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**GENDER LIBERALISATION AND POLARISATION:
COMPARING SEXUALITY
IN ST. PETERSBURG, FINLAND AND SWEDEN**

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In this article we compare recent developments in sexual attitudes and reported behaviour in St Petersburg, Finland and Sweden. In what respects did changes in sexual life in these countries seem to be converging in the 1990s, and what were the main differences? Which differences in post-socialist St Petersburg can be attributed to the cultural inertia of sexual practices and gender roles, and which to contemporary social change? The article discusses the processes of liberalisation of sexuality and the increasing equality in sexual behaviour with regards to pluralist sexuality, homosexuality, infidelity and prostitution. We argue that while Finland and Sweden are in a process of both gender equalisation and sexual liberalisation, Russia is characterised by a shift from traditional gender equality to liberal gender polarisation.

The article is based on five sex surveys: nationally representative sex surveys from Finland in 1971, 1992 and 1999, Sweden in 1996¹ and a survey representative of the population in St. Petersburg from 1996. The representativity of the data is presented in Haavio-Mannila & Rotkirch (1998) and Haavio-Mannila et al. (2000).² These surveys tell about sexual values, attitudes and behaviour of men and women born in 1917-1981. They were carried out by personal face-to-face interviews during which the intimate part of the questionnaire was filled by the respondent him- or herself while the interviewer waited. Only in 1999 in Finland, the survey was

1 We thank Bo Lewin from Uppsala University for sending us the Swedish survey data.

2 In 1971 in Finland the age group studied was 18-54 years, in Finland in 1992, Sweden and St. Petersburg 18-74 years, and in Finland 1999 18-81 years.

conducted by mail. The response rate in Finland in 1971 was 91 percent, in 1992 76 percent, and in 1999 only 46 percent. In Sweden and St. Petersburg, 60 percent of the respondents selected for the interviews participated in the studies.³ In St. Petersburg the proportion of “cannot say” and lacking responses was higher than in the Nordic countries, which tells about the delicacy of and lack of social consensus in regard to sexual issues.

Equal, traditional, polarised?

Russia’s historical fate has posited it as a country often compared with a normative and Western European standard of development. In the sphere of intimate relations, the ideas of romantic love, the bourgeois nuclear family, or sexual liberation, spread later in Russia than in Western European countries. Also the ‘sexual revolution’ in media and the public sphere took place in most Western countries in the 1960s, and in Russia in the late 1980s, after the onset of glasnost’ and perestroika in 1985 (Kon 1996). The later arrival of such phenomena in Russia means that they have an in built reflective flavour - the phenomenon and a critical or ironic reflection of it often take place simultaneously. (For instance, as the sexual revolution took place in the Russian media, a feminist critique of the sexual revolution was already articulated.) The ‘later’ arrival can also affect the structure of the phenomenon. For instance, the behavioural revolution in sexuality took place before the public sexual revolution in Russia (Rotkirch 2000). Additionally, Russia’s seventy years of socialism represented a way to and through modernity that differed from capitalist modernity and that had deep effects on family and gender relations.

All together, these historical factors pose specific challenges for those who, as we do, analyse gender and sexuality in Russia from within a Western academic framework. We can distinguish

³ Some questions were not used in every survey. One can see from the tables and figures from which study the data is available.

between three common interpretations, characterised by (1) equality, (2) traditionalism and (3) polarisation. Firstly, Soviet Russia was often presented for being 'before' the West in the sense of being *more gender equal*, especially in education, employment and reproductive rights. Second, during and after perestroika, Russian gender culture came to be increasingly perceived as *more 'traditional'* than Western cultures, mostly because of the lack of a broader interest in feminism and gender equality among the Russians. Third, recent scholarship has drawn attention to the fact that the post-socialist gender and sexual identities have arisen also as a direct response to the new political order. Peggy Watson (1997) has emphasised how the new public sphere of post-socialist societies such as Russia contributes to *a development of a politics of difference*. Differences between men and women, ethnic groups etc. have become important for the creation of people's identity. According to Watson's interpretation, the growing gender gaps are not so much due to the post-Soviet legacy, but rather to the demands of the current economic and political situation. (For examples of these different attitudes, see, e.g. Lapidus 1987; Attwood 1996; Watson 1997, respectively.)

