for an analysis, see Dan Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001, pp112-15; idem, 'Bolshevik Medicine and Russia's Sexual Revolution'; idem, *Bolshevik Sexual Forensics: Diagnosing Disorder in the Clinic and Courtroom, 1917-1939*. DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009, pp3-12, 159-71.

<sup>22</sup> On Communist sexual politics in Weimar Germany, see e.g. Atina Grossmann, *Reforming Sex: The German Movement for Birth Control and Abortion Reform, 1920-1950*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995; Manfred Herzer, 'Communists, Social Democrats, and the Homosexual Movement in the Weimar Republic', in *Gay Men and the Sexual History of the Political Left*, edited by G. Hekma, H. Oosterhuis and J. Steakley. Binghamton NY: Harrington Park Press, 1995; Laurie Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic: German Homosexual Emancipation and the Rise of the Nazis*. Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2015.

<sup>23</sup> Solomon, 'Soviet Social Hygienists and Sexology after the Revolution', pp118-22; Bauer, *The Hirschfeld Archive*; Ralf Dose, 'The World League for Sexual Reform: Some Possible Approaches', in *Sexual Cultures in Europe: National Histories*, edited by F. X. Eder, L. Hall and G. Hekma. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999.

sexological research.<sup>24</sup> Another transmission belt was the Comintern (the Communist International that attempted to coordinate party activity globally).<sup>25</sup> The mechanisms and people who trafficked in radical sexual politics within the Comintern have not been studied, and yet this could be a highly revealing line of inquiry for tracing the transnational flow of sexual politics and sciences via socialist networks.<sup>26</sup>

Current work on early Soviet ideology on sex and the formation of the New Soviet Person has little to say about expert viewpoints on intersections between sexuality and race, ethnicity, or nation. In the 1920s, Soviet narratives of class were richer in furnishing sexual Others than narratives of racial or ethnic Others. Effectively, Soviet sexology began by ‘colonising’ or exploring the sexual behaviour of (implicitly Russian/Ukrainian) workers and peasants.<sup>27</sup> Solomon’s social-hygiene oriented sexologists illustrate this point well. The surveyors of sexual behaviour established a study circle of young social hygienists investigating ‘social aspects of sexual life’ (under the State Institute of Social Hygiene, Moscow) from 1923 to 1926, and from 1927 to circa 1931, a separate ‘bureau of sexology’ in the same institute. They were led by a well known ‘utopian’ of the sexual revolution, Grigorii A. Batkis, whose defence of radical Soviet sex regulation had been published by allies in Germany in 1925.<sup>28</sup> The hallmarks of the social hygienists’ self-designated ‘sexology’ were, in Solomon’s estimation, a ‘fetish with measurement’ through surveys and quantification and a disinterest in ‘subjective data’ and the individualism of bourgeois sexology; they took no

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<sup>24</sup> ‘For much of the 1920s, foreign sexologists took from Soviet work what they needed for their own purposes.’ Solomon, ‘Soviet Social Hygienists and Sexology after the Revolution’, p126.

<sup>25</sup> Stephen A. Smith’s work on translation practices in the Comintern reveals important variance in the transmission of canonical texts from Europe to China, and foresees future research in this area: Alexander Vatlin, and Stephen A. Smith, ‘The Comintern’, in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Communism*, edited by Stephen A. Smith. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

<sup>26</sup> For documents suggestive of a transnational circulation of sexually revolutionary ideals, see Glennys Young, *The Communist Experience in the Twentieth Century: A Global History through Sources*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

<sup>27</sup> There is already a colonial relationship in the Russian/Ukrainian dyad, of course; it is hard to analyse the relationship because the actual discussion of differences between them in the sexological records available is so limited. A thorough history of Soviet Ukrainian sexology is needed.

<sup>28</sup> Solomon, ‘Soviet Social Hygienists and Sexology’, pp112-14; 125.

interest in psychoanalysis. The object of study was the worker's and less often, the peasant's sexual behaviour: questionnaires revealed so-called 'sexual budgets' counting incidence of sex attraction and intercourse.<sup>29</sup>

Stripped of 'subjective' and 'individualist' factors, the 'objective' and 'desexualised' truth of early Soviet sex life was studied by leading sexologists in class terms rather than with reference to an exotic Other elsewhere in the Soviet Union.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, socialist sexology's debt to the left's inherited interpretation of western anthropology (via Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and others) embedded the Other in this sexual science on the 'semi-periphery'. Marxist critiques of modern sexual politics contrasted the 'primitive sexual life' of non-industrialised societies, with the educable proletariat's struggle against the 'morally crippling' environment of capitalist urban factory existence.<sup>31</sup> 'Primitive sexual life' was alarmingly close to the present, and to the proletariat, in Soviet perceptions. As late as 1933 a leading proponent of Soviet sexology, Kharkiv social hygienist Z. A. Gurevich, proclaimed the superiority of worker sexuality over bourgeois and peasant sexual life for its restraint and sublimation for the good of the collective. This he evidenced through a range of surveys about the age of first sexual experience in Soviet society, demonstrating that workers (again implicitly Russian or Ukrainian) deferred their sexual lives until age 21.6 years (according to a Batkis survey) while pre-revolutionary surveys of 'bourgeois' students had reported an age of 18 years for their sexual debut. The key oppositions Gurevich emphasised were social and economic, not racial or ethnic. Capitalism, he argued, generated far earlier and more destructive sexual lives for its subjects, and the wealthier classes 'have incomparably richer

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<sup>29</sup> Solomon, 'Soviet Social Hygienists and Sexology', pp115-16, 123-24.

<sup>30</sup> Solomon, 'Soviet Social Hygienists and Sexology', pp115-16. On the questionnaires and their analysis, see also Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'Sex and Revolution: An Examination of Literary and Statistical Data on the Mores of Soviet Students in the 1920s', *Journal of Modern History* 50, 1978, pp252-78.

