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# **Out With the New, In With the Old: Traditional Values in Russia's Contemporary Identity**

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**Declaration**

**I, Emmie Stolpe Foss, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.**

**Signature.....**

**Date.....**

*“Osir gonpei noe ste odon” – to everyone who is still fighting and for everyone we lost.*

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## **Abstract**

Since Putin's rise to power in Russia there has been a rise of traditional values in Russia's contemporary identity. This became especially clear in the period following his reelection in 2012. These traditional values have manifested themselves in several ways, both nationally and internationally and affect the way Russia act in certain situations. Most notably is the treatment of Russian LGBT individuals, Russia's stance as anti-interventionist and a strong anti-Western sentiment. This thesis explores what the role of traditional values in Russia's contemporary identity is, and what the effects of these values are. It does this through a discourse analysis of three selected Putin speeches and a case study of 2014 Sochi Olympics and the protests and campaigns that surrounded it. It also includes a discussion on the role of masculinity in Russia and a discussion surrounding the Crimea conflict as part of Russia's contemporary identity formation.

The discourse analysis of the speeches shows that traditional values play an important role in Russia's contemporary identity, that family is the cornerstone of contemporary Russia, and that children needs to be protected at all costs. The speeches also show a clear anti-Western sentiment that was rooted in the West's lack of moral due to their liberal policies, especially in regards to LGBT rights. The Sochi case study show that the outside perception of Russia as negative did not have a negative impact on the role of traditional values in Russia's contemporary identity but rather the opposite. The case showed that when Russia is met with opposition in regards to LGBT rights, it will only increase the focus on traditional values. The opposition gave Putin something to rally around, and a clear "enemy" to defeat. This showed that the way the protests around Sochi were constructed was not the proper way to improve the state of LGBT rights in Russia.

This thesis argues that Russia's focus on traditional values is both political and ideological. The role of traditional values stem from a need to increase Putin's power and standing within Russia by implementing more traditional values and playing on masculinity, and at the same time showing the world that Russia is an alternative to the liberal West; Putin and Russia are looking for more international power and a way to regain their old power position. It is ideological because of the clear bond between the implementation of traditional values and the belief of the Russian Orthodox Church.

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## 1.0 Introduction

In 2013 the Russian Duma<sup>1</sup> passed a law that banned “homosexual propaganda”. Officially the purpose of the law was to protect young minds from the corruption of non-traditional lifestyles (AP 2013), but in reality the law is about stopping homosexuals from living their life openly and for young, questioning teens to be able to get information about sexualities other than heterosexual (HRW 2014).

The passing of this law happened eight months prior to Russia hosting the Olympics. This means that the world was already looking at Russia, and the law became highly contested internationally. The timing of the passing of the law and the Sochi Olympics was probably the main reason why such attention was put on Russia. There are as of today, four countries has laws that ban homosexual agenda (Carroll & Itaborahy 2015) and somewhere between 76 and 81 (depending on how you count) where being gay is illegal (Carroll & Itaborahy 2015); so why did Russia end up in the spotlight?

It was a mixture of the timing, and of the special relationship Russia has with the West. The relationship between the West and Russia has always been interesting, but maybe especially since 1945. The ideological battle between the US and The Soviet Union shaped the later part of the 1900's, and their battle to be the reigning champion of the world manifested itself in the space wars and the wars in Korea, Vietnam, and a number of smaller civil wars through the period (Green 2012). The period was shaped by this battle of wills, a battle about ideologies, but suddenly the Soviet Union fell, and the Cold War was over. Liberalism (and the US) was the winner of the Cold War and the battle was over (Green 2012). Except, it was not.

The Soviet Union was born in the ashes of the First World War and the Russian Revolution and grew great under the Second World War (Hosking 1992). It fought with the US for the position as the number one world power for almost fifty years, and then suddenly it was over. (Hosking 1992) Russia needed to rebuilt and figure out who they were now. The Soviet Union fell, and Russia was reborn at the same time as the debate between social constructivists and rationalists about the politicization of state identity and identity formation was unfolding (Clunan 2009:4).

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<sup>1</sup> The Russian Duma is the lower house of the Federal Assembly in Russia



Russia was lost and unsure of what they wanted to be, the ideas of the political elites were not in line with the public image of Russia(Clunan 2009:15-16). Then Vladimir Putin started his rise in the power hierarchy, and his thoughts about Russia, who they were and who they should be, was much more in line with the public opinion. Russia should be as it once was, a strong global power (Clunan 2009:16). But the way to reclaim that path would be hard, and this brings us back to the battle of ideologies that was thought to be over when the Cold War ended.

The framework has changed, the world looks nothing like it did at the end of the Cold War, but the battle lines remain similar: Russia and their traditional values on one side, and the West and their liberal values on the other. The role of traditional values in Russian politics is connected both to their foreign policy and their domestic policy. Where it manifests itself in a clear anti-interventional policy and a somewhat strained relationship with the West within Russia's foreign policy, it is also shown clearly in the domestic policies. The most notable instance is within Russia's treatment of LGBTQ+<sup>2</sup> individuals and the denial of equal rights within Russia (Wilkinson 2014).

This thesis has chosen to focus on LGBT rights because of the position they have gained internationally over the past ten years. Where women's rights was growing in the 1990's, LGBT rights are now at the forefront (Clinton 2011). But the reason why LGBT rights are especially interesting to look at when it comes to Russia's identity formation and the role of traditional values is how LGBT rights have gotten the label "a liberal right." By agreeing that LGBT individuals should have the same right as their straight, cisgendered<sup>3</sup> counterparts is the same as labeling yourself a liberal. This is not just relevant between countries, but it also takes place within countries. Even in liberal countries, such as the US, there is a divide between conservatives and liberal where most liberals support LGBT rights and conservatives do not. LGBT rights is a political fight, and the identity of those who fall somewhere on the LGBT spectrum has become politicized.

If the reasons for why Russia is holding on so tight to their traditional values and attacking LGBT individuals is *political* then the strategy for changing the quality of life of those who

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<sup>2</sup> Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, and other non-straight sexualities

<sup>3</sup> Someone whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. (In "opposition" to transgender in which your gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth). Trans\* is a blanket term for all gender identities that differ from the sex they were assigned at birth.

identify as LGBT in Russia would be different than if it is an *inherent belief* that being gay is wrong (or unchristian). If you want to solve a problem, you need to find the root of the issue, and in understanding how traditional values play a part in Russia's contemporary identity formation, I hope to do that.

### **1.1 The Goal of the Thesis**

This thesis aims to answer the question of how traditional values are part of Russian contemporary identity and the effects of this. It hopes to find out how politics play into the formation of Russia's identity and the role traditional values play in this process. In recent years, Russia's national identity has emphasized more strongly traditional values and anti-Western sentiments. The goal of this thesis is to be able to answer the research question:

“How are traditional values part of Russia's contemporary identity and what is the effect of these values?”

To be able to do that I have split the topic into several parts that will create a full image of the theme. There will also be three sub research questions to better be able to answer the primary research objective; which is how (traditional) values play a part in Russia's contemporary identity formation.

1. What do Putin's speeches tell us about how Russia perceives their contemporary identity and what is the role of traditional values in Russia's contemporary identity?
2. What does the “Sochi Case” tell us about how the West perceive Russia in light of liberal values and what was the role of the Sochi Olympics in Russia's contemporary identity formation?
3. How is Russia's identity gendered and how does Putin's play on masculinity affect this?

The role of traditional values in Russia's contemporary identity is an interesting topic to work with because of its implications about politics and identity. Russia's traditional values has defined them and their relationship with the West; and it affects minority groups within the country, especially those who identity on the LGBTQ+ spectrum. An analysis of the Sochi Olympics gave new insights into a battle that is just beginning for LGBT rights, and how this battle should proceed forward when dealing with traditionalist countries. The Sochi Olympics

offered several interesting insights that this thesis will deal with at a later stage. This thesis also includes a discourse analysis of three of Putin's speeches. This discourse analysis hopes to find out how Putin constructs Russia's contemporary identity and the role traditional values play in this formation.

This thesis is built around Anne Clunan's (2009) aspirational constructivism for its theoretical framework. The theory is relatively new but it is a very fitting theory for understanding Russia's identity formation. Clunan (2009) introduces a new way to look at identity, and it offers a way to understand how traditional values play into Russia's contemporary identity, by introducing new dimensions into identity formation and adds agency back into the process.

The outline of this thesis is simple. First it will introduce the theoretical framework as led by Clunan's (2009) theory, before explaining the methods used in the thesis and discussing the limitations, objectivity and identity in research. Then it will introduce the speeches and the discourse analysis, before moving on to the case study of the Sochi Olympics. The third part of the thesis will discuss and analyze how masculinity became a part of Putin and Sochi's identity and why it matters that identity is gendered.

The reason why this thesis has chosen to focus on the masculine/feminine dichotomy in regards to Russia's identity formation is due to Russia being a deeply masculine country, infused with sexism and misogyny. Russia is built in such a way that the traditional feminine point of view falls second to masculinity and that women will always fall second to men (Johnson 2014). To understand Russia's identity formation, one needs to understand the gendered aspect of Russia's identity and how traditional values affect this identity.

Lastly, this thesis will include a discussion about Russia's annexation of Crimea and the Ukraine conflict, and its role in in Russia's identity formation. This thesis does not focus on wars or power in the traditional sense, but the inclusion Crimea is done due to what Crimea represents in the international arena and how important it is for Russia's relationship with the West. Crimea also has a very specific role in Russia's identity formation, and offers interesting insights on Russia's foreign policy and contemporary identity.

## **2.0 Identity in IR**

This section of the thesis will discuss the role of identity in IR, and the degree to which identity is political and how values can be a part of a nation's identity formation. It will give

an overview on how identity is considered within various IR traditions before going deeper into Anne Clunan's (2009) theory of aspirational constructivism, with special attention to its focus of identity formation. To be able to understand how values play a part in Russia's contemporary identity, there needs to be an understanding of how identity in a state is formed.

This section will introduce the theoretical framework for this paper and discuss various types of identity in IR and what factors are relevant when analyzing how traditional values play a part in Russia's contemporary identity and how a country builds their national identity. This section will also take a look at how feminist theories within IR tackle the masculinity/femininity dichotomy as a way to introduce and discuss how identity is gendered and how this dichotomy may matter in Russia's identity formation.

## **2.1 "Traditional" Approaches to Identity**

When looking at identity, it is often done so through the lens of social constructivism, where identity is regarded as an object or substance that can be observed and measured (Baylis et al. 2013:186). Constructivism talks about how actors are created by their environment; they are not stable, static actors. This means that what makes Russia Russia is not the fact that the people speak Russian, but rather that there are certain rules associated with being Russian that shape Russia as a state. Russia's identity, interest, and foreign policy are what define Russia (Baylis et al. 2013:163).

The general theory about identity states that identity and culture do not exist in a vacuum but rather they are defined by the "other". The parts that are different from itself, when an identity is created it is created in opposition to something or someone else (İnaç & Ünal 2013: 223). The formation of the "self" is interwoven with the creation of "an other" in such a way that they cannot exist without the other. A failure to consider "the other" when looking at identity formation will have repercussions for the "self" that is created (Neumann 1999:35).

The reason why it is important to keep in mind the sense of the "other" in the case in which I am analyzing is because of the specific relationship between the West and Russia. Edward Lucas (2008) points out that in the mid-2000s, the West ceased to be Russia's moral compass and the West was, and still is, Russia's most important "other" in regard to identity formation (Riabov & Riabova 2014:26-27). This relationship between the West and Russia plays such an important part in who Russia is, and identity formation theory explains why an "other" is important when understanding a state's identity.