Both the second and the third interpretation thus stress *an increasing polarisation of gender roles and discrimination of women* in the Russian society. The traditionalist approach sees inequality as an inherited trait that was due to cultural inertia and that was only intensified after the 'lock' of Communist equality rhetoric was lifted. By contrast, the third approach of the politics of difference emphasises how the new economic and political order in Russia creates new gender differences. There is, indeed, much evidence of increasing polarisation and inequality. The gender gap in wages and unemployment rates has grown. More men than women are accumulating fortunes in business life. The ideal gender contract for family life stresses the role of the male breadwinner. However, there are also examples of *a growing gender equality* as a consequence of the adoption of the market economy. For example, sexist attitudes are not functional in the more client-oriented service sector, where well-educated and care-oriented women are a "golden" resource even as managers (Liborakina 1999). In Russia this contributes to a marginal but important equalisation of gender roles, similar to the general trend prevailing in the Nordic countries since the 1960s. The third approach is not sufficient to grasp why this trend of equalisation nevertheless exists in Russia, or why it is so much stronger in some capitalist

democracies than in others.

Liberalisation and equalisation as defining processes

We will propose a slightly different conceptual framework than the three approaches briefly outlined above. We distinguish between two processes: that of *liberalisation* and that of *gender equalisation*. Liberalisation is here understood as the antipode of ‘traditionalism’, while polarisation is the opposite of gender equality. We have developed Table 1 with regards to sexual behaviour, but it could well fit for other gendered practices as well.

Table 1. Typology of gender and sexual cultures in relation to liberalisation and equalisation

<i>Sexuality</i>	<i>Traditional</i>	<i>Liberal</i>
Gender relations		
Polarisation	Nordic countries until the 1970s	Russia in the 1990s
Equalisation	Soviet Union	Nordic countries in the 1990s

In Finland in the early 1970s, the impact of the sexual liberation on the attitudes of young people can be seen in their permissiveness toward unfaithfulness (Figure 8 and 9). In the 1990s, young Finns were less tolerant than older ones toward parallel relations.

In the West, here represented by Finland and Sweden, the contemporary gender system was preceded by a traditional and polarised gender system. In that system the division of labour between men and women both ideologically and often also in practice meant that the wife was a full-time homemaker and the husband worked for pay. The gender system of state socialism, by

contrast, was committed to equality in the public sphere and in working life but retained a traditional attitude to gender roles, especially in family and intimate life. During the latter half of the 20th century, the Western countries have moved towards both liberalism and gender equality. Russia has, as we shall see, rather moved towards liberalism and gender polarisation.⁴ As Russia's second city and former capital, St. Petersburg has many peculiar traits. It is, for instance, probable that its population is more liberal and tolerant than in other parts of Russia. However, we assume that St Petersburg can be taken as representative of the main trends in Russian urban life with regards to the topics discussed in this article. Ninety-one percent of the people interviewed there were ethnic Russians. We will specify the meanings of these terms with concrete examples from sexual morality and practices (see Table 5 in the Conclusion). Suffice it here to stress that 'liberalism' is not regarded by us as always more desirable than 'traditional' values. Traditional is here simply defined as the general attitude prescribed by church and public morality in the beginning of the 20th century. Liberalism may also be at odds with a commitment to gender equality, for instance, in the question of prostitution. The point is to approach these issues as two separate, although often intertwining, processes.

In the early 1970s, the traditional double standard system in participation in economic activity was still quite strong in the West. One fourth of the Finnish women were full-time homemakers, i.e., not working for pay, studying, retired or unemployed in 1971 (Table 2). Since then, this gendered division of work between men and women has been steadily declining in the Western countries. It has practically disappeared in Sweden and can only faintly be seen in Finland. In the 1990s, only five percent of Finnish and two percent of Swedish women were full-time homemakers.⁵

⁴ We sometimes generalize the results from St. Petersburg and talk about 'Russians'. In the Finnish and Swedish samples also rural population was included. In our earlier study (Haavio-Mannila & Rotkirch (1997) we compared St. Petersburg with urban Finland only. We have checked that there are only minor differences between urban and rural areas in Finland. Thus we here use data on the whole populations assuming that the same applies to Sweden.