<sup>31</sup> Maurice Bloch, *Marxism and Anthropology: The History of a Relationship*. London: Routledge, 2004; Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*. London: Penguin Classics, 2010.

sources of sexual stimulation than the proletariat does' and hence more sexual disorders and less rational sublimation for constructive social purposes.<sup>32</sup>

Frances Bernstein's study of psychiatrists and hygienists who counselled Moscow workers shows that the classed Other in the sexological imagination was Russian, rural, and backward; typically she was an aged female peasant 'wise woman' whose primitive diagnoses and folk-medical cures for sexual troubles threatened health, enlightenment, and progress.<sup>33</sup> The Russian peasantry needed education and uplifting to political consciousness on a par with urban workers: Russia had its internal 'primitives' and in the mindset of expert observers in the major centres, the country still needed to 'colonise itself'. Ideologists thinking about sex focused concern almost exclusively on the urban working class (the heroic protagonists and inheritors of revolution) – and that class was often Russian-speaking even in Ukraine and Central Asia, a legacy of Imperial colonisation, economic migration, and development.<sup>34</sup> The self-colonising impulse was scarcely assuaged by working-class credentials alone. Party thinkers doubted that workers' consciousness was sufficiently advanced to assure the emergence of the New Soviet Person in sexual matters. Eric Naiman and Gregory Carleton chart the terrors of the ideologist observing the worker as misogynist factory comrade, as gang-rapist on the streets, and as incapable of the sublimation of pleasure or bored by 'rational' leisure.<sup>35</sup> Within the Russian Soviet republic, the worker was to serve as the ideal citizen while the peasant was an exemplar of 'backwardness'; and yet both failed to measure up to demanding Bolshevik standards.

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<sup>32</sup> Z. Gurevich, 'Polovaia Zhizn', in *Bol'shaia meditsinskaia entsiklopediia*, edited by N. A. Semashko, Moscow: OGIZ RSFSR, 1933, 26: 286, 290-91.

<sup>33</sup> Bernstein, *The Dictatorship of Sex*, ch. 4, 'Envisioning Health'.

<sup>34</sup> Jeff Sahadeo, *Russian Colonial Society in Tashkent, 1865-1923*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2007; Serhii Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine*. London: Allen Lane, 2015.

<sup>35</sup> Naiman, *Sex in Public*; Carleton, *Sexual Revolution in Bolshevik Russia*.

Beyond the Great Russian population, forensic experts did train a national gaze on their sexual subjects. A little-known feature of Soviet sexual legislation from the 1920s to the 1990s was the absence of a stated age of consent. Instead, sexual intercourse ‘with persons not having attained sexual maturity’ was a crime. ‘Sexual maturity’ or immaturity was determined by doctors in each case of a complaint or allegation of a crime; in 1925 in Russia alone 4,600 examinations of persons to determine ‘sexual maturity’ took place. The rationale for the ‘sexual maturity’ threshold of sexual consent was that the Soviet Union’s diversity of social customs, geographic and class differences, and finally ‘race’, meant that legislators felt a single age tariff was impossible to set.<sup>36</sup> Doctors forced to interpret this law fell back on pre-revolutionary research on puberty-onset around the Empire; and they continued to conduct surveys of first menses (for girls) and less frequently of ‘sexual debut’ for young men. (Psychoanalytical sexology was also eschewed by forensic experts as too vague for courtroom evidence, too inward-looking, and ‘idealist’ rather than materialist.) Fascinatingly, both racial-geographic and social axes informed Soviet notions of ‘sexual maturity’.

From pre-revolutionary gynaecological and sexological textbooks of the 1880s through to Soviet manuals of the 1930s, geography and race were said to trigger the start of sexual life. Influenced by German and European sexologists, Russian experts looking beyond their own empire noted how Southern ‘races’ (Jews in Central Europe, the ‘Metis of Mexico’) experienced earlier onset, more intense sexual feeling, and higher fertility. The opposite was said of Greenlanders and Scandinavians. Within the Russian Empire and Soviet Union, the diversity of peoples became the framework for a similar ladder of racial geography. Jews living among the Russians and Poles displayed sexual precocity; Caucasians (Georgians, Armenians, Azeris) did as well, whereas the Finns, for some reason, were particularly late bloomers in Russian eyes; and Russians in the north (girls in Leningrad)

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<sup>36</sup> Healey, *Bolshevik Sexual Forensics*, pp37-82.

matured later than Muscovites, Ukrainians, and Crimeans. The Muslims of the USSR presented special difficulties, for the racial and the social were entwined in a long-observed ‘social problem’ of child-marriage. The ‘sexual maturity’ legal threshold was intended to take Muslim customs in the Caucasus and Central Asia into account while protecting girls from abuse.<sup>37</sup>

At the same time, class remained critical in the definitions of ‘sexual maturity’ used by forensic doctors. Before the Revolution, they paid more attention to upper- and middle-class subjects, whose environment might precociously stimulate sexual onset (servants, novels, and spicy foreign food were culprits). Peasants, who constituted 80% of the population until 1930, were at first romanticised, with fresh air and a lack of urban stimulants said to lead to a naturally innocent sexual debut; after the 1905 Revolution with its widespread rural rebellion, however, the view of the peasant grew darker with corruption, poverty and poor diet, ignorance, and patriarchal family life blamed for a later sexual onset in the countryside well into the 1930s.<sup>38</sup> Workers under tsarism were perceived as blighted with premature onset of sexual activity in the corrupting urban setting. While this blight did not end instantly after 1917, Soviet studies of worker pubertal onset saw a sustained focus on the working class as the new scientific norm defining the onset and character of puberty.<sup>39</sup> Protecting the worker-child from premature loss of sexual innocence became a critical sexological task of Soviet pedagogy in this period, and psychoanalytical approaches, loosely

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<sup>37</sup> Healey, *Bolshevik Sexual Forensics*, pp44-46; on Soviet age of marriage debates see Dan Healey, ‘Defining Sexual Maturity as the Soviet Alternative to an Age of Consent’, in *Soviet Medicine: Culture, Practice, and Science*, edited by Frances L. Bernstein, Christopher Burton and Dan Healey. DeKalb, IL.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), pp114-16.

<sup>38</sup> Healey, *Bolshevik Sexual Forensics*, pp47-48.