Anne Norton (1998) formulated a way to approach identity formation within states that looks upon identity formation as a process of desire for the power of “an other” that produces the image of self. Norton talks about the idea that the capability to recognize “an other” as a “like” is connected to a *bodily* similarity. In Norton 1988, page 42, she states

“That like-mindedness is coextensive with likeness of physiological constitution: that all men, insofar as they have the same bodies, have the same capacity for reason, the same emotions, and the same desires. This conviction, which has lent to particular ferocity to debates over racial and sexual difference, denies the role of politics in the constitution of the mind.”

(Neumann 1999:9) The creation of identity is a process that takes form over time and space and it is a continuous process and this also applies to the identity of countries, not just individuals. The ever changing nature of today’s world makes it so that identity formation is a continuous process, even for countries (İnaç & Ünal 2013: 223-224).

This idea is a starting point to understand and study how identity formation is gendered. IR theory in itself is gendered, due to the nature of the discipline and of the world. When a discipline is created mostly by men, the factors and ideas that come forward will always put men’s experiences first, and invalidate those of the females (Youngs 2004). For example, realism is considered a masculine theory because it is rational, unitary and steadfast, all things that are generally associated with men and masculinity. To accept gendered ideas like this is problematic for several reasons, but mostly because it builds up a toxic and problematic world view (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005).

Looking at how identity is gendered is especially relevant when trying to dissect Russia’s identity formation due to how Russia as a country is deeply gendered and has a long history with the shaping and reshaping of traditional gender roles in society and how gender roles shape the way various issues are handled (Riabov & Riabova 2014). Today, Russia is a deeply male oriented country with a large amount of male privilege (Johnson 2014) and to understand how this plays a part in their identity formation, theories about the feminine/masculine dichotomy and how identity and states are gendered need to be applied.

When it comes to identity formation and gendered issues, we see that there is a clear separation between the countries that want to be seen as masculine, a strong focus on material goods, on battle and on a need to be “strong” (Hackman et al. 1992). Whereas on the other side, you have the more feminine aspects, human rights, cooperation, emotion. These are the

images and feelings that leaders and countries built upon when creating their identity (Hackman et al. 1992; Wood 2016).

National identities are the product of debates among a country's political elites about what the country's international status and purpose should be. This is worked out in regards to the country's history and external and internal circumstances that shape how the country works (Clunan 2009:20). It is important to consider human agents when figuring out why certain national identities get chosen over others, and become the dominated national identity. In the end, the choice of national identity arise both from aspirations that are connected to the past (*history*) and the practicality of how a state's image is in relations with other states(Clunan 2009:20).

Identity is never one thing, and it is important to always look at identity and identity formation as a progress rather than a given entity. Neither history nor a country's aspiration alone can decide or predict how a country's identity formation will work, but rather a combination of the two(Clunan 2009:20). History tells us what they *can* be, and even maybe what they want to be, but their aspiration is what they *could* be, and where and how these two intersect is what is important when looking at how national identity is formed.

## **2.2 Aspirational Constructivism**

In her book, "The Social Construction of Russia's Resurgence", Anne Clunan (2009) proposes a new theory which she calls "aspirational constructivism." The theory, based on social constructivism, is at its core about collective identity and identity formation among nations. Clunan(2009) argues that the need for a collective national identity directly shape a nation's domestic and foreign policy, and the image they wish to portray to the world.

The reason why aspirational constructivism has been chosen for this thesis is because of its unique take on identity. While Russia is a country that has long been shaped by the countries around it, whether because of the Soviet Union or simply because of a need to be a part of the big boy table, the otherness of Russia's identity formation is not the whole story. By focusing only on the countries that form the "Other" to Russia's self, we lose the opportunity to understand Russia from the inside out.

Aspirational constructivism is interested in how national identities are formed, and how national identities shape what the political elites consider to be of national interest. It tries to

answer three questions in regard to national identity and identity formation. “What are the sources of national identity?”, “Why do multiple identities come into contention?” and “Why does one identity come to act as the “one” national identity and reject all others?” (Clunan 2009:22) .

*“Social identity theory allows us to consider how the self and human agency figure out the self and human agency figure into the construction of the national self.”* (Clunan 2009:38)

Aspirational constructivism is based both on constructivism and social theory, it draws on social theory’s need for self-esteem in regards to social identity formation, and the constructivism emphasis on value rationality and ideas (Clunan 2009:22). There are three main aspects to the idea of a national identity in aspirational constructivism: self-esteem, aspirations and ideas. These are based on social theory about identity, and when applying to a state; it uses group theory or the idea of a collective self-esteem (Clunan 2009:23).

If we look at the identity formation at its very base, it is about humans, and Clunan(2009) argues that to understand identity formation in states, we have to understand why identity formation happens on the individual level, and how this can be applied onto the state level. As well as how individuals become part of a social collective and what the purpose of this collective is. Nationality is one of these social collectives and therefore social theory can be applied to this idea of state identity formation (Clunan 2009:22-24).

Individuals form group identities as a way to establish and maintain self-esteem which means that social collectiveness only works if the group has a positive status, and is effective in its goal. A group will fall apart if it does not become an integral part of oneself or becomes a part of a secure self-concept. This means that the group is a part of your *identity*. Being a part of the group is an integral part of who you are (Clunan 2009:22-24).

The aspect of Aspiration Constructivism that this paper is going to focus on is the idea about national self-images and national identities, but it is important to separate between “national identities”, which is the dominant national identity, and “national self-images”. The dominant national identity is the one that has succeeded in dominating the political discourse (Clunan 2009:29). On the other side, we have “national self-images”. At base these two are the same and serve the same purpose: the ideas of a state’s international role and political purpose. A self-image differs from a national identity in that it is a temporary conception about what and

how a country should be and how it should behave. If a self-image manages to become part of and dominate the political discourse, that self-image will then be the prevailing national identity (Clunan 2009:29).

This idea about self-images and national identities are especially relevant for this paper because of the number of identity crises Russia has been through over the past century. There are, and have been for a long time, a number of competing identities within Russia(Clunan 2009:29), and to understand why Putin's vision for Russia has become the prevalent one, this idea about national self-images helps explain how ideas form national identities.

*“A national identity is a type of collective identity that constitutes a particular set of actors as a state”* (Clunan 2009:28)

Collective identity is a set of ideas that are recognized by the groups to be their defining characteristics; a collective identity is created through the groups' internal purpose and their status vis-à-vis others. Applied to states, this means a country's political purpose and international status (Clunan 2009:28).

A country's collective identity is created by the political elite, by looking to the past and current events to invest and reinvent a country's identity. As mentioned earlier, Clunan (2009) separates between national self-images and national identity. A self-image turns into an identity when it has been the primary self-images portrayed in political discourse for an extended period of time (tentatively five years) (Clunan 2009:30). The reasoning for this time frame is that the politics of identity formation can be lost if the time frame studied is too narrow or too broad.

Classical identity theories from constructivist such as Alexander Wendt and Ted Hopfs focus strictly on how identity is created through the force of “others”, and while that is an important part of the identity formation of a nation, it is not be the whole picture (Clunan 2009:22). Structural constructivism says that identity is the result of the present situation, that could be the behavior of others or cognitive structures, which means that the external environment works automatically to create an identity which means that the self has no agency and little action in the creation of its own identity (Clunan 2009:22-24).



This is the argument that aspirational constructivism has the most problem with, and suggests that identity formation includes more agency and action on the part of the self. Aspirational constructivism therefore adds social theory to the structural constructivist theory to explain how agency plays a part in identity formation (Clunan 2009:22-24).

As mentioned earlier, aspirational constructivism borrows from both social theory and structural constructivism, as a way to fill in the gaps in both theories with ideas from the other. For example, social psychology says that “others” and social structures do not automatically determine a group’s self, this is in direct contrast to the beliefs of Alexander Wendt. Social theory says that the self consists of core elements that separate it from “the other.” Amos Tversky stated that the most important point of identity formation is the self, not the “other”(Clunan 2009:23-25).

*“History shapes individuals’ readiness to accept an identity.” (Clunan 2009:38)*

When creating a national identity, the political elite looks both to the past and to the current situation, and a good memory of the past serves as aspiration while a bad memory might prompt a desire to turn away from those ideas of the past (Clunan 2009:38).

This idea of history being a part of what shapes a nation is especially interesting when looking at Russia because of Russia’s long history and its past as a superpower. Russia as a nation is constantly looking to find a way to regain its power basis and return to the glory days of the old(Riabov & Riabova 2014; Tsygankov 2015). Russia’s need to reclaim old glory can be explained by historical aspirations.

“Others” are only “allowed” to define the self’s identity when it is an identity that has been accepted by the self and this adds some of the agency back into the process. If the identity suggested by “the others” is in line with the historical past of the self, the self is more likely to adapt this identity(Clunan 2009:25). History decides whether an identity will be accepted as self-identifying and the legitimacy of the identity is also connected to history. National identity is a part of a long process that takes years to finish (Clunan 2009:24-26).

Psychological theory suggests that the past and the present are connected, and that the past is always going to be a key element of the present identity and that the past-self works as an actor to the present situation (Clunan 2009:27). Transferring this social theory into

international relations and states, aspirational constructivism says that the historical self is likely the key source of aspirations that serves as the central standard for forming national self-identities and the process of national self-identities turning into national identities(Clunan 2009:27-28).

While “others” do have an influence on the identity formation process, certain countries’ opinions may have different influence on the internal debates on self-images. The self singles out certain countries’ opinions and policies as central (Clunan 2009:43). This is interesting if we take in account the realist view on security and on the international forum as a whole. A realist believes that all Great Powers matter in the definition of another country’s national interests. This means that all Great Powers should have the same amount of influence on another country’s identity formation in regards to their international status(Clunan 2009:43). However, according to constructivism a country’s relationship with a foreign country serves to reinforce or undermine certain national self-images. This is particularly the case if a national self-image is modeled on another country. This means that certain countries matter more in the definition of a state’s national interest and identity (Clunan 2009:43).

One of the central pillars of aspirational constructivism is the idea that national self-images construct certain countries as “in-groups” and “out-groups”. However, a country rarely creates these images one-sidedly which means that countries may end up being in more than one group and this creates a complex relationship that complicates the expected behavior towards these groups(Clunan 2009:49-50). This means that the image in which one state perceives another is fundamental in how they deal with each other(Clunan 2009:50). The political purpose entailed in national self-images and the legitimacy of in- and out-groups are critical variables in understanding the formation of national identity(Clunan 2009:50).

According to aspirational constructivism, national identity rests on two pillars: political purpose and international standing(Clunan 2009:30). Political purpose refers to internal features, mission of state, system of governance and economic system, and deals with ideas about values, principles, traits and symbols that characterize the country. Political purpose also includes the formulation of a national mission (Clunan 2009:30-33). On the other hand, international standing is about a country’s external position, obligations and rights, questions about one’s rank, which means the possession of a country in an imagined international hierarchy(Clunan 2009:33).

Aspirational constructivism builds a framework that is easy to understand, and which I will be applying throughout my analysis. Aspirational constructivism's focus on the self is very important, and offers a unique insight into identity formation. Identity formation as a mixture of the self, of the state's history and what others feel about them, fits very well with the process that Russia has been going through since the end of the Soviet Union. Russia, especially due to their relationship with the West, has an interesting relationship with "the other" in identity formation, but history also plays a big part in who Russia wants to be moving forward. All the aspects of Clunan's (2009) theory provide an interesting insight into Russia and their identity formation.