⁵ It is important to note that women who are on maternity leave do not register as home-makers. Half of Finnish children younger than three years are raised at home, mostly by their mothers, but these women profit from welfare state provisions and are not formally outside the working force. (Statistics Finland 2000)

Table 2. Some Social and Sexual Behaviour Patterns According to Study and Gender, Age Adjusted, Percent

	Finland 1971	Finland 1992	Finland 1999	Peters- burg 1996	Sweden 1996
Full-time homemaker					
Men	0	0	0	1	0
Women	25	5	5	9	2
Both	13	2	2	5	1
Other than man-on-top position in latest intercourse					
Men	30	52	68	55	..
Women	32	48	59	52	..
Both	31	50	64	54	..
Infidelity ever *					
Men	25	37	34	..	37
Women	9	33	31	..	23
Both	17	35	33	..	33

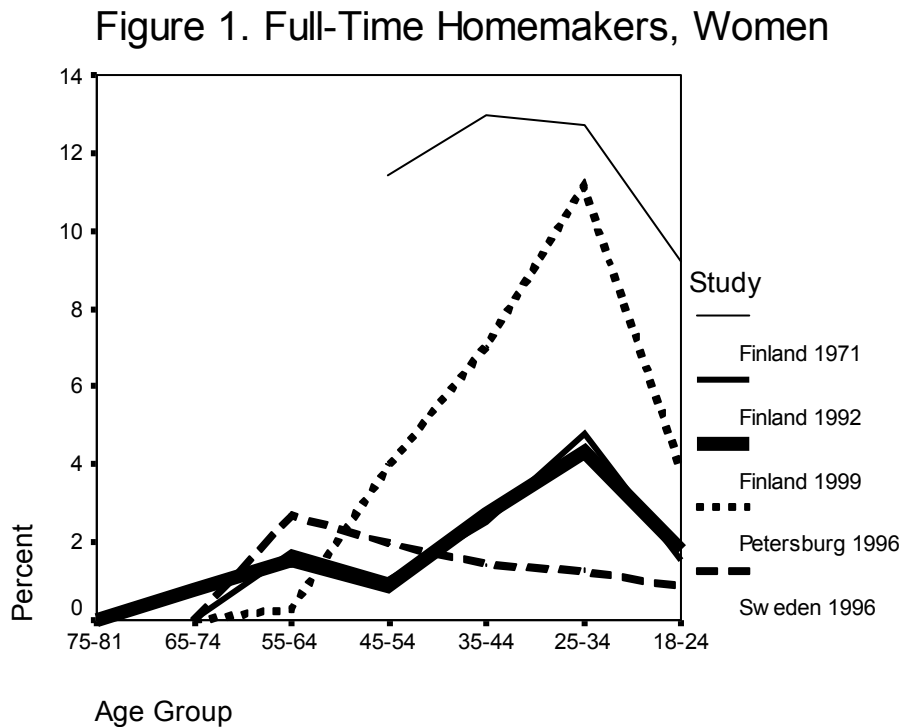
	Finland 1971	Finland 1992	Finland 1999	Peters- burg 1996	Sweden 1996
Infidelity in present marriage **					
Men	..	37	29	52	..
Women	..	14	16	23	..
Both	..	25	23	38	..
Sexually interested in same-sex persons					
Men	7	7	7	7	3
Women	7	6	7	12	7
Both	7	7	7	10	5
Has taken money for sex					
Men	..	2	3	2	2
Women	..	0	1	4	1
Both	..	1	2	3	1
Has paid for sex					
Men	..	11	13	10	13
Women	..	0	0	1	0
Both	..	5	7	5	7

	Finland 1971	Finland 1992	Finland 1999	Peters- burg 1996	Sweden 1996
Number of respondents					
Men	744	1 103	624	870	1 475
Women	1 408	1 146	872	1210	1 335
Both	2 152	2 249	1 496	2080	2 810

* Calculated of ever married or cohabiting persons, in Finland in 1999 of people ever having had a steady sexual relationship.

** Calculated of presently married or cohabiting persons.

After the economic reforms in Russia in 1991, more women than men lost their jobs. It became both ideologically acceptable and necessary for some women to stay at home. In the 1990s in St. Petersburg, staying at home was most popular in the age group 25-34 years. In St. Petersburg, twenty percent of these young women were full-time homemakers (Figure 1). The proportion was almost as high as in Finland in the early seventies.