<sup>39</sup> Healey, *Bolshevik Sexual Forensics*, pp48-49.

associated with opposition-leader Leon Trotskii, were rebuffed for the credence they gave to the sexual lives of children.<sup>40</sup>

The discussion in forensic medicine of racialised geographies of sexual maturity indicates that conceptions of race mattered to early Soviet socialists, and had meaning in other areas of sexual science, such as eugenics. There was certainly considerable interest in socialist eugenics in the early and mid-1920s, with a particularly active traffic of influence between Berlin and Moscow, as the two outcast-states of the Versailles system established strong ties in racial and medical geographical research at this time.<sup>41</sup> Yet the Soviet and German research agendas never sat comfortably together, with the Germans using the USSR as a fieldwork site for work that was increasingly seen by Soviet colleagues as incommensurate with socialist racial science.<sup>42</sup> At its most utopian, Soviet racial scientists in 1929 when utopian ideas were in the air – and far less appropriately for the times in 1936 – postulated the mass artificial insemination of Soviet women to produce superior humans for socialist development.<sup>43</sup> The Party rejected such proposals and with an eye on Nazi Germany's racial ideology quickly took the view that eugenics as a prescription for human sexual norms was incommensurate with socialism. Yet anthropologists and others who had promoted Soviet eugenics before 1933 continued to pursue their scientific interests within greater ideological constraints. Soviet anthropologists from the Stalin-era 1930s to the mid-1950s would define human races as 'historically emerging groups of people united by shared

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<sup>40</sup> See e.g. L. M. Vasilevskii, *Polovoe vospitanie rebenka*. Moscow-Leningrad: L.D. Frenkel', 1924; A B. Zalkind, *Polovoe vospitanie iunykh pionerov*. Moscow-Leningrad: Molodaia gvardiia, 1929. On Trotsky and psychoanalysis see Etkind, *Eros of the Impossible*, pp203-204, 296-310.

<sup>41</sup> Nikolai Kremontsov, 'From "Beastly Philosophy" to Medical Genetics: Eugenics in Russia and the Soviet Union', *Annals of Science* 68: 1, 2011, pp61-92; Susan Gross Solomon, ed. *Doing Medicine Together: Germany and Russia between the Wars*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006; Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to Soviet Union, 1921-1941*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

<sup>42</sup> Susan Gross Solomon, 'The Soviet-German Syphilis Expedition to Buriat Mongolia, 1928', *Slavic Review* 52: 2, 1993, pp204-32; Solomon, ed. *Doing Medicine Together*; David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment*.

<sup>43</sup> Mark B. Adams, ed. *The Wellborn Science: Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil and Russia*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, pp180-81, 192-97.

origins, expressed in common inherited characteristics in the structure of the body'.<sup>44</sup> Races were pointedly not 'degenerate' and 'racial mixing' was a sign of social and historical advance, leading to an expected outcome of greater hybridisation, and the eventual disappearance of distinctive 'races'.<sup>45</sup> Race turned out to be rather like class: due to disappear as the approach of communism neared.

A final area in which racialised geographies informed sexology and Soviet regulation was in medical, legal, and ideological understandings of homosexuality.<sup>46</sup> Early Bolsheviks lacked a consistent or unified approach to the question of homosexuality, as their actions demonstrated. To secularise and modernise the law they decriminalised male homosexuality ('sodomy') in 1922 in the Russian, Ukrainian, and Belorussian republics of the new USSR; however, in Georgia, Azerbaijan, and the Central Asia republics, sodomy remained a crime for reasons discussed below. (On state-security grounds, Stalin recriminalised male homosexuality for all Soviet republics in 1933-34.)<sup>47</sup> In the interval of partial decriminalisation, Communist officials and sexological experts expressed diverse views about 'homosexuality', as both a medical and as a social phenomenon, depending on the context. Officials and sexological experts routinely interpreted homosexual behaviours in the south and east of the Soviet Union to be products of local social relations, usually in Muslim societies; while 'homosexuality' as an inborn or biosocial condition could be a medicalised anomaly ascribed to citizens of the more 'modern' European heartland.<sup>48</sup> Some sexual-revolutionary 'utopians' and some citizens themselves argued that Soviet decriminalisation of

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<sup>44</sup> 'Rasy Cheloveka', in *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia*, edited by B. A. Vvedenskii, Moscow: Gos. nauchnoe izdatel'stvo Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 1955, 36: 107-12, quoted at p107.

<sup>45</sup> Hirsch, 'Race without the Practice of Racial Politics'.

<sup>46</sup> Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia*, pp152-71.

<sup>47</sup> Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia*, pp181-204; idem, *Russian Homophobia from Stalin to Sochi* London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018, pp158-66.

<sup>48</sup> Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia*, pp158-62.

sodomy meant liberation for ‘homosexuals’, whom they understood as a biosocial category of people worthy of protection, like women and ethnic minorities, under socialism.<sup>49</sup>

Reformers within and outside Muslim Central Asia thought that female veiling and seclusion, and male ignorance facilitated disturbingly visible ‘survivals of primitive ways of life’ (as the criminal codes called them).<sup>50</sup> The most spectacular examples of Central Asian male same-sex ‘survivals’ were the Uzbek dancing-boy (*bachi*) schools which served as hives of pimping, male prostitution, and child exploitation. The 1926 criminal code of Soviet Uzbekistan adopted no fewer than eight articles against the maintenance of *bachi* and the sexual harassment of men and boys.<sup>51</sup> We have no research on how these laws were drafted, received, or enforced, but we know that local Bolshevnik campaigning associated keeping *bachi* with gambling and womanizing, and condemned such ‘backward’ pursuits in the press and in embarrassed conversation with visiting western artists.<sup>52</sup>

Within the European republics of the USSR scientists conducted a range of endocrinological, psychiatric, and criminological studies of male and female homosexuality, exploring their clinical cases for evidence confirming or undermining theories for the etiology of same-sex desire they read in European sexology. There were experiments to

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<sup>49</sup> Among the ‘utopians’ was Batkis, who expressed this perspective in Grigorii Batkis, *Die Sexualrevolution in Russland*. Berlin: Syndikalist, 1925. For the voices of Soviet homosexuals themselves, see Irina Roldugina, ‘“Pochemu my takie liudi?” Rannesovetskie gomoseksualy ot pervogo litsa: novye istochniki po istorii gomoseksual’nykh identichnostei v Rossii’, *Ab Imperio*, 2, 2016 pp183-216. The most articulate expression of homosexual emancipationism ‘from below’ came in a letter to Stalin from Harry Whyte, British Communist and editor at Moscow Daily News in 1934; see Young, *The Communist Experience in the Twentieth Century*, pp88-98; and Jeffrey Meek, *Queer Voices in Post-War Scotland: Male Homosexuality, Religion and Society*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp83-88.