In addition to Clunan's (2009) theory, when looking at Russia there is a need to introduce feminist thinking, as Russia as a country works very clearly within the construction of the feminine/masculine dichotomy. Also when looking at a case study including LGBT rights and individuals, keeping in mind how gender influences politics and the understanding of the world is needed.

### **2.3 Gender and identity formation**

Until Cynthia Enloe's *Bananas, Beaches and Benches* (2000), women's role in IR had been irrelevant and the feminist tradition of IR was practically invisible. The book presents sexism as an issue and throughout the book gives a look at history about how sexism has worked its way into the world. Enloe (2000) discusses how issues like colonialism in light of the dichotomy of the typical masculine and the feminine. And she discusses how certain cases may be different if you look at them with the gender dichotomy (Enloe 2000).

Cynthia Enloe started the conversation, but Ann Tickner took it one step further. Ann Tickner is one of the most prominent feminist thinkers and her ideas about masculinity and femininity in IR has shaped much of the dialog around this issue. Tickner(1992) pointed out that especially realism as a study is shaped by masculine beliefs in that the idea of the strong male warrior has been projected over to states, and this affects how a state's power is measured(Tickner 1992). This does not only show a strong correlation with masculine identities but also includes a great deal of misogyny. When looking at identity construction in particular and what IR looks at as strong or powerful states, it is important to keep in mind that these issues are gendered(Youngs 2004). Masculine and feminine values and ideas are projected onto countries. Values that are typically connected to masculinity like strength and

ruthlessness, as cemented in arms races and wars, is considered high politics, while typically feminine values like compassion and compromise, as cemented in cooperation with NGOs or other countries and agencies and human rights battles, is looked upon as soft politics. These values are given less importance than hard power, especially within the realist tradition (Youngs 2004).

At its core feminist IR is about exposing the masculine thinking of IR, and about being aware of what circumstances and which ideas lay at the core of our understanding of IR. In this thesis, I am trying to explain to what degree identity is a political action, and that is why it is interesting to look at the feminine/masculine divide within the IR tradition and what this means for the evolution of a country. Which traits does a country focus on when building their identity and how can this identity be understood?

If you look at it from a more traditional perspective about how the international arena works, the aspect of focus will be very different. Realism in itself is a very masculine theory, the focus on power, autonomy and rationality, all of which are generally linked to masculine characteristics, and this leads to a gendered paradigm. Feminism aims to fight this thinking and challenges key concepts such as power, sovereignty and security because they are so closely linked to masculinity (Enloe 2000). A country would for example focus mostly on material power and security vis-à-vis other states when building an identity, but as I have discussed previously in this thesis, identity does not work like that, and not every decision made is about power in the material sense. This is where feminism in IR comes in; feminist IR is particularly interested in security and is very critical to the traditional view on security and power.

Zaleskwski and Enloe (1995) discuss how the process of international relations helps construct a particular kind of (gendered) identity and that process of identity building (gender and otherwise) affects international relations as a study. And how these processes are unable to be fully understood in the dichotomy of realism, structuralism and other schools of thought that are to be constructed ontologically, ethologically and epistemologically (Zalewski & Enloe 1995).

Tickner (1992) talks about something that is called “hegemonic masculinity” which according to her is a “socially constructed cultural idea while it does not correspond to the actual personality of the majority of men, sustains patriarchal authority and legitimizes a patriarchal

political and social order”(Tickner 1992:6). The reason why this term is important is because characteristics which are associated with it are transferred over to states (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005:832). Hegemonic masculinity is dangerous not only because of toxic masculinity but rather because it makes the way a country is perceived as strong equal to certain typically masculine characteristics and closes off the opportunity for a different way to not just look at power, but also identity(McClintock 1991:105).

These things, these ideas about masculinity and femininity and power are important to keep in mind when looking at a country’s identity formation, to what degrees they play up this dichotomy and what traits they prefer over other. When analyzing identity formation in the light of gendered identity, you have to keep in mind what aspects are gendered and what this means for the identity. Identity in gendered is several ways, but maybe the two most important aspects is in power, how they want to be perceived, the power they have and what sort of power this is. The difference between the more traditional view on power, and the more feminist and constructivist way of looking at power: who has it and how is it measured. The second important aspect is values. Certain values have certain gendered attributes embedded in them which inherently makes all research into values gendered. This means that we need to look at values from a gendered perspective, and how some values are worth less because of their “gender” (Riabov & Riabova 2014; Youngs 2004; Zalewski 2007) .

This thesis has now established a theoretical framework that will make it possible to analyze and understand how traditional values play a part in Russia’s contemporary identity formation. Anne Clunan’s (2009) framework will be used in this thesis for analysis and discussions about identity as the main theoretical framework. It has also discussed how gender plays a part in our understanding in the world and the role this may have in identity construction. This is a point in which we will return to later in the thesis when looking at how Russia and Putin use masculinity as a way to convey power.

Gaining a theoretical framework is only the beginning of understanding and working towards answering the research question. In this next section we will be looking at the *how* in regards to understanding and analyzing the role of traditional values in Russia’s contemporary identity and also discussing limitations and processes.

### **3.0 Methodology**

When approaching a research question there are several questions a researcher needs to answer before they can start working on their topic. What is the best method to use for answering my question and how can my methodology help me understand and answer my research?

#### **3.1 Discourse analysis**

An understanding of Anne Clunan's (2009) theory about identity formation and the pillars of her identity formation theory gives a better entry point into how to analyze the three selected Putin speeches within an identity formation framework. In addition to keeping the pillars of aspirational constructivism and identity formation in mind, the method used to understand the speeches was discourse analysis.

It is also important to note that the methods chosen for this thesis is in the form of *qualitative* research, which means that in analyzing the speeches, I was not interested in the amount of times Putin said "family" or "values" but rather analyzing the idea and the meaning of the speeches beyond just counting the number of times various words appeared in the speeches. Discourse analysis is not just one thing, and exists in many forms (Bryman 2012:528).

One such kind is critical discourse analysis (CDA) which is a method I debated using, but ultimately decided against as CDA as a tool works best if the subject researched is connected to power relations and how language is connected to the significance of power and social differences (Bryman 2012:537-538). The reasons why CDA was debated was due to the three dimensional framework it offers which gives a great overview of analysis and its somewhat clear guidelines in how to do a critical discourse analysis. The negative sides of using CDA is not only in regards to their focus on power relations but also due to CDA's roots in critical realism (Bryman 2012) and does therefore work with different preconceptions in regards to what power then the constructivist belief this thesis follows. CDA also focuses more on aspects in which I am not interested in for this study as organizational discourses and the deep focus on intertextuality (Bryman 2012:556-538).

CDA's close connection to power and how power relates through language is the main reason the methods were disregarded. While yes, Putin is in a position of power, the ultimate goal of my analysis is not to understand how Putin uses his languages in these speeches to convey

power or how they play into the social differences in Russia, but rather what the language of the speeches says about the *identity* of Russia.

Discourse analysis is the “perfect” tool for understanding identity because identity *is* political for discourse analysis. If you look at politics without looking at identity, you lose an important aspect of politics. Politics can also help in understanding identity, it can try to answer who “we” are and without understanding to what degree “others” play a part in state identity formation you lose an important aspect about politics and about how conflict plays into this process (Neumann 2001:124). A lot of discussion exists within IR about the degree of which identity is constructed and to what degree it is political (Neumann 2001:124).

Discourse analysis works under the conception that identity is constructed by things surrounding them, as it is the cornerstone of constructivism (Neumann 1999:124). It also fits into a framework of feminism, which this thesis also uses as theoretical framework in addition to Anne Clunan’s (2009) aspirational constructivism.

Discourse analysis is about looking at the words chosen, the time and space in which they were said, written or used, and the audience of the discourse (Bryman 2012:528). For this thesis, the discourse chosen is a speech, though rather than using the actual speeches, both due to the fact that I do not speak Russian and that video, while available dubbed into English for the 2013 and 2015 speeches, are dubbed in such way that does not show tone changes or other speech patterns. The analysis will be done on written transcripts, which means that factors such as tone of voice, pauses and other vocal attributes are not a part of the discourse analysis. Instead the speeches will be treated as written texts, in which the context of them will be taken in account when analyzing what the speeches say about Russia’s identity formation.

When it comes to sampling, the three speeches chosen were chosen on the basis that they represent Putin and what he thinks about the identity of Russia. The period of the speeches was also important as it shows how the identity has evolved over a period of time, and how Putin’s opinions or not have changed. The first speech, often called the demography speech, from 2006 was chosen due to its perspective on the population crisis in Russia and the degree of which Putin chooses to put focus on population and values. The second speech, held in 2013, was chosen because of its strong focus on values and identity, and the last speech, which Putin held at the UN in 2015, was chosen because of Putin’s approach to Western values as well as it shows how Putin wants Russia to be perceived in the international

community which offered a unique perspective on “in- and out-groups” and how Russia wants to relate to other countries.

After picking out the three speeches that I felt was the most applicable to my thesis and the themes in which I was researching, I needed to gain an overview over the three speeches, what they were about and which themes that were prevalent throughout them. For this, I chose to start with an open coding, which means reading through the speeches looking for trends and patterns (Berg & Lune 2012:35). First, I discovered that values were at the core of all three speeches in different ways, and that family played a huge part in the first two. I was particularly interested in how traditional values were finding their way into the political discourse and how this was contextualized in regards to Russian identity.

### **3.2 Case study as a method**

A case study allows a researcher to study things that are hard to quantify like democracy, power and political culture (George & Bennett 2005:18). However, using case studies can be a complicated process as it can be hard to define what constitutes a case or whether or not using case studies is the right approach for your field of study (Yin 2013:4).

The case study I will be using for this thesis is that of the Sochi Olympics, the winter Olympics in 2014 and the campaigns and protests that surrounded them. This case was selected to understand how Russia’s image is projected internationally and how the response or the effects of Russia’s traditional values are internationally. When using a case study in the research process, George and Bennett (2005) say that a case is a well-defined aspect of a historical happening rather than the event itself (George & Bennett 2005:17). In this thesis this translates to mean that it is not the Olympics itself that is the case but rather the circumstances/events surrounding them.

Yin (2013:32) states “you need to define a specific real-life case to represent the abstraction”. In this thesis this means that the Sochi Case is the specific case that represents the effects of Russia’s traditional values abroad and how an “other” plays a part in the identity formation of the “self.” In addition, this case was chosen because it includes a unique perspective in regards to how LGBT rights have become a point of contention between western liberal values and the traditional values of Russia. The Sochi Case also offers a unique perspective on how values matter in the relations between countries. This thesis also looks at what the Sochi Olympics represented for the Russians, all of this make the Sochi Case interesting to



examine both as a domestic soft power variant and as an “other” in the identity formation process.

There is a fair amount of critique within IR against using case studies as a focal point for research due to its lack of rigor and agreed-upon methodology (Bennett & Elman 2007:172). However, there has been a change in this over the past few years and more guidelines in regards to how to handle case studies have come into place (Bennett & Elman 2007:172-173). This thesis does not focus strictly on the case study but rather using it as a way of seeing the effects as well as representing the “Other” in the identity formation process while the discourse analysis focuses on the “self”. It could also be argued that the Ukraine case I discuss could be looked upon as a case study, but the discussion surrounding the Ukraine conflict is not about explaining an abstract idea but rather about using an idea to address the conflict in Ukraine, and discussing whether or not Russia’s choice of intervention in Ukraine was a part of their identity formation up to that point or a break in it.