We shall now look closer at these categories by empirically studying sexual attitudes and behaviour in four respects: gender roles in heterosexual contacts; homosexual contacts; fidelity in a couple relationships, and sex trade. These aspects of sexual life are delicate and controversial. Precisely therefore, they are good indicators of both liberal or traditional attitudes and about gender relations as well.

Gender roles in heterosexual contacts

Gender roles in heterosexual contacts were studied by examining attitudes toward women's sexual initiative and gender roles in heterosexual interaction, exemplified by the positions used by men and women in sexual intercourse. The first indicator shows a more traditional attitude

towards gender roles in sexual life in St. Petersburg than in Finland (Table 3). For example, the reactions of St. Petersburg men to the statement “women have every right to take the initiative when they want sexual contact with men” were more negative than those of men in all three Finnish samples. Russian women were in the nineties as traditional as Finnish women in 1971 but more traditional than Finnish women in the nineties.

Table 3. Some Attitudes toward Gender and Sexual Roles According to Study and Gender, Age Adjusted, Percent

	Finland 1971	Finland 1992	Finland 1999	Peters- burg 1996
Accepts women's sexual initiative				
Men	92	93	96	81
Women	71	85	90	69
Both	81	89	93	75
Accepts temporary infidelity of a husband*				
Men	31	18	22	52
Women	29	21	13	25
Both	30	20	18	38
Accepts temporary infidelity of a wife				
Men	25	21	20	18
Women	26	22	15	27
Both	26	22	18	23

	Finland 1971	Finland 1992	Finland 1999	Peters- burg 1996
Considers homosexuality a private affair				
Men	39	58	57	54
Women	37	68	70	59
Both	38	63	63	56
Accepts prostitution				
Men	..	51	64	33
Women	..	22	25	21
Both	..	36	44	27

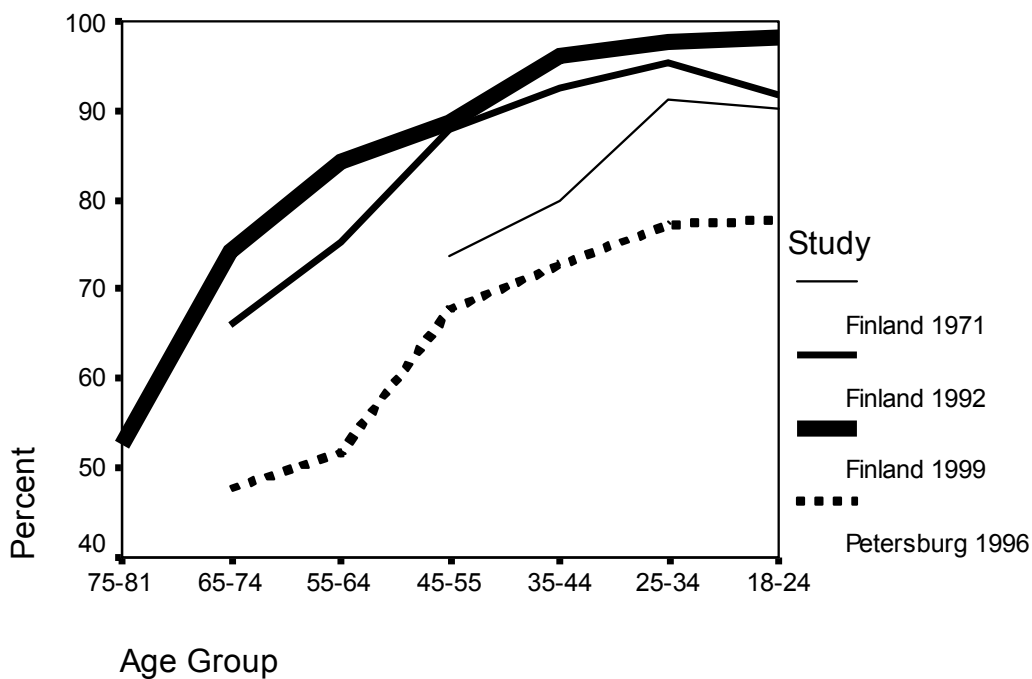
* In Sweden, 21 percent of men and 19 percent of women disagreed with the statement: "There is nothing that can forgive sexual infidelity of a person who has a steady relationship" (see Lewin 1997, question C106e)

Women reported more traditional gender role expectations in sexual interaction than men did. It seems not to be the men, but the women themselves, who carry forward the traditional gender roles in this respect.⁶ This can be interpreted by saying that it is often easier and nicer to be invited than to invite oneself. The active role in sexuality is heavy and may lead to being rejected. Nevertheless, many women would like to take initiatives but do not dare to do so. They may fear the bad reputation that is attributed to sexually active women.