<sup>50</sup> On campaigns against veiling, bride price, and the gender politics of Bolshevnik Central Asia, see Shoshana Keller, *To Moscow, Not Mecca: The Soviet Campaign against Islam in Central Asia, 1917-1941*. Westport, Conn., London: Praeger, 2001; Douglas Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender & Power in Stalinist Central Asia*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004; Adeeb.Khalid, ‘Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective’, *Slavic Review* 62: 2, 2006, pp231-51.

<sup>51</sup> Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia*, pp159-62.

<sup>52</sup> Alisher Latypov, Tim Rhodes, and Lucy Reynolds, ‘Prohibition, Stigma and Violence against Men Who Have Sex with Men: Effects on HIV in Central Asia’, *Central Asian Survey* 32: 1, 2013, pp53-55; Jennifer Wilson, ‘Queer Harlem, Queer Tashkent: Langston Hughes’s “Boy Dancers of Uzbekistan”,’ *Slavic Review* 76: 3, 2017, pp637-46.

‘cure’ homosexuality with sex-gland transplants; psychiatric case histories of cross-dressing women; detailed descriptions of the criminal queer as female murderer or male prostitute; and at least one wide-ranging discussion in the health commissariat in 1929 attended by psychiatrists and eugenic biologists about Soviet ‘transvestites’. This committee of experts heard details of the autobiography of a ‘person of intermediate sex, a male psycho-hermaphrodite’ who had married their female partner. These experts agreed such a marriage might be permissible for ‘transvestites’ after psychiatric assessment.<sup>53</sup> This early discussion of medically sanctioned same-sex marriage was the high-water mark of Soviet sympathy for the queer subject, and it was framed as a scientific concession for an otherwise ideal citizen of apparent Russian nationality; it contrasted with these same experts’ worries about Uzbek *bachis* and effeminate Russian males ‘infecting’ army platoons. Homosexuality had national, social, class, and geographic aspects that presented varying degrees of ‘trouble’ for Bolsheviks and fellow-travelling scientists. European workers in the Soviet heartland who presented with queer desires were most likely to be treated with medical sympathy, while backward peoples in the internal Orient required more radical social and class transformations to eradicate egregious homosexual behaviour. The Russian and early Soviet approach to homosexuality straddled an epistemological fault line: when Russian experts looked east and south within the USSR, European medicalised explanations for homosexuality were trumped by socialist socio-economic diagnoses of an Asian ‘Other’. The disunity of Soviet understandings about homosexuality was such that not one but two articles about it,

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<sup>53</sup> Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia*, pp165-71. Health commissariat experts used the then-novel sexological term ‘transvestite’ (invented in 1910 by Magnus Hirschfeld) for a subject we might today read as ‘transgender’: assigned female at birth but inhabiting male social gender. The subject defined himself as ‘a person of intermediate sex, a male psycho-hermaphrodite’. In the 1990s, when I first encountered the article and archival file on this subject, ‘Evgenii/Evgeniia’, I treated her as a woman passing as a man and as a lesbian; a transgender-studies informed reading now seems more appropriate. See A. O. Edel'shtein, ‘K klinike transvestitizma’, *Prestupnik i prestupnost': sbornik II*, 1927, pp273-82; Dan Healey, ‘Evgeniia/Evgenii: Queer Case Histories in the First Years of Soviet Power’, *Gender & History* 9: 1, 1997, pp83-106; idem, ‘Unruly Identities: Soviet Psychiatry Confronts the “Female Homosexual” of the 1920s’, in *Gender in Russian History and Culture, 1800-1990*, edited by Linda Edmondson, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001.

the first expressing the medicalised perspective and the second, explaining the forms it took ‘among “s[o]-c[alled] primitive peoples’, appeared in the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* in 1930.<sup>54</sup>

Revolutionary Soviet sexological sciences withered in the 1930s under the force of Stalin’s Five-Year Plan assault on industrial development and peasant agriculture. A Moscow conference of the World League for Sexual Reform, due in 1931 on an invitation from Soviet social-hygiene sexologists, failed to materialise; it was later held in Brno, Czechoslovakia, instead. International contact in sexology disappeared. The institutional wrapper for Bolshevik sexology, social hygiene, was downgraded and its staff scattered in five-year plan restructuring.<sup>55</sup> As early as 1933 a psychiatrist with sexological interests could declare the virtual elimination of the need for overt talk and investigation of sexual behaviour. Soviet modernisation with ‘the new way of life, the pioneer [youth] movement, coeducation, polytechnical education with its labour instruction, the physical culture movement – all of these powerful educational factors’ directed ‘sexual inclinations into the channel of other interests’, leaving little left to say.<sup>56</sup> The Soviet Union’s vaunted sexually progressive regulation was virtually annulled: male homosexuality was recriminalised in 1933-34, contraception was secretly removed from sale in 1935, abortion was banned and divorce made less accessible and less acceptable in 1936.<sup>57</sup> A public campaign accompanying the last two measures touted heterosexual marriage as the only place for sexual life under Soviet socialism, and ‘utopian’ sexual revolution was buried without any vocal resistance from the sexologists of the revolutionary years.

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<sup>54</sup> The first was by a psychiatrist, the second, by a classicist; Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia*, p171.

<sup>55</sup> On this episode see Solomon, ‘Soviet Social Hygienists and Sexology’, pp128-31; Dose, ‘The World League for Sexual Reform’.

<sup>56</sup> A. O. Edel'shtein, ‘Polovoe vospitanie’, in *Bol'shaia meditsinskaia entsiklopediia*, edited by N. A. Semashko, Moscow: OGIZ RSFSR, 1933, 26: pp299-302, quoted at p301.

<sup>57</sup> Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia*, pp181-204; Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution*, pp296-336.