### **3.3 Identity and Objectivity**

Within political science and the study of international relations, knowledge has long been measured by its objectivity. That if the rules of objectivity, validity and reliability are followed the research will be true. But research cannot be truly objective; humans are not computers that can process information without any personal bias (Westmarland 2001).

A lot of feminist scholars reject the idea that objectivity as set out in the rules is the only way to create trustworthy results. The reason why a lot of feminist epistemology rejects objectivity is because it, like the rest of the IR tradition, is created by men and in many ways rejects the input of marginalized groups in understanding research (Westmarland 2001). And Sandra Harding (1992) introduced the idea of “strong objectivity”. Strong objectivity does not reject the notion of objectivity but rather turns it into something where marginalized voices are not just incorporated into the research program, but is the starting point for knowledge (Brooks & Hesse-Biber 2007:8).

Throughout this process, it has been hard for me to gain “traditional” objectivity due to the fact that I self-identify as a queer liberal woman and remaining objective was especially hard in instances where my very identity was under attack by the things I read. This can be looked upon as a weakness of my research, but rather than focus too much on that, I have followed a tradition that is more in line with Sandra Harding’s (1992) belief about “strong objectivity”,

which steps out of the classical constrictions of the conceptual framework (Brooks & Hesse-Biber 2007:10). If the classical sense of objectivity is built around the western conceptions, Harding's (1992) objectivity is about the values and rationality of the people that has been excluded and my identity as a queer female offers a different kind of perspective than that of the mainstream IR. Feminist empirics understand that certain identities and experiences are impossible to divorce yourself from (Brooks & Hesse-Biber 2007:10), and the experience of being female and queer has shaped me in ways that I cannot explain and therefore cannot remove from myself or my way of understanding the world and this has at certain places informed my research.

Feminist empirics seek to produce stronger, more objective, more truthful results by including women in their studies as well as introducing their experiences into the already established canon of research (Brooks & Hesse-Biber 2007:10).

### **3.4 Limitations**

There are a couple of limitations that have to be taken into account with this thesis, some of them connected to the methodological choices I have made and some other limitations. Other limitation, as mentioned, also included the fact that the speeches that I analyzed were translated transcripts from their original Russian due to the fact that I have no skills in the Russian language and things can (and often do) get lost in translation, which is always something that you need to keep in mind, especially when doing discourse analysis when wording is one of the more important aspects of analysis.

Another limitation is in regards to my case study and how it as an event happened two years ago. While this gives me the opportunity to look at the aftereffects of the campaigns and of Sochi, it also leaves me reliant on secondary sources. Originally, the plan was to interview someone who had been a part of the protests as to get another view on the process, but this fell through.

Now we have an understanding about how the research question can be answered and we have established a framework in which this is possible. Not just a theoretical framework where understanding how identity formation works, but also a framework that helps us *analyze* identity formation and apply certain tactics to the case and the speeches we are studying. The next step is now to apply the theory and the methods to the Sochi Olympics case and Putin's speeches to be able to answer the research we set out to do.

## **4.0 Russia's identity formation**

Identity formation, as showed earlier, is a process and to understand how this process has taken place in Russia, this section will analyze three speeches from Putin and look at the “Sochi Olympics” as a case. Identity and values are connected in several ways and this section aims to figure out how traditional values became a part of contemporary Russian identity and what the effects of these values are, not just domestically but also internationally.

Russia defined “traditional values as “being linked to the rebirth of Russian society, and to the preservation of Russia’s collective identity” (Wilkinson 2014:367). To understand how Russia is forming their identity, we have to look inwards. How Putin as the head of Russia is working to create a narrative of what Russia is and should be, and what this narrative is. This section first dives into three speeches by Putin, the 2006 demography speech, the 2013 speech to the federalg assembly at Valdai, and lastly Putin’s 2015 speech to U,. Then this section will deal with the case study of the Sochi Olympics.

### **4.1 Discourse analysis**

To figure out how Russia looks upon itself in the international arena, I have chosen to look at some speeches made by President Vladimir Putin over a period of nine years and to see how his opinions have (or have not) changed, and how he looks at Russia’s place in the world and the values in which he considered important. The reasons why these three speeches<sup>4</sup> have been selected are because they encompass Putin, his values and his opinions about Russia and the direction of their identity.

#### **4.1.1 The Federal Assembly Address in 2006**

In his speech to the federal assembly in 2006, Putin talks about the demographics and the future of Russia. While he never talks about values directly, there are a few things in this speech that point towards a traditional point of view, and the speech says some things about what Putin thinks Russia should be, and what external forces they should be protected against.

The keyword from the Federal Assembly Speech is “family,” what family means, what family should be and the importance of family. In building this typical Russian family, Putin is building Russia. If identity is created from the ground up, then family is certainly the first

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<sup>4</sup>Links to all speeches in bibliography

corner stone. Also by making family a priority, Putin “uses certain values as the basis for what it means to be Russian.

Using the wording of using “most important” in relations to love, women and children, speaks to the way Putin want Russia to be. What he wants to focus on. Reproduction is the main focus of this speech. Family is the theme, but reproduction is what he is encouraging. This is a theme that will continue over several years, and Putin’s main purpose for Russia seem to be able to reproduce and create a new *Russian* society built on Russian values and Russian people. In addition to this, we have the use of the phrase “everyone knows” and “you know” several times during the speech which works to reinforce the thought that Putin’s idea about family and children is not only the right opinion, but the universal one.

There is also an interesting gender dichotomy in this speech as it focuses very clearly on traditional gender roles and about its women’s responsibility to procreate and make kids. However, at the same time, Putin talks about creating programs that would make it easier for mothers to re-enter the workforce, and how attitudes to working mothers have to change, because mothers and children are the most important part of Russia’s society.

“We need to restore these time honored values of love and care for family and home,”(Putin 2006) Putin refers to the values of the past and how these need to be restored into Russian society. He is building a narrative of a family friendly Russia, with children in the forefront. This can be seen in light of the anti-propaganda law which “purpose” is to protect children. Russia’s identity is one of family and of protection and love of the next generation. There is a constant comparison between having children and making Russia great again, as if to suggest that the only way that Russia can return to its former glory is by reproduction and the return of “family values.”

“We need to build our home and make it strong and well protected” (Putin, 2006), this line is spoken in regards to external influences and the West’s “need” to impose their values onto other countries. It is very clear that Putin wants Russia to be its own thing, very distinct from the West, and that this Russia is strong and capable of handling itself against the evils outside its “walls”.

This speech tells us certain things about Russia’s identity according to Putin. First of all that there is no room in Russia for those who fall outside the norm, whether that be homosexuals

or even just barren women, or women who simply do not want kids. The purpose of being Russian is to reproduce and by doing that, Russia could be great again. Russia needs to build a new generation that is growing up with values about family and about Russia. This is the only way to make sure that Russia's values and traditions stay intact and the children of Russia need to be protected from external influences.

In regards to the question about how traditional values play a part in Russia's contemporary identity, we see that family is the cornerstone of Russian identity, and family and traditional values are closely related and family is often considered one of the most important aspects of traditional values (Inglehart & Baker 2000). Already here, back in 2006, we can see that Putin is laying the groundwork for the way he uses family and traditional values in comparison to making Russia great again. If we add that to the underlying message in the speech about how everyone who does not exactly fit in has no place in Russia, we see a clear narrative forming. A narrative about a return to the traditional, to family, and to a certain extent to traditional gender roles.

This idea of Russia having to be protected from outside influences, to be able to form its own identity is also a theme that reoccurs in Putin's 2013 speech to the Federal Assembly. In many ways, the entirety of the 2013 speech is about Russia's identity, what it is, what it should be, and how it can be protected.

#### **4.1.2 The 2013 Speech at Valdai**

"Today we need new strategies to preserve our identity" (Putin 2013) – there is a clear thread throughout the entirety of this speech in that they need to protect Russia's traditional pure identity from the outside influence. It is also clear that when Putin talks about outside forces he is referring to the West. This speech is about building a narrative about what Russia is and who they want to be. The opening of the speech goes "questions about who we are and who we want to be?" (Putin 2013) In many ways this speech is the blue-print of Putin's Russia.

"After 1991 there was an illusion that a new national ideology would develop by itself. The state, authorities, intellectuals and the political elite refused to partake in a process of creating a new identity." (Putin 2013) - this refers back to Russia's problem of finding an identity after the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union, and he blames the political elite and the intellectuals for not taking action back then. Then he compares that with today, and how he refuses to fall "into the traps of the past" (Putin 2013). Russia's identity is something that

needs to be created, and it needs to be created without the interference of the outside forces. “A new national idea does not simply reappear” (Putin 2013) and “neither does mechanically copying other countries experiences.” (Putin 2013) Russia needs to be something individual and something new. Or something old in this case. It needs to be built on the ideas and values that made Russia great, and not fall into the traps that led to the fall of the Soviet Union.

He blames the lack of a proper Russian identity after the fall of Soviet Union on “primitive borrowing and attempts to civilize Russia from abroad.” (Putin 2013) And how such actions were not “accepted by the majority of our people.” (Putin 2013) Here we see the use of some of the same rhetoric as in the 2006 speech. By using words like majority of our people, as a way to cement his opinions and by including the majority of people, he makes sure that his narrative is the one that is accepted.

This idea that the majority of Russian may have rejected outside forces, and the need to civilize Russia, the use of the world civilize is interesting here. Because it shows that Putin is aware that the “otherness” of Russia is that it is uncivilized and he is fighting this image by creating a new Russia. But not one that is colored by this view of Russia being uncivilized, but rather that Russia is something independent of what “others” consider right and civilized. Russia is something separate, not connected to others.

In the same vein we have this quote, “We also understand that identity cannot be imposed from above [it is] not a rigid thing, but rather a living organism.” (Putin 2013) – which is interesting because it says that identity is fluid and ever changing, which according to most theory is true, but yet Putin seems determined to make sure that the tradition and values of the past is a part of this moving identity. That while identity should be never looked upon as rigid, it is still important to remember the beliefs and values of the past, because at its heart, these values are the ones that make Russia, Russia. Also, bringing back the use of “we”, it is indicated that this is a clear thing, universally understood. It is unlikely that Putin talked to everyone in that room, and they came to an understanding about this, but rather by using we, instead of I, he is building a narrative where what he is saying is the universal truth because “we (...) understand” (Putin 2013).

“We have to clean up *our* mess of the past and we have to move towards making Russia great again.” (Putin 2013) – Again, Putin references why the Soviet failed, and why the “attempts” at building an identity built on western ideas after the Cold War was over were not successful.

The narrative is that to make a lasting, successful identity for Russia, it needs to be made from within Russia and they need to make sure that the Russian identity will not fall victim of western culture.

There is an entire section in his speech in which Putin attacks the morals of the West, and says that “we see how many of the Euro-Atlantic countries are actually rejecting their roots, including the Christian values that consists the basis of Western Civilization.” (Putin 2013) This speech rather dramatically attacks the way of life of these countries, and the loss of morals in these countries is compared to how Russia has been able to keep the traditions of the past, and how these morals and values are what makes Russia great and strong. Stronger than these other countries, because they have lost their moral principles and traditional identities. He then goes on to comparing allowing same-sex marriage to confusing belief in God with the belief in Satan.