⁶ This has been found in other studies, too. For example, when 600 customers filled a questionnaire in Finnish afternoon dances in Helsinki in the seventies, more men (43 percent) than women (24 percent) reported that they would accept an invitation to a date by a charming representative of the other sex met in the restaurant (Haavio-Mannila & Snicker 1980, 269).

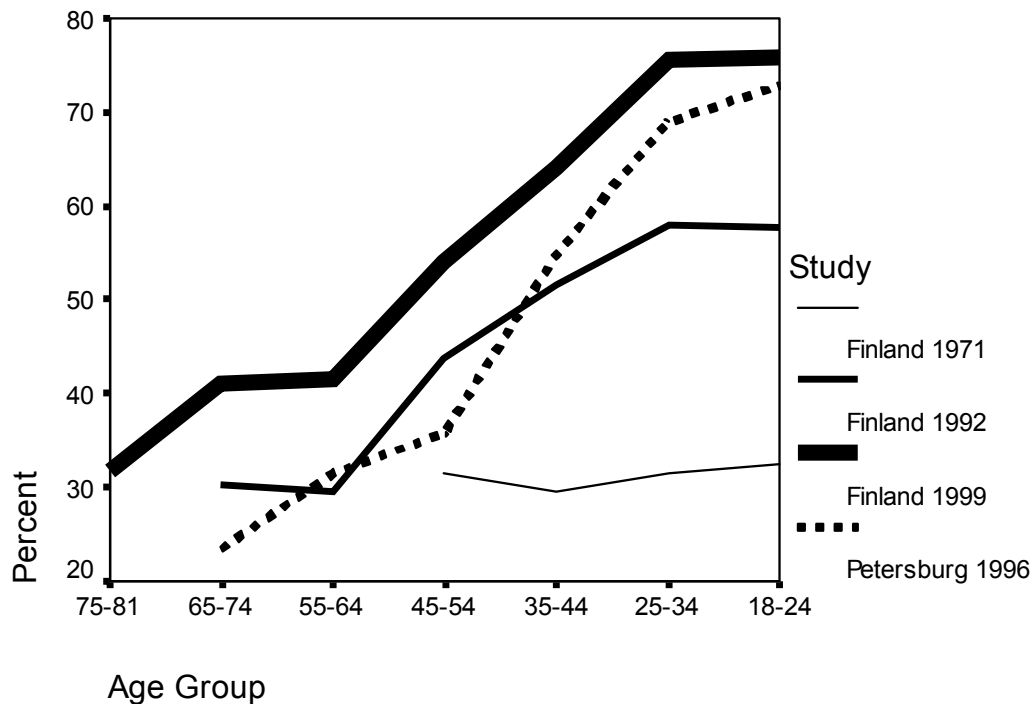
Young people were more positive than older people toward women's activity in sexual life (Figure 2). Elderly Russian women were particularly negative toward women taking initiative in sexual contacts with men. For Russian men age did not make so much difference.

Figure 2. Accepts Women's Sexual Initiative



The position used in sexual intercourse has often been used as an indicator of both liberalism and gender equality in sexual practices. The traditional Western “missionary” position, in which the man is on the top and the woman underneath, is not very enjoyable for many women. This position was very commonly used by Finns in their latest intercourse early seventies (Figure 3). There has been a real change toward more versatile positions which have contributed to the increase in the sexual satisfaction, especially for women (Haavio-Mannila & Kontula 1997). This is part of a general pluralisation of sexual practices (Haavio-Mannila & Rotkirch 1997).