*Post-war and late-Soviet developments in sexology*

A critical problem facing the USSR after the Second World War and at the dawn of Cold War was the demographic challenge. Some 26 million citizens had died, with a preponderance in the most reproductively active age cohorts. The Stalinist silencing of Soviet 'sexology' continued, but population anxiety pressed experts to delve into the intimate lives of citizens. The Party in 1944 decreed state-paid child support for the first time, unleashing a wave of unmarried motherhood, with almost nine million 'fatherless' babies born in the decade after the war.<sup>58</sup> Meanwhile doctors protested to Ministry of Health policymakers about Stalin's 1936 ban on abortion and the resulting illegal backstreet terminations, which harmed fertility and women's health. In 1954, the last year of the ban, almost two million illegal abortions ended in hospitalisation; doctors were frustrated by their role enforcing the ban and treating the health impacts.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, physicians and health officials spearheaded efforts to reduce abortion and stabilise sexual behaviour through moralising 'sex education' pamphlets and publications – a wave of these appeared in the late 1950s and early 1960s, some of them translations of Czechoslovak or East German publications.<sup>60</sup> The Stalinist formula, devised in the 1930s and owing much to the literary doctrine of Socialist Realism, of silencing discussion of sex and letting nature take its course, became unsustainable in a

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<sup>58</sup> Mie Nakachi, 'Population, Politics and Reproduction: Late Stalinism and Its Legacy', in *Late Stalinist Russia: Society between Reconstruction and Reinvention*, edited by Juliane Fürst, London & New York: Routledge, 2006.

<sup>59</sup> Nakachi, 'Population, Politics and Reproduction', pp37-38.

<sup>60</sup> Deborah A. Field, *Private Life and Communist Morality in Khrushchev's Russia*, New York, Bern, Berlin: Peter Lang, 2007, pp51-54; Rustam Alexander, 'Sex Education and the Depiction of Homosexuality under Khrushchev', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Women and Gender in Twentieth-Century Russia and the Soviet Union*, edited by Melanie Ilic, London: Palgrave, 2018, pp351-56.

restive post-war society that was more highly educated and expected better living conditions.<sup>61</sup>

With Stalin's death his successors embraced wide-ranging change. Sexological questions emerged gradually as a result of reforms intended to offer the Soviet population more incentives to build communism in the Cold-War atmosphere of 'peaceful coexistence'. Legal, state-funded abortion was restored in 1955; labour policy encouraged women to cede lucrative industrial jobs to men and retreat to the welfare and service sectors.<sup>62</sup> Khrushchev launched a housing construction boom of single-family apartment blocks, giving millions of citizens more privacy after years confined to typical Stalin-era communal flats. Between 1957 and 1984 over fifty million apartments were built using pre-fabricated concrete slab technology.<sup>63</sup> After decades of ideological attacks on individualism, the Party conceded that Soviet citizens deserved a degree of 'privacy' behind the closed doors of their homes, with unforeseen implications for sexual behaviour.<sup>64</sup>

Several sites of broadly sexological research emerged in the 1950s and developed into the 1980s. These endeavours had at least four features in common; the first was a commitment to applied science. Blue skies exploration of sexuality remained impermissible to Soviet research gatekeepers, but specific sex-relevant problems that might be resolved

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<sup>61</sup> There was one published sex education pamphlet issued in 1948 by the Ministry of Health: Lev A. Zalkind, *Zdorovyi brak i zdorovaia sem'ia*, Moscow: Medgiz, 1948; on it see Alexander, 'Sex Education and the Depiction of Homosexuality under Khrushchev', p350. On Socialist Realist 'traditional' heterosexuality founded on silence about sex, 'conflictlessness' in gender relations, and joie-de-vivre, see Dan Healey, "'Untraditional Sex" and the "Simple Russian": Nostalgia for Soviet Innocence in the Polemics of Dilia Enikeeva', in *What Is Soviet Now? Identities, Legacies, Memories*, edited by Thomas Lahusen and Peter H. Solomon Jr., Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2008, pp183-87.

<sup>62</sup> On abortion see Melanie Ilic, 'Women in the Khrushchev Era: An Overview', in *Women in the Khrushchev Era*, edited by Melanie Ilic, Susan Emily Reid and Lynne Attwood, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp8-9; on housing see Lynne Attwood, 'Housing in the Khrushchev Era', pp117-202 in the same volume; on labour see Don Filtzer, 'Women Workers in the Khrushchev Era', pp29-51 in the same volume.

<sup>63</sup> Nikolay Erofeev, 'Experiment in the Architecture of Soviet Public Housing, 1955–1990', DPhil, University of Oxford, 2020, p30.

<sup>64</sup> Field, *Private Life and Communist Morality in Khrushchev's Russia*; Lewis H. Siegelbaum, ed. *Borders of Socialism: Private Spheres of Soviet Russia*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

through medical therapy or social policy interventions were given licence and a degree of investment. Behind this permission lay the state's demographic and welfare priorities to improve efficiency and productivity. By the 1970s, as Russian birth rates slowed, nationality began to figure in these priorities for sexology. The applied nature of these sexologically relevant investigations contributed to the second common feature, their confinement to disciplinary silos. Soviet experts working on sexual behaviour and sexual norms in the post-war did not become interdisciplinarians in the manner of Weimar German sexologists or US post-war investigators like Alfred Kinsey. The limits of late-Soviet tolerance for delving into sexual questions were set by disciplinary gatekeepers: academicians, editors, doctoral committees and research bureaucrats, all under Party supervision.<sup>65</sup> Until the 1980s with the popularising publications of philosopher-sexologist Igor' Kon, the Party would not let a 'Soviet Alfred Kinsey' as public intellectual exist in the Soviet information sphere to explain sexual questions to the broad public.<sup>66</sup> Moscow's reluctance to enable a figurehead for Soviet sexology to emerge contrasted with sexological practice in the socialist people's democracies of central and eastern Europe, with their older and stronger traditions of interdisciplinarity and public outreach, and their distinctive sexual cultures. The vector of influence ran to the Soviet Union, and rather less from it. Although Pavlovian physiology got a late-Stalin era boost in Soviet science at a moment when Sovietisation was strongest in the new 'peoples' democracies' of central and eastern Europe, the Kremlin did not impose on the socialist camp a rigid transnational uniformity in sexology.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> These limits are well catalogued in Igor' S. Kon, *80 Let Odinochestva*, Moscow: Vremia, 2008; and see Idem, *Seksual'naia kul'tura v Rossii: klubnichka na berezke*. Moscow: OGI, 1997, pp171-73, 180.