This entire passage of the speech is interesting in regards to Russia’s identity on two fronts. The first being that it paints a pretty clear picture about what Putin thinks of the moral choices of the Euro-Atlantic countries, and how Russia has to protect itself from falling into these same traps. On the other hand, it brings in the role of religion in the making of moral principles and traditional identities. Russia, like a large part of western countries, has a separation of state and church, but this does not mean that the Christian values that the country was built on were lost. Putin seems to suggest that by opening up the country for more open policies in regards to same-sex relationships, these countries have turned their back on the Christian foundation of Western civilization and doing so would certainly mark doom. There are several things with this argument that is problematic, but when it comes to identity formation and Russia, it is clear that despite Russia’s divide between church and state, the values and opinions of the Russian Orthodox Church are important when creating this narrative.

The Russian Orthodox Church is very traditional, though it is becoming increasingly more open and liberal in regards to issues like abortion, birth control and divorce. This is again a reference to the traditional beliefs and values in which Putin feels Russia should represent. The wording of the entire passage shows clear disdain for allowing same-sex relationships the same benefits and respect as “large families”. This part also says something not just about what values Putin looks upon as important and which should be the foundation for a Russian

identity, but also it shows a clear narrative about what Putin considers to be wrong about liberal values.

He then goes on to criticize liberal values, and goes as far to as to inexplicitly comparing homosexuality to pedophilia. This is not a new thing for Putin, nor would it be the last time he did this. It plays into his bigger narrative about protecting the future generations and how children are the corner-stone of the Russia he wishes to “build”. Once more he brings back the reproductive argument in regards to same-sex relationship and how “if a country fails to repopulate, isn’t that the biggest moral crisis of all” (Putin 2013) - once again he creates a link between being able to procreate and being a good Russian, which again also plays on traditional gender roles and good old Christian values.

“We consider it natural to and right to defend these [Christian] values.” (Putin 2013), two things about this sentence. The first thing is the use of the word “we” again as a way to cement this opinion and same with the word natural and this is the way it was supposed to be. The second is the right to defend the Christian values. This sentence is again spoken in regards to reproduction and how minorities need to be respected, but the rights of the majority must not be put into question. Putin’s comparison between Christian values and reproduction is interesting in the light of identity formation because it says something about what values Putin considers to be the most important in building the identity of the country. To regain Russia’s greatness two things are needed. The first one is a higher reproduction rate so that Russia doesn’t lose itself or its identity by migration or simply by loss of numbers whereas the second thing needed to return to greatness is to remember the moral principles and traditional values of Christianity.

The picture that Putin is painting about Russia, and its identity, is one of strong conviction, of family values and Christian morals. And in the end, this is what will cement that Russia prevails over the evils of the West.

“A true civil society and a true nationally-focused political elite, including the opposition with their own ideology, values and standards for good and evil on their own, rather than those dictated by the media or from abroad.” (Putin 2013) → Putin focuses on developing your own morals and ideas about good and evil, and not listening to the media or those westerners from abroad. Through this speech, the narrative Putin has been telling shows a pretty clear picture of what he believes are the right values and which values should represent Russia, mainly



family values and values that are in line with the Russian Orthodox Church. It is also interesting that he brings up the idea of good and evil, which is also generally associated with religion. Generally throughout this speech Putin has been focusing on Russia's identity, what did not work after the Wall fell, and how to proceed. There has been a lot of focus on morals and principles and the difference between what is good and what is bad or evil. Russia's identity should be self-created, and it should be created not only by its citizens but by the political and intellectual elite. It is about the image in which Russia wants to project to the world, but also the image they want to project to their own citizens.

Lastly, Putin looks to the past, of the role Russia (and the Soviet Union) had in the two world wars and the congresses that followed. Putin argues that Russia was a big part of why these congresses were successful, "Russia's strength as a winning nation manifested itself as generosity and justice." (Putin 2013) This is a throwback to a "better" age, a time where Russia was on top of the world, at least to a certain degree. He talks about how Russia evolved "on the bases of diversity, harmony and balance and brings such skills to the international stage." Here Putin paints a picture of what Russia's role on the world stage should be, and why they should have more influence. History has shown that they are a fair and strong country, and they could still be that. It points towards foreign policy and how this plays into identity formation. Several theorists talk about how foreign policy is a part of identity formation, as it deals with how they are perceived by other countries and the actions taken on the foreign policy fronts deals with the outside part of identity formation. While this part of my thesis focuses on the agency and the self of identity formation, it is important to keep in mind that how the inside reacts and deals with the outside is a part of identity formation (Campbell 1992).

This is also a point that will become even clearer as we dive into the UN speech, which deals with Russia's identity in the international society. However, not from an outside perspective but rather how Russia is using their foreign policies as means to cement their identity.

"We believe that every country, every nation [...] is unique, original and benefits from equal rights, including the right to choose their own development path" (Putin 2013) – this is the first reference in this speech to Russia's identity as a country that believes in anti-intervention. If we look at this separately from the speeches, and how this part of Russia's identity plays out internationally, we can see that if we look at Russia's voting record in the Human Rights

Council, we can see how these beliefs in culture and self-governing transfer into Russia's foreign policy. At first overview, Russia's voting record shows pretty clearly that they are against intervention for *all* reasons, and consistently voted against mandates that would either establish or continue the Special Rapporteur to gain access in countries to monitor Human Rights. The only exception was Palestine and other occupied Arab territories, which shows a clear double standard and raises questions about Russia's selectivity in regards to the Council (HRW 2016). This part of Russia's identity formation will also come into focus when looking at Putin's 2015 speech to the UN.

#### **4.1.3 Putin's speech to the UN in 2015**

The main thread that moves all its way through the UN speech is the need to step back from the Middle East, and let them solve their problems without intervention from outside forces. This does not mean they should not help, it means that they should not work to topple governments as that is not their job. By doing that "we would get a world dominated by selfishness rather than collective work"(Putin 2015), and "attempts to push for changes within other countries based on ideological preferences often led to tragic consequences and to deterioration instead of progress" (Putin 2015). These sentences themselves do not mean that much, but viewed in comparison to Putin's earlier speeches, this reads as a direct attack on liberal values and the dangers of the Western intervention policy.

This speech cements Russia's image as an anti-intervention country, and it draws a clear picture about who Russia wants to be internationally. Putin is using this forum, and this talk about intervening or not intervening in Syria to project the current identity of Russia. This is different from his 2013 speech where he used "we" and "everyone" to convince those who were present of the "rightness" of his ideas and how this is the image of Russia. In the UN speech, we see the other side of identity formation. Russia has formed an identity, and now Putin wants the world to respect and sense that identity. In one way, this deals with the "otherness" of identity formation, while looking at the agency in what Putin and Russia is choosing to do at the UN.

Putin also talks about how some people have referred to his opinion in regards to not to interfere in Syria and his continued support of Assad as being a part of Russia's power play, to which Putin replies, "It is not about Russia's ambitions but about the fact that we can no longer tolerate the current state of affairs in the world" (Putin 2015). The message is pretty

clear. Liberal values are damaging. The way the speech is framed, Putin makes a suggestion that because of the West's "need" to push their liberal values on the Middle East, the foundation for radical terrorism is born. The way Russia does this, and seen in light of his 2013 speech, works as a way for him to state his anti-western sentiment as a way to change or improve the state of international affairs.

Whether Russia's stance about non-intervention in the Middle East is about Russia's own ambitions or something larger is not important in this stance. But rather that this shows a full circle from the narrative that we saw Putin create in 2006. It is about making sure a country is allowed to develop (or fall apart) on its own without interference from outside countries, and it is about fighting a norm.

If we look at Syria in particular, which Putin himself chooses to focus on in this speech, we can see a pattern. The conflict in Syria is complicated, and has a lot of sides, but one thing is clear: It did not start with ISIS. Syria was in trouble long before ISIS, Syria has an incredibly corrupt regime, and the civil war is not a result of terrorism. Terrorism and ISIS is a *symptom* of the issues in Syria. Yet, Russia has continuously supported Assad, and in his speech to the UN he suggested that the way liberals try to force their beliefs on others is what created today's radical Islamic terrorism. ISIS is a reactionary tale to how the USA and the rest of the West have acted in Islamic countries over the past couple of decades.

If we look at all of the three speeches, and Russia's voting record on the Human Rights Council, one thing becomes clear: they seem to keep a pretty steady line that "state sovereignty is about freedom and the right to *choose freely* one's own future for every, nation and state. [...] And no one should have to conform to a single development model that someone had once and for all recognized as the right one" (Putin 2015).

Looking at all of three speeches and keeping in mind what Clunan (2009) thought about how self-images turn into national identity, it seems clear that the narrative that Putin introduced into the political discourse in 2006 about how the cornerstone of Russia is family and traditional values is the dominant discourse and it has gone from being a self-image to an actual identity.

The next part is going to go deeper into how in- and out-groups are affecting Russia's identity but we can see in these speeches which groups Putin considers out-groups that he is trying to

distance himself from. That mostly being the liberal West and the ideas that they stand for are mostly ideas that Putin tries to distance himself from, from equality of marriage to intervention.

If we look at Clunan's (2009) two pillars of identity formation, political purpose and international standing, these three speeches say quite a lot about Russia in light of these two. Political purpose is about which values, ideas and principles should characterize the country, and Putin make these pretty clear: values about family, traditions, and to a certain extent power. This need to protect the children and to reproduce. As for international standing, Russia wants to regain a power position and Putin says that they deserve to do so. They know best, and history has shown that Russia can be both powerful and merciful when it comes to solving international problems. They have earned international respect.

So, after looking at these three speeches, we can see that traditional values have some sort of influence on who Russia wants to be. We can see that when asked and when talking Putin will turn to traditional values as to explain what Russia is and what they should be. The speeches tell us that Putin wants Russia to stand separate from the liberal West, and that Russia should act in reaction to their moral weakness. The UN speech told us that Russia looks upon itself as somewhat superior to the West, and the image they want to project is one of understanding. But also at the same time, they want their history to show that they can be trusted, and that their methods worked. They point to the past as a way to justify the present. Traditional values and the past are very visible in these three speeches from family values to the role the Soviet Union had after World War II.

The next step is now to look at the identity formation process from another angle. The speeches gave us an insight into how Putin uses traditional values as a way to build Russia's identity and they showed that traditional values are one of the corner stones of the "new" Russian identity. This next section will now look at the Sochi Case, and see how this represented this growth in the Russian identity and how "others" perceive Russia's identity and how this perception is also part of shaping Russia's contemporary identity.

#### **4.2 The Sochi Case**

Sochi was the "opportunity to project a carefully crafted national image" for the Russians (Alekseyeva 2014:458). In many ways, that idea has become one of the most important parts of hosting the Olympics for any nation. The opportunity to show the world who you are.

Sochi was the most expensive Olympics in history, and it was the Russian glory project from the instant they won the bid in 2007 (Müller 2014:628). The Sochi Olympics were an attempt by the Russian government to show their strength in the contemporary international arena, and gaining international recognition was one of the main driving forces behind the Sochi Olympics (Müller 2014:646).

Sochi was supposed to be Russia's "return to greatness"; it was supposed to show that they still had a stake in the game and that they should be respected for that. But what happened? Did the campaign and processes surrounding the Olympics put a stop to this part of Russia's identity formation?

During the lead up to the Sochi Olympics in 2014, a number of protests and controversies surrounding LGBT rights in Russia arose. First, the concern was about gay and lesbian athletes, of which there were seven (Outsport 2014), and LGBT spectators that were going to participate in the games. Already in 2012, it became clear that LGBT issues may become an issue for the 2014 Olympics, when a judge banned the "gay pride house" on the grounds that it would offend "public morality" (Gold 2012). This incident took place almost eighteen months prior to the "anti-propaganda" law coming into effect in Russia.