Figure 3. Other Than Man-on-Top Position*



* in Latest Intercourse

St. Petersburg people had frequently used more innovative positions than the traditional missionary or man-on-top position in their latest intercourse. Only the Finns studied in 1999 passed them in this respect. The older Russians resembled the Finns in 1971, while the young Russians were close to contemporary Finns. Unlike attitudes toward women's sexual initiatives, the St Petersburg people were not traditional in regard to position in intercourse. Attitudes toward women's sexual initiative tell about gender equality and positions in intercourse about sexual liberalisation. In Russia, sexual techniques seem to be pluralistic, while women's sexual autonomy is not appreciated.

Homosexual contacts

Homosexuality has been a morally and legally extremely controversial issue. In Finland it was a crime until 1971. In Soviet Union male homosexuality was a crime against society and could lead to up to six years of incarceration, while female homosexuality could lead to forced psychiatric treatment (Essig 1999). In the Nordic countries the last decade has witnessed a public and

parliamentary debate on the legalization of homosexual unions and the adoption of children by same-sex couples. At the moment homosexual marriages are possible in Sweden, but not in Finland (one of the many examples in which Finland and Sweden play out a mini-Europe with 'eastern' Finland 'lagging behind' 'western' Sweden). In Russia, homosexuality is now decriminalized and has entered the public sphere, but many legal and practical problems remain.

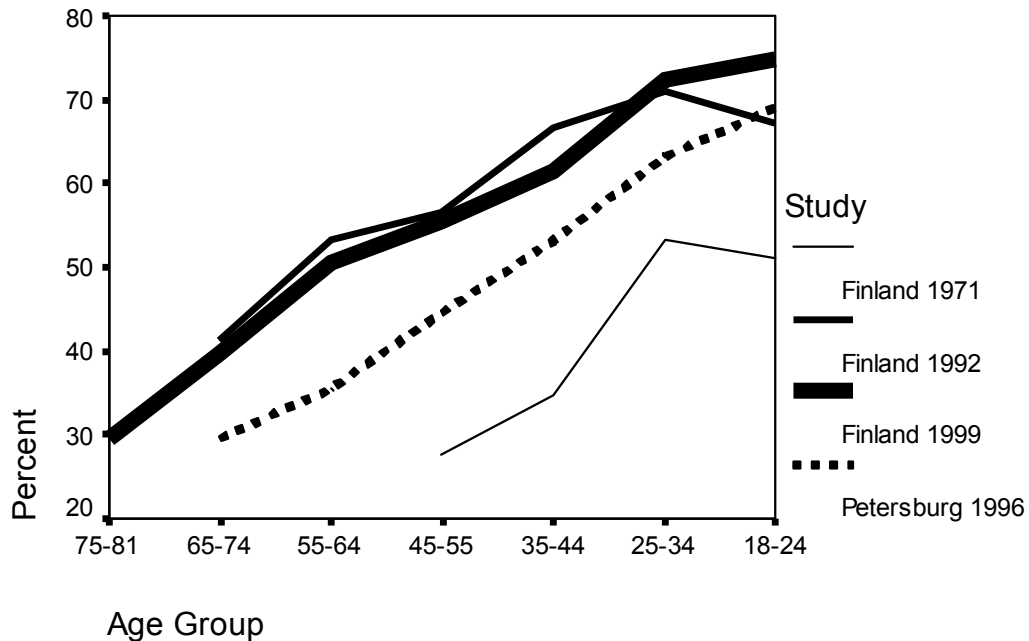
In our study, attitudes toward homosexuality were measured by the following statement:

"Homosexual behaviour among adults is the private affair of the people concerned, with which officials and the law should in no way interfere".⁷

The Russian attitude to homosexuality is situated in between the views of the Finns in 1971 and in the 1990s. In the 1990s, Finns were more permissive toward homosexuality, but in 1971, they were less tolerant than people in St. Petersburg (Figure 4). In both areas and decades, more young than old people accepted homosexuality. The youngest Russian and Finnish age groups almost converge. Finnish women interviewed in the nineties were the most permissive groups.

⁷ In 1971, the criminality of homosexuals was still debated in Finland. At that time, the agreement with the statement clearly reflected liberal sexual morality, as it does in Russia today. Now, the new demands for legalizing homosexual couple relationships in Finland make the interpretation of the replies of the different surveys problematic. Agreement with the statement can be interpreted either as permissiveness toward homosexuality or as a negative attitude toward the present demands by gays and lesbians.