<sup>66</sup> Kon's landmark popularising book was *Vvedenie k seksologiiu*, Moscow: Meditsina, 1988.

<sup>67</sup> On Eastern Europe's longer and deeper traditions of sexology, see e.g. Agnieszka Kościńska, 'Sex on Equal Terms? Polish Sexology on Women's Emancipation and "Good Sex" from the 1970s to the Present', *Sexualities* 19: 1-2, 2016, pp236-56; Kateřina Lišková, *Sexual Liberation, Socialist Style: Communist Czechoslovakia and the Science of Desire, 1945-1989*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018; Josie McLellan, *Love in the Time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the GDR*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011; Hadley Z. Renkin, and Agnieszka Kościńska, 'The Science of Sex in a Space of Uncertainty: Naturalizing and Modernizing Europe's East, Past and Present', *Sexualities* 19: 1-2, 2016, pp159-67. On the Pavlovian moment

A third common feature of late-Soviet sexological discourse was nevertheless its limited, but still significant, internationalisation, common to all late-Soviet science. Gatekeepers believed that if solutions were to be found to sex-related problems, they might be sourced from Western or Eastern-bloc science. Bibliographies and card catalogues demonstrate that Soviet sex researchers read foreign scientific works about sexual dysfunction, sexual behaviour, and psychosexual development, even if libraries restricted distribution. Nevertheless, Soviet sexologists' interaction with foreign researchers and agendas was circumscribed by prudish Party and academic gatekeepers who saw ideological danger in conference attendance or shared research activity. It is striking how little knowledge exchange ran from the Soviet Union to the peoples' democracies or Western nations in the sexological field.

Finally, a fourth area concerns the key theme of this article, the role of racial, ethnic, or national Others in Soviet sexology. In this period, 'nationality' became an increasingly institutionalised and 'primordial' category in Soviet perceptions, despite the ideological (and colonial) dream of a merging 'Soviet people' based on a shared Russian language and socialist values. Individual Union republics became modern, urban, educated societies with the titular nationality gaining in confidence; outmigration of other nationalities tended to homogenise republican capitals.<sup>68</sup> Some researchers in sexual matters responded to these contradictory aspirations and trends by concentrating attention on 'national' problems. One

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and its influence on aversion therapy for homosexuality in Czechoslovakia, see Kate Davison, "Cold War Pavlov: Homosexual Aversion Therapy in the 1960s." *History of the Human Sciences*, May 2020, pp1-30.

<sup>68</sup> The picture varied, as there was a high degree of Russian/Ukrainian migration to some national-republics, notably to the Baltics; see e.g. Uku Lember, 'Memory and Asymmetry in Russian-Estonian Intermarriages in Estonia During Late Socialism', in *Intermarriage from Central Europe to Central Asia*, edited by Adrienne Edgar and Benjamin Frommer, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020. In the south and east national consolidation took off, e.g. Tbilisi became a majority-Georgian capital of Soviet Georgia in the 1970s as Armenians and Azerbaijanis left for their 'own' republics; see Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994, p299. For Central Asia see Adrienne Edgar, 'Marriage, Modernity, and the "Friendship of Nations": Interethnic Intimacy in Post-War Central Asia in Comparative Perspective', *Central Asian Survey* 26: 4, 2007, pp581-99. On the general picture see John Keep, *Last of the Empires: A History of the Soviet Union 1945-1991*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, pp141-62.

such issue was an emerging demographic trend: European Soviet birth rates dropped below replacement level in the early 1970s while Central Asian levels rose.<sup>69</sup> Late-Soviet sexology justified itself by studying ways to elevate Russian and Ukrainian ‘marriage productivity’ (fertility). Sexological studies proliferated in a new medical sub-field of ‘sexopathology’; in forensic-medical debates about sexual maturity; in the emergence of psychotherapies focused on sexual life; and in the appearance of a new branch of sociology, that of families, with a focus on reproductive activity.

‘Sexopathology’ (*seksopatologiya*) emerged as a new medical field in the early 1960s as Soviet psychiatrists, gynaecologists, and urologists sought to address pathologies of sexual function. Authorities confined the new science to the ‘pathologies’ of sexuality, rather than exploring ‘normal’ sexual behaviour. Historians have noted the anxiety about male impotence driving the development of this new field, most powerfully, in psychiatry; psychiatric leadership in the field in the 1960s recapitulated many concerns about ‘nervousness’ and sex charted by Bernstein for the 1920s, and there were slim threads of continuity from the 1930s.<sup>70</sup> From 1965, health ministry funding supported a Department of Sexopathology in the Moscow Scientific Research Institute of Psychiatry and seminars and conferences on sexological issues were held in Moscow, Leningrad, Riga, Kyiv, and Gor’kii (now Nizhnii Novgorod).<sup>71</sup> Areas of interest investigated by Soviet sexopathology included birth defects or hormonal disorders inhibiting sexual function, psychotherapy for sexual disorders, the detection of sodomy in men for police investigations, hermaphroditism and medical

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<sup>69</sup> On these demographic trends and Soviet expert anxieties see Dan Healey, ‘The Sexual Revolution in the USSR: Dynamic Change beneath the Ice’, in *Sexual Revolutions*, edited by Gert Hekma and Alain Giami, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

<sup>70</sup> Kon, *Seksual'naiia kul'tura v Rossii*, pp171-95; for continuities see Rustam Alexander, ‘Homosexuality in the USSR (1956–82)’, PhD, University of Melbourne, 2018, pp81-84; for the 1920s, when psychiatry was just one of many medical disciplines interested in sexology, see Bernstein, *The Dictatorship of Sex*, pp66, 73-99.