The banning of the pride house was just the beginning of what was going to be a long, uphill battle surrounding LGBT rights in Russia. And the Sochi Olympics brought them to light and for the first time on such a grand scale you could see gay rights gain a new sort of international attention. A somewhat coordinated campaign for gay rights that involved several countries and several high standing officials against an authoritarian regime was unprecedented (Altman & Symons 2016).

However, the majority of protests and concerns regarding LGBT rights in Russia was focused on, and in many ways born as an effect to the anti-propaganda law passed in July of 2013. Arguably, much of the reasons behind the (sudden?) western support for LGBT rights in Russia in the period leading up to and during the Olympics can be traced back to the Olympic Charter. Principle six in the Olympic Charter contains explicit language that denounces any kind of discriminatory behavior during Olympic Games. Though the charter did not refer explicitly to "sexual orientation" at the time of the Sochi Games, sexual orientation was added following a campaign in the aftermath of the 2014 Games (Gibson 2014).

Principle 6 was the target for the first stages of international pressure against the International Olympic Committee; the pressure was to compel the IOC to move the Games to another country and for Olympic Sponsors to take a stand for LGBT rights. Several high level nationals also refused to attend, reasons varying from legislation to outright disapproval for the “anti-propaganda” law (Coppola 2013; Liptak 2013).

#### **4.2.1 The Protests and what happened?**

Prior to 2013, the challenges of LGBT identifying individuals from Russia were ranked low on the western rights agenda, but 2013 changed all of that. There were diplomatic pressure, vodka-dumping campaigns and celebrity support from people like Madonna and Lady Gaga. There were protests in New York when the city was visited by a Russian business delegation by the organization RUSA LGBT. Due to the pressure of the Sochi Olympics and the anti-gay propaganda law, Russia’s mistreatment of LGBT individuals were suddenly front and center, and international campaigns arose everywhere (Sindelar 2013).

Google redid their front page to a rainbow with various Olympic sports, the Norwegian sport chain XXL did a gay-themed commercial with the tagline, “Whatever team you play for” which went viral and currently has over 4 million views on YouTube, and everyone from celebrities like Wentworth Miller to several top officials in France refused to attend the Olympics due to the propaganda law in Russia. Everyone was talking about it. Whether it actually had any effect in its aftermath is debatable but for a brief moment of time, LGBTQ+ rights in Russia was on everyone’s mind (Coppola 2013; Davies 2013; Williams 2014).

While a lot of the analysis on the Sochi Olympics depends on secondary sources that deal with what Sochi may have meant for the Russians from the outset i.e. what the main “point” of the Olympics was for the Russian, the other side of the Sochi case and the analysis is the analysis of how the protests went on, what their purpose was and whether or not they were successful. First, I needed to figure out which protests I should give the most analysis of, and to what degree I wanted to look at the protests as a singular event. Mostly, I decided to look at the protests as a singular event as none really stood out on their own, but the entire movement as a whole is what offers the unique perspective.

However, I did choose to look a little closer at two protests, that of Principle 6 (P6) because it was the largest one and the virtual “paint Russia in the colors of the rainbow” campaign from the Norwegian newspaper “Dagbladet” and the Norwegian branch of Amnesty because of that

campaign's popularity on various social media platforms. Principle 6 (P6) was one of the most prolific and noticeable campaigns that arose around the Sochi Olympics. Principle 6 was based around principle 6 in the Olympic Charter which states that no country or person should be discriminated against on grounds of race, religion, gender or *otherwise* is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic Movement.

P6 was launched in January of 2014, as a protest towards Russia's anti-gay legislation and in relation with the upcoming Olympic Games. P6 was a collaboration between All Out, a social media advocacy group with 1.9 million supporters around the world, Athlete Ally, an organization focused on ridding sports of trans/homophobia and finally American Apparel, which is an American clothing chain (*Principle 6* 2013).

The main purpose of the P6 campaign was to create a way for athletes, spectators and global supporters to celebrate the non-discrimination principle in the Olympic Charter. While during the 2014 Games, sexual orientation was not explicitly stated, the IOC confirmed that the charter did include discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation. By supporting P6, everyone could show support for the values that inspire the games and stand in solidarity with LGBT people in Russia and around the world (*Principle 6* 2013).

The goal of the campaign was to push the IOC to take action against Russia and their blatant disregard for Principle 6 in the Olympic Charter. The protest and campaign were co-signed by current or former athletes that either identify on the spectrum or considers themselves allies (*Principle 6* 2013).

In relation to the Sochi Olympics, the Norwegian branch of Amnesty joined together with "Dagbladet" to create a campaign named "To Russia With Love", and the idea was that people from all over the world could go into a site, enter their name, age and gender and by doing so they would help "paint" Russia in the colors of the rainbow. To fill the entire flag, you needed 28 000 people and in the end almost 300 000 people signed. The campaign spread beyond Norway and made quite the splash on social network sites like Tumblr. The purpose of the campaign was that everyone who was willing could go in, sign up, and then spread it on social media and in doing so, cast a light on the mistreatment of LGBT individuals in Russia

But overall, the main analysis on the campaigns/protests surrounding Sochi was about what the campaigns themselves *represented*. The battle of liberal values and the traditional values of Russia, and how this battle of values created a very real situation surrounding a cultural event. The goal of the Sochi Case Study was not to gain a deep understanding of how the protests worked, or didn't work, but rather the context in which they were created and the context in which Russia replied to them, and what this meant for the identity formation in Russia.

To do this, what I did was to look at the protests and the response to them both within Russia and outside, what effect they had within Russia and whether or not they were successful in their endeavor or if they did something else entirely.

Ultimately, the purpose of the case study was to figure out what the campaign was about, how Russia defended its traditional values and how all of this plays into identity formation in Russia.

I also tried to figure out why it was possible for such a grand scale union of fighting for LGBT rights on this scale when this had been impossible before and what this means for the special relationship between Russia and the West. To figure this out, I looked at the mission statements from P6 and what they hoped to accomplish and I looked at that in light of the "Licence to Harm" report produced by the ILGA in 2014 about state-sponsored homophobia in Russia.

After the re-election of both President Obama and President Putin, you could see that homosexuality started to emerge as a possible theme for a cultural war between the Russia and the West with the US at the forefront. Both governments use sexual minorities and trans\* rights as a way to mobilize international opinion. Obama used the human rights framework to criticize Russia's rhetoric and dependence on *traditional* values and even in the Russian rhetoric during the beginning of the Crimea conflict, there was talk about protecting the East from the "homosexual agenda" of the west (Altman & Symons 2016).

The anti-propaganda law and the Sochi Olympics were part of a bigger narrative about the creation of Russia's identity that did not just come from the inside, but from the outside. The critique of the *traditional values* argument and the use of human rights frameworks, were all parts of a narrative that created Russia as the villain in the fight for human rights.



#### 4.2.2 Russia's response

When asked about the security of gays and lesbians at the Olympics, Putin replied that the Games would be held “without discrimination on any grounds,” but just a few days later he changed his stance and stated that Russia was a traditional country and that he refused to accept European values on sexual orientations. He also insinuated that giving homosexuals the right to marry and criminalizing gay hate crimes was equal to the legalization of pedophilia (Walker 2014).

When asked about the propaganda law in particular, his answer to this was to bring up something he talked about in 2006, the need for reproduction and how children should not be aware of “non-traditional” sexualities. The connection between banning gay “propaganda” and the need for reproduction is weak but still a point Putin seems to want reinforce. Not only within Russia but also for an international image. He also mentioned that the so called “gay propaganda” law also covers pedophilia, once again suggesting that homosexuality and pedophilia are of the same caliber and that is the reason why children have to be protected from homosexuals (Walker 2014).

The purpose of the law is the protection of young people's health and spiritual and mental development (Wilkinson 2014:366), which again can be traced back to this idea about children being the cornerstone of Russia's contemporary identity. There are several problems with this, maybe the most important being that queer kids and youths are at a much higher risk for depression than their heterosexual peers (*Facts about Suicide*), and forcing this law on top of it, can only be damaging for their mental health.

However, the argument from the Putin administration is that the moral and spiritual health of minors can be hurt if they receive information about non-traditional lifestyles. There are several things that makes this law real and it shows that non-traditional relationships are worth less and are damaging for children. It plays on the idea that a family consists of a mom and a dad, and preferably more than one child, and this plays into the fact that family values are traditional values and they are the corner stones of the Russian identity (Wilkinson 2014).

In regards to the question about queer rights in Russia, Putin said: "What, are we supposed to follow along like obedient lapdogs, towards whatever consequences await? We have our own traditions, our own culture. We have respect for all of our international partners and ask that they also respect our own traditions and culture." (Walker 2014).

Aggressive political homophobia had become a part of projecting the traditional values as corner stones of the Russian identity both at home and abroad (Wilkinson 2014:357). Political homophobia is an “easy” way of making a stand for traditional values and especially as Western European countries and the US are working towards a more LGBT friendly reality, political homophobia is an easy way of showing we are not like you. We are something else.

If we return to the idea of self-images and national identities and look at this in light of that theory, we can see that “traditional values” as political discourse sprang out after Putin’s 2006 demographics speech where family was clearly in the center and has been the political discourse for ten years. We see that political homophobia is just a part of this traditional values packet that the administration has been selling; traditional values and family oriented values have gone from being a national self-image, to a national identity. An accepted collective identity.

#### **4.2.3 What does this mean for Russia’s identity construction?**

In Russia today there is a close relationship between the fact that Russia is and will remain a global power and the Russian’s national identity, and Sochi Olympics were looked upon as the next step in this process. The Sochi Olympics ended up being almost equal to Putin and his administration, and if the Sochi Olympics could show that they were great and powerful, that would mean that the Putin administration also was that (Persson & Petersson 2014:199).

If we focus on the homophobia aspect of the campaigns and the narrative that was painted by the West as a result of the anti-propaganda law and the timing of the Olympics, there is a strong public approval of the anti-gay laws, and there is a general understanding that traditional values are part of being Russian. This is not just political discourse (Wilkinson 2014:368).

In the build up to the Games, Russia framed the attention to international gay rights as an “invented problem” created by the Western, liberal media (Van Rheenen 2014:133), a point Putin has continued to sell, both before and after the games. He is very clear in his belief that the propaganda law is not discriminatory but rather a precaution to protect the young minds of Russia. If we look at the anti-propaganda law as a part of Putin’s anti-western leanings we can see that the condemnations about the law mostly came from Western Europe and the US (Van Rheenen 2014:133).

Western Europe and the US have gone from being a group of countries that Russia wanted to be a part of, an in-group, to a group that Russia is trying to distance itself from. Marking the West and the US as an out-group is an important part of Russia's identity formation. In and out-groups do not just decide how a country relates to another country but also what characteristics they want to project to the world (Clunan 2009:76-77). Sochi may have ended up making the divide between the West and East even bigger than it had been before, and the campaigns that wanted to make it easier for LGBT individuals in Russia may have ended up doing the opposite (Van Rheezen 2014:134).

The use of homophobia to represent traditional values is interesting in the light of Russia's identity formation, and especially in the Sochi Case. Liberals are fighting the idea of state sponsored homophobia in Russia, but we see little to no coverage or mainstream criticism of countries, with the exception of Uganda, where being gay is a death sentence (Encarnación 2014:102-103); Russia is and will always be unique in its relationship to the West. There has been a long battle for what Russia is supposed to be and after the Cold War it seemed like Russia was more interested in moving towards the West, but that stopped in the mid-2000 (Riabov & Riabova 2014:27). But when it comes to the very foundation of Russia, they are turning away from the West. They are fighting liberal ideas with traditional ones. The reaction of others seems to cause reaction instead of action, almost as if the point of focusing so hard on traditional values is to separate themselves from the West on a fundamental basis.