Figure 4. Accepts Homosexuality *

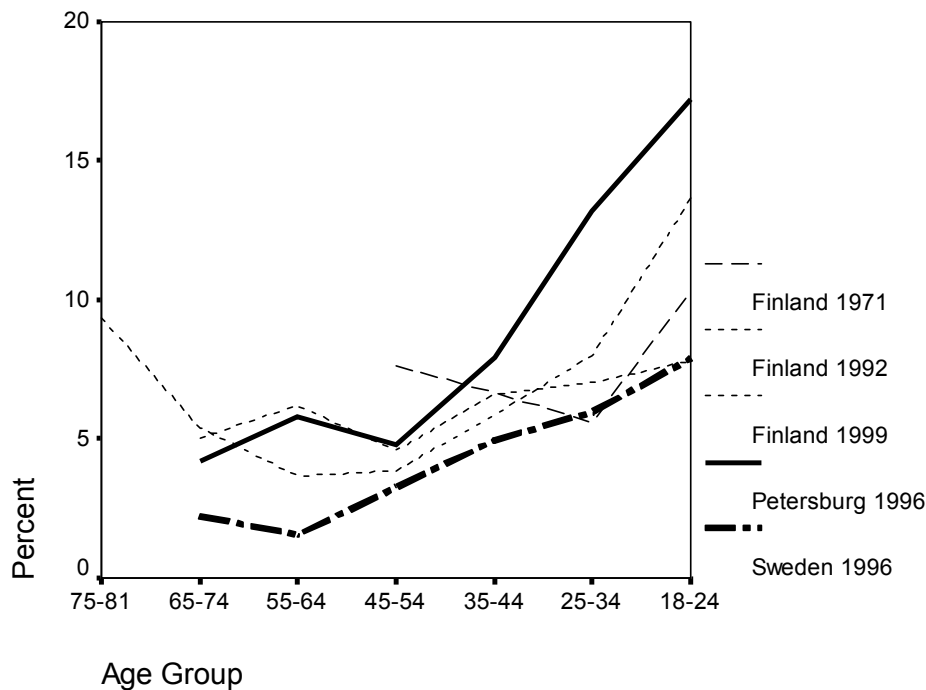


* Homosexual behaviour among adults is the private affair of the people concerned with which officials and the law should not interfere

Sexual interest toward same-sex persons was studied by asking the question used by Alfred Kinney et al. (1948): “Are you at the moment sexually attracted to only the male sex, mainly the male sex, both sexes equally, mainly the female sex, or only the female sex?” From five to ten percent of the respondents had at least some sexual interest in people of their own sex. Young people more often admitted same-sex interest than older people (Figure 5). Interestingly, stated same-sex interest was most common in St. Petersburg and least common in Sweden. This may reflect the identity politics of the respondents: in Finland and Sweden, the question was probably often interpreted to mean ‘are you homosexual?’, and some people who had had same-sex experiences did perhaps not want to define themselves as homosexuals. Exceptionally many young Russian women reported having felt sexual interest in women. This may be due to the fact that the Russian respondents did not interpret this as a question about sexual identity, as Russian culture is not labelled by the same categories of sexual identity as in the West, combined with the fact that women are often less afraid of acknowledging same-sex experiences (Essig 1999; Kaskisaari 1998). Of course the possibility also remains that young Russian women indeed have

had much more same-sex interest than both women and men from Finland and Sweden. This, in turn, could partly reflect the same kind of adventurism and variety that was found in the sharp increase in the use of sexual positions among young people from St Petersburg.