<sup>71</sup> Alexander, ‘Homosexuality in the USSR (1956–82)’, pp83, 142-43.

interventions to manage it, and later in the 1970s-80s, sex changes for transsexuals.<sup>72</sup>

Psychotherapy, itself enjoying a modest post-Stalin expansion, and a proliferation of approaches and methods including ‘autosuggestion’ and ‘autogenic training’ contributed to the therapeutic arsenal of sexopathology when dealing with sexual dysfunction and homosexuals who sought cures. A handful of comparatively sympathetic psychiatrist sexopathologists used talking cures to ‘treat’ male homosexuality in the 1960s-70s, despite the fact that ‘sodomy’ remained a crime in the USSR.<sup>73</sup>

Cures for female homosexuality were touted too. Sexopathologists sought to bring the queer patient to a ‘sexual-psychological vacuum’ by hypnosis and ‘rational’ suggestion techniques and (for some) by using desire-deadening drugs, then develop feelings in the patient for the opposite sex via ‘autogenic training’ and even group therapy.<sup>74</sup> Only in the late 1980s could some therapists envision social adjustment without attempting to undermine the patient’s sexuality. A noteworthy Leningrad psychologist-sexologist Dmitry Isaev studied male homosexuality and treated gay men suffering from psychological problems sympathetically.<sup>75</sup> Psychotherapists also promoted ‘sexual hygiene’ for workers in extreme situations; one site of research and experimentation with lectures and one-to-one counselling was the Soviet fishing fleet, where mostly-male staff were on six-month tours of duty with limited contact with the opposite sex. While research remains to be done on regional sexopathologists and their practice, it is clear that resources were limited to large cities and

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<sup>72</sup> Kon, *Seksual'naia kul'tura v Rossii*, pp175-77, 183; Alexander, ‘Homosexuality in the USSR (1956–82)’, pp81-84, 87-88; Dan Healey, *Russian Homophobia from Stalin to Sochi*, London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018, pp103-104.

<sup>73</sup> Aleksandra Marta Brokman, ‘The Healing Power of Words: Psychotherapy in the USSR, 1956-1985’, PhD, University of East Anglia, 2018, pp35-74; on curing homosexuals see Alexander, ‘Homosexuality in the USSR (1956–82)’. Soviet psychotherapy rejected Freudian explanations for the operation of the will and relied on Pavlovian physiology well into the late Soviet years: Brokman, ‘The Healing Power of Words’, pp62-70.

<sup>74</sup> Alexander, ‘Homosexuality in the USSR (1956–82)’, pp154; 160.

<sup>75</sup> Dmitrii Isaev, ‘Patologicheskie deviatsii seksual'nogo povedeniia u podrostkov muzhskogo pola’, Candidate's dissertation, Leningradskii nauchno-issledovatel'skii psikhonevrologicheskii institut im. V. M. Bekhtereva, 1989; Kon, *Seksual'naia kul'tura v Rossii*, p181.

that deliberately or as a convenient result of funding limits, European Soviet citizens were the principal beneficiaries of the new sexology.<sup>76</sup> Sexopathology was evidently intended to improve marital relations, reduce divorce rates, and raise childbirth rates in Soviet Russia and Ukraine, where its institutional bases were concentrated.

Sociological work on marriage and sexual life also revived after Stalin's death.<sup>77</sup> Similar academic restrictions applied to its output as to sexopathology. A significant body of questionnaire-led research studied sexual activity among urban Russians, focused on citizens' decisions to initiate a sex life, get married, raise a family, and seek divorce. Conducting the research was difficult within a hostile and suspicious academic environment, according to practitioners.<sup>78</sup> Related work on demography seems to have been easier to organise and report on. (Meanwhile, a separate silo of sociologists employed in housing design institutes conceptualised family configurations and housing need.)<sup>79</sup> Demographers and sociologists of marriage alike noted trends in Russia and Ukraine that disturbed the dominant national groups in the Soviet elite. Sex was happening earlier, marriage was coming later in life after a shorter courtship, and divorce was rising rapidly even before legal relaxation in 1966. The fertility of Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian women was dropping below replacement level, while Central Asian (Muslim nationalities such as Kazakh and Uzbek) birth rates were rising dramatically. Soviet demographers in the 1960s anticipated a situation by the end of the twentieth century in which the labour needs of European Russia would have to be met by migrants from Central Asia; today they are indeed met this way.<sup>80</sup> There was obvious concern

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<sup>76</sup> Brokman, 'The Healing Power of Words', pp75-108 (psychotherapy's infrastructure), pp181-93 (fishing fleets); Alexander, 'Homosexuality in the USSR (1956–82)', pp141-47 (sexopathology's infrastructure by 1970s).

<sup>77</sup> This work is discussed in Healey, 'The Sexual Revolution in the USSR'.

<sup>78</sup> Kon, *Seksual'naiia kul'tura v Rossii*, pp171-75; S. I. Golod, *XX Vek i tendentsii seksual'nykh otnoshenii v Rossii*, St Petersburg: Aleteiia, 1996, p6; idem, *Chto bylo porokami, stalo nravami*, pp79-119.

<sup>79</sup> Erofeev, 'Experiment in the Architecture of Soviet Public Housing, 1955–1990', chapter 2.

<sup>80</sup> Sergey Ryazantsev, 'Labour Migration from Central Asia to Russia in the Context of the Economic Crisis', *Russia in Global Affairs* 8: 3 (2016), <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/labour-migration-from-central-asia-to-russia-in-the-context-of-the-economic-crisis/> (accessed 20 July 2020).

in sociologists' research programmes and methods about the decline of traditional constraints on intimacy and about the stabilisation of the European family inside the Soviet 'family of nations'. Sociologists worried explicitly about the improvement of the 'quality' of births among Central Asians, by which was meant improving education and training opportunities to catch up with rising demand; and also encouraging intermarriage with Russians and Ukrainians, believed to have a 'modernising' impact.<sup>81</sup> Despite the ideological aspiration for more mixed marriages between diverse national groups – and more mixed offspring that would adopt 'all-Union' outlooks – Soviet experts witnessed hardening endogamy in southern and eastern nationalities. The Soviet sociology of marriage was not always overtly 'sexological' in focus but its anxieties about reproductive behaviour illustrated the tension between socialist 'internationalism' and the realities of persistent ethnic hierarchies and the consolidation of nationalities.<sup>82</sup>

Late-Soviet forensic doctors continued to research the onset of sexual maturity since it remained a legal concept to the end of the Soviet Union.<sup>83</sup> New guidelines adopted in 1966 gave doctors greater authority in sex-crime investigations where minors were examined for their sexual maturity, which remained the threshold for legal sexual activity.<sup>84</sup> Some forensic doctors conducted large-scale anthropometric studies of ethnically distinct populations, comparing for example Karelian or Armenian girls' maturation against that of Leningrad schoolgirls.<sup>85</sup> Improvement in diet and living conditions were judged to have brought about

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<sup>81</sup> Kon, *Seksual'naia kul'tura v Rossii*, pp174-77; A. G. Kharchev, and M. S. Matskovskii, *Sovremennaia sem'ia i ee problemy: sotsial'no-demograficheskoe issledovanie*, Moscow: Statistika, 1978, pp148-50; Michael Rywkin, *Moscow's Muslim Challenge: Soviet Central Asia*. London: C. Hurst, 1982, p76; Edgar, 'Marriage, modernity, and the "friendship of nations"'

<sup>82</sup> Edgar, 'Marriage, modernity, and the "friendship of nations"', pp585-86, 596.