#### **4.2.4 The failure of the international campaigns**

So why did the international campaign fail and how did it somehow make Putin's position within Russia stronger? There are two sides to this debate, how the international LGBT campaigns failed in their efforts because of the choices made by them, and how they failed and somehow increased Putin's standing in Russia due to the narrative created by Putin and the Kremlin within Russia in response to the campaigns.

There were several articles following the Sochi Olympics about how the international LGBT lobby had failed in their efforts (Zeigler 2014). There were two main reasons behind this failure; the first was that there was no united effort. There were several campaigns and causes, across a myriad of mediums, and the internet made it easy to catch them all. But the internet also made sure that there was no unity, and there was no connected effort to the Games. It is much easier to retweet a tweet or sign your name at the Amnesty/Dagbladet flag than doing

something that would make an actual difference for LGBT individuals in Russia (Juzwiak 2014; Zeigler 2014). The second reason behind the failure was that no one was willing to risk anything, no one flew out to Russia to protest and no athlete made a stand. Principle 6 raised money for the cause, but unless someone is willing to take a risk, change will not happen. There has to be more than just talk involved (Juzwiak 2014; Zeigler 2014).

In the end, none of the campaigns had much to do with improving the quality of life in Russia, and to some degree it was about making those involved feel better. Boycotting the sponsors or pouring vodka in the streets have nice symbolism, but in the end it does very little to help the actual cause. As previously pointed out, by bringing the issue to the forefront in the way they did, by pushing Russian activists out of the closet, but refusing to help them on the ground by paying their bail or offer similar help, it may have ended up making the situation worse (Juzwiak 2014; Wilkinson 2014). It may have ended up giving Putin something concrete to fight about; an actual enemy from the West that he could claim was trying to destroy Russian values. It gave Putin a narrative he took every advantage of.

If we look at it from Putin's perspective, and how he used what was the Western criticism of their traditional values he used it as an opportunity to not only further cement traditional values in the Russian society, but as a way to increase both his power and the nationalism of the Russian people. Campbell (1992) argues that foreign policy is a relevant practice for identity formation. He uses the Cold War as an example of this, Campbell's (1992) main argument throughout his entire book is the designation and understanding of danger and how this affects the enemy picture and a state's identity formation. During the Cold War, danger was externalized to a massive degree, and the danger was not just the fear of a nuclear war, but rather that communism would spread to the US. The danger was externalized but rather it was about the internal identity of the US. The choices made about the US foreign policy during the cold war were global in scope but national in design (Campbell 1992).

Much in the same way that the US used the outside threat of communism to rally the US and create a uniform national identity, Russia and Putin used the threat of the liberal values and the LGBT campaigns surrounding Sochi as a way to rally around the flag (Grix & Kramareva 2015:4) The reasons for Russia's choices surrounding the Olympics, the narrative and how this affected Russia and their international standing will be looked at closer in this next part.

#### **4.2.5 What was the result of Sochi?**

If the goal was to create a “new” Russia in the eyes of the international society, then the Sochi Olympics were a failure. The lack of a coherent image, the fact that the discourse sprouted by the government officials was not in line with the actual events that took place, raises questions about how effective a narrative can be if it is not reinforced by actions (Müller 2014:646). The Russian Government evidently failed to trigger any fundamental changes in the dominant international image of the country (Grix & Kramareva 2015:7).

If the idea was to advance Russia’s standing, this narrative was never unfolded. The discourse was there, but without the action to back it up, the idea of a more international Russia was gone. There was too much outside “noise” that made the rhetoric used by Russian government officials useless. The passing of the anti-propaganda law caused the most and loudest international uproar, and if that was not enough, the long standing issues surrounding the Circassians and then the annexation of Crimea only days after the end of the Olympic may have destroyed any chance Russia had to change the way the world perceived them (Müller 2014).

However, this raises the question about what image Russia actually wanted to portray and a discrepancy between international and domestic image. Clunan(2009) pointed out that how a country acts internationally may not always be in line with how they act domestically, and that usually international identities have longer self-life than their domestic counterparts (Clunan 2009:30).

But what if Russia did not intend to use Sochi to show that they were great and understanding, that they respected human rights and that they had earned a place at the big boy table again, but rather was about Russia itself? What if Sochi was about instigating a sense of self-worth, of patriotism, and to cultivate a viable national idea? (Grix & Kramareva 2015:4) After all, a national identity only holds up if the association is positive. If Sochi was not about showing the world what Russia could be, but rather showing Russia what they could still do, does that mean that Sochi was a success in regard to the ideas and identity formation it sat out to do?

The Sochi Olympics were domestically promoted by the Putin administration as another battle in the ongoing war with the West, and this rhetoric was embraced by a majority of the population. The fact that the western media was attacking Russia for their traditional values only made this rhetoric more successful at home (Grix & Kramareva 2015:4). If the purpose

was to show their population that they were strong, and they were powerful, and they were not the West, then the protests that surrounded Sochi played perfectly into this narrative.

In fact, the anti-propaganda law came at a time when countries like the US and the UK were making great strides for pro-LGBT legislation, and certain scholars argue that the most likely explanation for the law is that it was both part of Putin's effort to rally an anti-western settlement in his country and as a reaction to the Western protests about the return to his presidency (Arnold & Foxall 2014:4).

In terms of what the role of traditional values in Russia's contemporary identity is, this case has showed that "the other" in Russia's identity formation or at very least the West's role as "other" has an image of Russia as deeply traditional and morally wrong. The West, as showed through the protests, thinks that the way Russia is treating its population is wrong, whereas Russia considers the way the West has "agreed" to give equal rights to LGBT individuals show that they have lost their moral compass. The case study shows that the West has truly gone from being an in-group to an out-group, and in their attack of Russian values, Russia only seeks to reinforce them. They want to be able to say that they are not like the West, and they managed to use the Western protests as a way to make the Russian citizens rally around the flag.

LGBT individuals in Russia are simply the victims of a much bigger game; they are being used for a political purpose. While yes, a majority of Russians may disapprove of homosexuality (Encarnación 2014:96), making the effort to make laws that attack a specific group either takes a lot of individual hate or is it a part of a bigger political issue. Most things indicate to that the extreme political homophobia in Russia is a part of a bigger narrative about children and families being the cornerstone of Russia's contemporary identity.

No one would argue or believe that Russia would be anywhere close marriage equality or even anti-discrimination laws even prior to when the anti-LGBT law came into effect, but maybe in a different circumstance where pro-LGBT rights did not mean liberal, and being anti-LGBT rights means you are traditional, the LGBT population of Russia could have been left alone. This also brings us to gender roles and the role of masculinity in Russia.

In the last two parts we have seen how family is important to the Russian identity, how the West and its liberalism is perceived as weak, and how Russia needs to fight for its traditions

and values even in the face of opposition. Traditional gender roles and beliefs about masculinity is important for Russia. They want to build a narrative in which they are strong. Also, the history of state formation is gendered and identity is therefore gendered, feminist IR argues that male power can and should be explained, and not just be given or be taken for granted (Youngs 2004:81). This is especially noticeable in Russia, where the state and identity formation has long had a tight connection to the gender roles of the society (Riabov & Riabova 2014-25).

### **4.3 Putin, Russia and Masculinity**

At the end of the 1980's and into the beginning of the 1990s, just as Russia was making the transition from Soviet to Russia, there was a belief among Russians that the Soviet idea about gender not mattering into what kind of work a person can do had led to a feminization of the Russian male (Riabov & Riabova 2014:25). Perestroika, the strategy implemented by Gorbachev worked to reinforce the old gender roles while also working towards modernization. This led to an establishment of hyper-masculine values in Russia, but a lot of men were unable to live up to these expectations which again led to a de-masculinity of the Russian men (Riabov & Riabova 2014:25).

Russia is a society with very strong roots in traditional gender roles, and the idea of masculinity being what creates a good leader. Russia is a traditional society, and believes very strongly in the traditional attributes of gender. Masculinity represents strength, reason, will, vigor and fairness (Riabov & Riabova 2014:24-25), all traits that are desirable in a leader. Whereas femininity is more associated with weakness, passivity, emotional bias, impressionability and indecision (Riabov & Riabova 2014:24-25).

Putin's regime is successful because they have created an attractive image of national masculinity and found a way to bind these traditionally masculine traits to the country. As Clunan(2009) mentioned, for a collective identity to work, it has to be positive and in the Russian society, masculine traits are looked upon as those who are the most desirable (Riabov & Riabova 2014:23). Putin's use of his masculinity and the creation of such has been part of his political image since his first presidency, and he uses his masculinity as a way to portray his dominant position in Russia (Wood 2016:4-7). This means that by creating a masculine image of Russia, Putin is making sure that the image and identity of Russia is positive in the eyes of the citizens.

Feminist theory works with how the world is gendered, as shown earlier, and to the degree in which male privilege exists and how this gender hierarchy affects how we look upon the world. Masculinity and femininity, and the traits traditionally attributed to them, are at the core of this gendered identity. Joan Scott said that “gender is a primary way of signaling relationships of power.” (Riabov & Riabova 2014:24). Gender and power exist in a hierarchy where maleness and masculinity will always end up on top due to the way our world is structured. This is especially noticeable in Russia where masculinity is considered the greatest attribute one can have (Riabov & Riabova 2014:24).

This also leads to the fact that political agency in Russia is an extremely gendered activity, which means that men is perceived to hold the decision making and leadership positions within political activity and women are looked upon as those who can fulfill the tasks set up by men. This works to reinforce the gender hierarchy where men will always rank higher than women (Salmenniemi 2005:738). The Russian nationalism, and its strong ties to masculinity also works as a way to legitimize the gender order in Russian society and works in such a way that feminists and homosexuals are marked as deviants in relation both to their gender, for failing to conform to traditional gender roles, and in regards to their Russianness (Riabov & Riabova 2014:40).

Russia is a patriarchal culture, built on traditional gender structures, which means that using gendered language, and playing up a leader’s masculinity can be used as a way to increase said leader’s popularity. Masculinity is equal to power. At its core, Russia is a masochistic, sexist society dependent on traditional gender roles and anything that dares to challenge those roles is a threat to the Russian society (Johnson 2014; Riabov & Riabova 2014:24). In patriarchal communities, the legitimization of power is connected to the leader’s ability to demonstrate that he is in fact a “real man.” Putin’s popularity largely depends on him being able to restore a collective masculine identity in Russia (Riabov & Riabova 2014:26-32). Putin creates this muscular image of himself as a way to prove that he is a “real man”, and by using for example personal photos that are published publically to convey a sense of masculinity, he is making sure that the dominant political discourse is one about masculinity (Wood 2016:2).

So the reason why Putin works so hard to reinforce masculine traits surrounding him is because it is a way to legitimize his power as Russia’s leader, but it is not enough for Putin



himself to be looked upon as masculine (Riabov & Riabova 2014:26). Putin uses personal pictures of himself in masculine positions as a way to legitimize his position of power, and equalizing his masculinity with those of Russia. By making this connection between his masculinity and Russia's, he is building an identity where Putin and Russia are synonymous, and this identity is very closely connected to the gender hierarchy and the idea that typically masculine traits are superior (Foxall 2013). Masculinity has become a way for Putin to show his power without having to explain it, his masculinity gives him legitimacy as the leader of Russia (Wood 2016:14).