<sup>83</sup> Healey, 'Defining Sexual Maturity', pp124-25.

<sup>84</sup> The new guidelines let doctors determine 'sexual maturity' physiologically, excising ideologised social criteria imposed on them in the 1930s; see Healey, 'Defining Sexual Maturity', p124.

<sup>85</sup> V. M. Musaelian, 'Svavnitel'nye dannye o periode polovogo sozrevaniia u shkol'nits Erevana i Leningrada', in *Aktual'nye voprosy sudebnoi meditsiny i kriminalistiki. Trudy Len. GIDUVa, Vyp. 49*, Leningrad: Leningradskii gosudarstvennyi ordena Lenina Institut usovershenstvovaniia vrachei im. S. M. Kirova, 1966; T. S. Noreiko, 'O vremeni nastupleniia polovoi zrelosti u devushek Karelii', in the same volume.

convergence in the onset of 'sexual maturity': the Soviet Union's diverse peoples were, by this sexological measure, becoming more like the implicit European-Russian baseline.

### *Conclusions*

What does thinking about Soviet sexology through the lens of Communist approaches to 'race, ethnicity, and nationality' reveal about the Soviet sexual sciences and their place in Soviet politics?

Sexology's development in early Bolshevik Russia reflected both the modernising optimism of the 'sexual revolution' and its limits based on the pre-revolutionary inheritance and Russia's 'semi-peripheral' relationship with the European 'core' where sexology was developed. From an emergent science directed primarily at the affluent in tsarist Russia, early Soviet sexology firmly turned its attention to the working class. The New Soviet Man and Woman would be forged from this demographic: Russia would 'colonise itself'. Batkis's social hygienists tallied up sexual acts and impulses, and apparently 'found' a proletariat gradually learning to channel its sexual appetites for the good of the collective. Workers were the baseline when measuring 'sexual maturity' and managing sexual 'anomalies' like homosexuality or transgender individuals. At the same time workers could display 'wild sexuality' and needed discipline – and the Party, as well as sexologically informed experts consistently recommended sublimation, labour and education. Beyond the factories of European Russia and Ukraine, the picture was more challenging. 'Primitive sexual life' was never far beneath the surface in the Russian and Ukrainian countryside – peasants needed Soviet sexual 'enlightenment', but transformation would be a long process. The dilemma for Batkis and his bureau of sexology was that by dawn of the 1930s, counting and describing the 'sexual budgets' of workers had become superfluous. Stalin's Great Break would radically

transform the ‘economic base’, and superstructural phenomena like sexual life would follow spontaneously into natural grooves laid down by the Party.

Elsewhere across the Soviet Union, the gaze of early sex researchers examined non-Russians and non-Ukrainians and found undesirable ‘survivals of primitive custom’ in sexual life. Such judgements expressed in policy and research were products of Marxist readings of European anthropology, applied in local context. It mattered little that the original anthropological insights, applied in sexology, were gathered from Europe’s overseas colonies. Bolshevik encounters with the peripheral Other in their land empire were frequently mediated by the tension between Christian Europeans and Muslim Asians, a relationship inherited from Imperial Russia and one which communists struggled to decolonise through secularisation, affirmative action policies, and promotion of indigenous cadres.<sup>86</sup> Communist aspirations for Central Asia and other peripheries involved ‘modernising’ agendas in educating indigenous nationalities, industrialisation of outlying regions, and raising the status of women. Later marriage, freely chosen by women rather than arranged by families was a critical prescription for modernisation; also promoted for their ‘modernising’ effect, in the post-war period, were interethnic marriages between Central Asian men and Russian or Ukrainian women. And yet endogamy prevailed among non-Russian nationalities as they gained in confidence and viewed Russia’s ‘elder brother’ role with mistrust; in the early 1970s educated Muslim Tatars expressed greater disapproval of interethnic marriage with Russians than less educated fellow Tatars.<sup>87</sup> Central Asian women experienced comparatively little Soviet-style emancipation in their marital lives, as Anna Temkina’s study comparing women’s sexual lives in Russia, Armenia, and Central Asia reveals.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Khalid, ‘Introduction’, p466; Daniel Brower, and Edward Lazzarini, eds. *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700-1917*, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997.

<sup>87</sup> Edgar, ‘Marriage, modernity, and the “friendship of nations”,’ p591.

<sup>88</sup> Anna Temkina, *Seksual'naia zhizn' zhenshchiny: mezhdru podchineniem i svobodoi*, St Petersburg: Iz-vo Evropeiskogo universiteta v Sankt-Peterburge, 2008, pp37, 67-105, 140-44.

Being situated on the 'semi-periphery' of sexological knowledge development compelled Soviet researchers to look both ways: westward to the European and American 'core' countries, and eastward to the Soviet internal orient. Sexologists had to filter Western knowledge and align it with communist ideological narratives. Perhaps this translational habit was most evident for sexologists studying homosexuality in the early Soviet years, which seemed to be a medical issue in European Soviet cities but a socio-cultural and thus political problem on the Soviet peripheries. Later in the Soviet era similar translation work was evident in sex-relevant research into sexual dysfunction, psychotherapy for male and female homosexuality, and the sociology of marriage and family reproduction. Even work from fraternal socialist countries had to be 'translated' for Soviet use, and much of Central and East European sexology, with its psychological depth and appreciation of pleasure was impossible to transfer to the Soviet context. In their position on the 'semi-periphery', Soviet sexologists and researchers handled problematic knowledge that had to be sifted for what it could offer to the project of communist modernisation with its notes of internal colonisation.