“Departures from gender norms (for instance homosexuality) are denounced as a threat to the nation.” (Riabov & Riabova 2014:25). Homosexuality was legalized in Russia in 1993, but not removed from the list of “official” mental disorders until 1999 (Foxall 2013:150). In comparison, homosexuality was declassified as a mental illness in the US in 1975 (Bayer 1981). This understanding of homosexuality as something that defies traditional gender roles may be part of the reason why homosexuality is generally regarded as wrong in Russia, and also why Putin is so adamant about distancing himself from homosexuality. While Obama was called “the gay president” after including gay rights in the 2013 state of the union (Encarnación 2014:90), Putin and Russia's hard attack on homosexuality and gay right may be a way to reinforce the masculinity of the country.

Putin also needs to find a way to make sure that the typically masculine traits are associated with Russia as a whole (Riabov & Riabova 2014:26). The most important one of these masculine traits is *strength*. It is very important for Putin, and for the Russian society, that Russia is perceived as strong. This is where the image of Russia as a bear stems from (Riabov & Riabova 2014:26-27).

The hegemonic discourse of Russian nationalism has since the mid-2000 evolved from considering the West its moral compass to depicting Europe as a degenerate civilization, one in which their gender order has completely collapsed and feminists and homosexuals have taken over. This is cemented in the fact that same-sex marriage is legal and the destruction of the family (Riabov & Riabova 2014:27). This loss of family and their lack of gender order is a natural consequence of the liberal values of the western culture, values such as tolerance, secularism and above all democracy. Russia is the opposite of this; they are the guardian of

moral principles and they fight for the preservation to remain a “normal” nation (Riabov & Riabova 2014:27-30).

Masculinity and strength stand strong in the Russian identity formation. It is a way for Putin to show his power, and it is a way for him to reinforce traditional gender roles that fall in line with the traditional values of Russia. The way Putin uses masculinity is an effect of the role of traditional values in Russian contemporary identity. The way it reinforces this belief about traditional gender roles, and the image of the strong man. We also see this effect in how Putin acts internationally, and maybe especially in Russia’s annexation of Crimea.

### **5.0 Further discussion: Crimea – A break or a continuation of Russia’s identity formation**

Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014 was shocking in certain regards; it went against almost everything written by Russian officials and in Russian legal scholarship since the end of the Cold War on the legality of the use of military force (Allison 2014:1267). Three reasons are often offered for why Russia chose to invade Ukraine: Geopolitics, protection of the Russian identity in Ukraine and domestic political consolidation (Allison 2014:1268-1292).

According to Allison (2014), it is the geopolitical theory which holds the most water and which has been focused mostly on. Since 1991 Ukraine has been the pivotal state for Russia’s efforts to restore at least partial control over security orientation in the CIS region (Allison 2014:1268). This thesis is not that interested in figuring out why Russia decided to invade Ukraine, or what reasons are the most prolific ones but rather how the annexation of Crimea fits into the bigger narrative of Russia’s identity formation. Does the action taken by Russia in regards to Ukraine fall into place by the narrative told by Putin and the Kremlin or does it mark as a shift in the narrative?

However, to be able to analyze where in the narrative this situation fits, we need to look at the Russian discourse surrounding the invasion of Ukraine and at the very least to the official reasons behind the conflict. The reason why that was the dominant one in the political discourse was that of “the protection of the Russian people” in Crimea. This identity aspect played a part of the legitimization of the invasion from the perspective of the Kremlin (Allison 2014:1282-1283).

Putin's warfare in Ukraine is interesting to look at because it is as much about image as it is about actual military capacity (Dunn & Bobick 2014:406). The way Russia has chosen to frame their intervention as acting on behalf of their "compatriots" in breakaway provinces, and in doing so they are trying to discourage a narrative in which they are only doing this to reestablish their sphere of influence that was lost after Soviet Union fell. (Dunn & Bobick 2014:407)

In many ways, Ukraine has shown that Russia is still a power player in the world, which fits perfectly into the narrative Putin wants to sell. The Russian invasion of Ukraine shows that they are still able to use international law as a way of securing strategically needs, without too many consequences (Dunn & Bobick 2014:410) The conflict with Ukraine can almost be considered a miniature Cold War where small-even tiny- regions can become political leverage that Russia can use as a way to undermine Western political ideologies and alter their geopolitical standing with the West (Dunn & Bobick 2014:410).

If we look back at the pillars of Russia's identity formation during Putin's regime, especially his second run, the one thing that is the most clear, other than the need to promote family, is the need to protect Russia from the dangerous values of the West. It is in this narrative we can also fit in the conflict with Ukraine.

It could be argued that what made the conflict possible, maybe even inevitable, was the West's lack of recognition of Russia's values and interests in Eurasia on the one hand, and the geopolitics and the important role of Ukraine on the other(Tsygankov 2015:280). I am choosing to focus on how the West's lack of understanding and respect for Russia's values, as well as Russia's need to protect Russia from liberal values, played a part in the annexation of Crimea as this could help explain how Crimea fits into Russia's identity formation.

As this thesis has talked about earlier, there is a connection between values and power and how this all plays into identity formation. Power becomes a part of values when those values are threatened or when national values are promoted externally(Tsygankov 2015:287).

If we look at Russia's need to protect its traditional values and the West's tendency to promote its values as universal we get a conflict. As pointed out earlier, Russia's relationship with the West is complicated, and today Russia may cooperate with the West when their fundamental beliefs and values are not threatened. But the instant Russia's values and

traditions are challenged by the West, Russia has a tendency to turn to a more nationalistic and assertive foreign policy(Tsygankov 2015:287).

However, Putin's actions have never been reactions to imitate conditions, they are well-thought out and they are a part of a clear cut strategic vision. Everything that Putin does is a part of a bigger narrative, and that is the narrative of "Great Russia", and in order to be able to sell this image to the Russians, this narrative has to be replete with symbolism and concrete gestures that support this vision(Grix & Kramareva 2015:8).

Following the Western supported Orange Revolution in Ukraine and the presidency of Viktor Yanukovich, the Ukraine was on the way towards a more Western oriented path, and was choosing to ally itself with the West over Russia. While Yanukovich would later change his position, which ended up being fatal for his presidency, in the beginning of his term he was part of the will that would move Ukraine closer to the West (Tsygankov 2015:280-282). Due to Ukraine's geographical position, they have always been geopolitically important to Russia, not just due to their placement but Ukraine has worked as a sort of buffer-zone between the West and Russia in regards to values. When Ukraine decided to turn more Western friendly, Russia lost this buffer-zone and instead the values of West were coming closer and infringing on the former Soviet countries (Tsygankov 2015:288-291).

Ukraine had a tie to the West that Russia has never been comfortable with and then the increased tension between the West and Russia with constant criticism about Russia is handling its own internal matters. Then add in Putin's rhetoric about "new" Russia as a defender of traditional values from the liberal values of the West and a new focus on national unity. The only outcome that would fit into the narrative was a Russian invasion of Ukraine(Tsygankov 2015:290-291).

If we look at Ukraine as a continuation of their identity formation, we can see that it fits straight into Putin's condemnation of the West. Putin's continued narrative about "the decay of the liberal world order, the double standard in application at international law and [the West's] weakening moral authority(Grix & Kramareva 2015:9). Then, if we look at the assumption that part of why Russia is holding on so tight to these beliefs, and is distancing itself from the West is to fill a power vacuum in the international arena by drawing on similarities more traditional countries, we can also see that a large number of the global population agrees with Putin's narrative about the West. Also when we add in how

charismatic Putin is we can see how his influence will grow internationally. It may not fit into the traditional definition of soft power as articulated by Joseph Nye but its influence none the less(Grix & Kramareva 2015:9-10). Actually, the invasion of Ukraine fulfilled one of the most important goals of Russia's identity formation, it elevated national consciousness to unprecedented levels in a post-Soviet era(Grix & Kramareva 2015:8).

From an identity formation perspective, the Olympics and the Crimea annexation go hand in hand. They both represent different things, where the Olympics was about showing that Russia still had an international standing, that they should be respected, and succeeded in building a narrative that showed that even among adversity they will be strong, the Crimea conflict shows that they are strong and they are able to protect Russia from the West. They will not be pushed down. They are both part of a narrative that promote national values(Grix & Kramareva 2015:8-9).

## **6.0 Conclusion**

This thesis has been about identity in Russia and how this is connected to traditional values. The data used to explore and research the connection between traditional values and Russia's contemporary identity was a mixture of discourse analysis and case analysis. The discourse analysis of the speeches showed that traditional values is at the very core of Russia's contemporary identity, along with a very deep anti-western sentiment due to the liberal values of the West. The UN speech was particularly interesting due to what it says about the protection of values. It showed that Putin values a country's right to form and evolve their own values without intervention from the outside. This is ultimately what separates Ukraine from Russia's anti-intervention policy. Ukraine was about protecting Russian values, and the Russian identity in Russia from the Western influence.

While the case analysis of the Sochi Olympics gave an interesting new insight into how "othering" can work negatively, and in how trying to change Russia's stance on LGBT rights and individuals by forcing liberal values on them will not work. The Sochi Case was very interesting because of what it showed about Russia's relationship with the West and their values. The protests and campaigns surrounding Sochi was about trying to get Russia to move closer to the West, but instead it ended up pushing Russia further away.

The purpose of this thesis and the research that went into it was because I wanted to understand traditional values and the politics that surround them. In doing so I hoped to gain an understanding of it and to which degree Russia's traditional values was political, and to what degree they were inherent beliefs. What I discovered was that traditional values *are* the Russian identity; it works its way into their politics and into the discourse on a myriad of subjects. It is the reason behind their anti-Western sentiment; it is the reason for the anti-intervention policy; it is an important aspect in the Ukraine case; and it is definitely a defining force behind Russia's treatment of LGBT individuals. This is the effect of the traditional values in Russia's contemporary identity. We also see the effects of traditional values in how masculine Russia is, and how traditional gender roles are central to their beliefs. Russia is a deeply sexist, man-centered society and the traditional values only works to cement this belief of equating masculinity with strength and power. Traditional values are defining of what it means to be Russian.

The use of aspirational constructivism was also something that offered a new insight into Russia during Putin's second period as president. Aspirational constructivism deals with identity in a new and interesting way, and is especially valid when working with Russia. Aspirational constructivism's focus on agency and history fits perfect into Russia's identity formation due to Russia's strong history as a world leader and the wish to return to this position. This history makes it much harder for them to accept the perception of Russia that the West has, and make them more willing to fight for their own values and ideas.

Maybe the most important finding in this thesis, at least as to where to go next, was the mixture of the idea of national self-images, and the politics that are behind the traditional values in Russia and what its meaning for the LGBT population in Russia. The case study showed that if we want to move to improve the state of LGBT rights in Russia the clue is not to impose Western values onto Russia as that did not work, and seen in light of Putin's UN speech and certain degree the 2013 Valdai speech we see that imposing your values on another country is not something Putin or Russia take lightly.

The next step in this is to find a way to approach the issue so that it does not seem like it is liberal values that are trying to replace their traditional ones. The goal should be to find a way to make LGBT rights seem like the next logical step in Russia's identity, and not something that comes from external forces. This thesis set out to understand the politics of traditional

values, and the next step would be to put this into action. Aspirational constructivism taught us about how self-images become self-identities; and there are a myriad of self-images in Russia, some of them are liberal. The clue moving forward is how to turn those national self-images into national identities in such a way that it seems natural for Russia to move in that direction without it feeling as if the West is forcing their liberal values onto Russia. What Sochi should have taught those who want to change, and what I hope this paper has showed, is that the change in Russia needs to happen on their terms and it needs to happen from within. It cannot be forced upon them; by trying to do so it will only make reaching the objective so much harder.

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