Figure 5. Same-Sex Interest

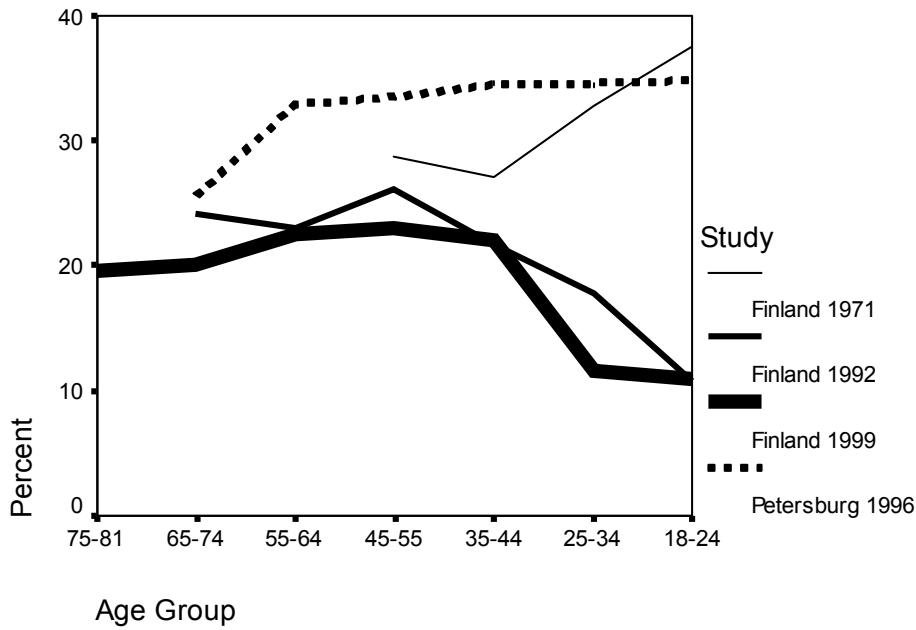


Marital fidelity

In the 1990s, marital infidelity was both accepted and practised in St. Petersburg more than in Finland and Sweden (Figures 6-7)⁸. In this respect, St Petersburg was and remains more liberal than the Nordic countries. It is a liberalism that goes hand in hand traditional double morality, to the degrees that there are different moral standards for the two sexes.

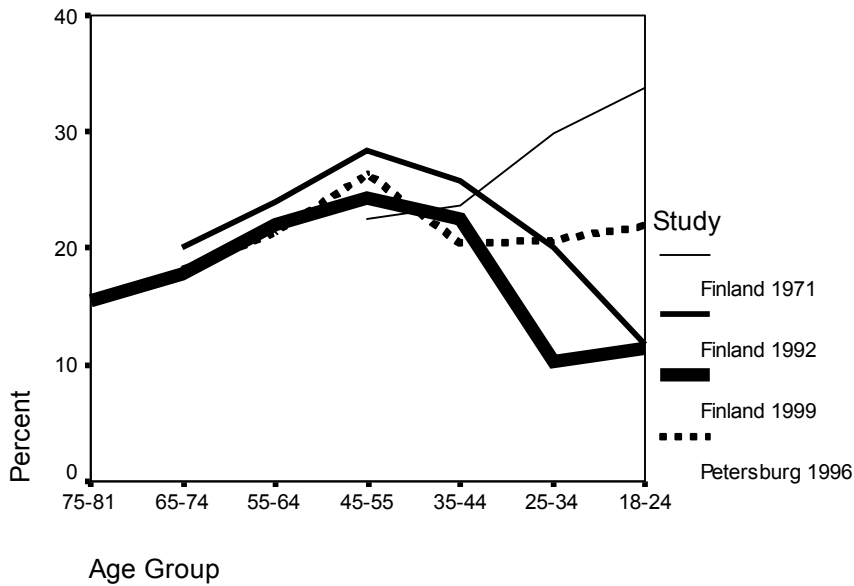
⁸ Because the Swedish attitude item did not distinguish between the infidelity of men and women, the Swedish percentages referring to attitudes toward infidelity of either gender are presented in the footnote of Table 2 only.

Figure 6. Accepts a Husband's Infidelity*



* One must be able to accept a husband's temporary infidelity

Figure 7. Accepts a Wife's Infidelity*



* One must be able to accept a wife's temporary infidelity

While Russian men were very liberal toward male infidelity, Russian women were less so. More than every second St. Petersburg man but only every fourth Russian woman agreed with the

statement: "One must be able to accept temporary infidelity of a husband". In Finland, the proportion of permissive people in regard to the infidelity of a husband was 30 percent in 1971 and one fifth in the 1990s.

A wife's unfaithfulness was accepted by about every fifth respondent of both genders in all surveys. The similar attitudes of Nordic and Russian men toward the infidelity of a wife may reflect different normative expectations. A Nordic man may reply 'gender-equally' even if he would think (or act) in another way whereas a Russian man replies like a 'macho-man', in spite of the fact that more Russian than Nordic women have had parallel relations.

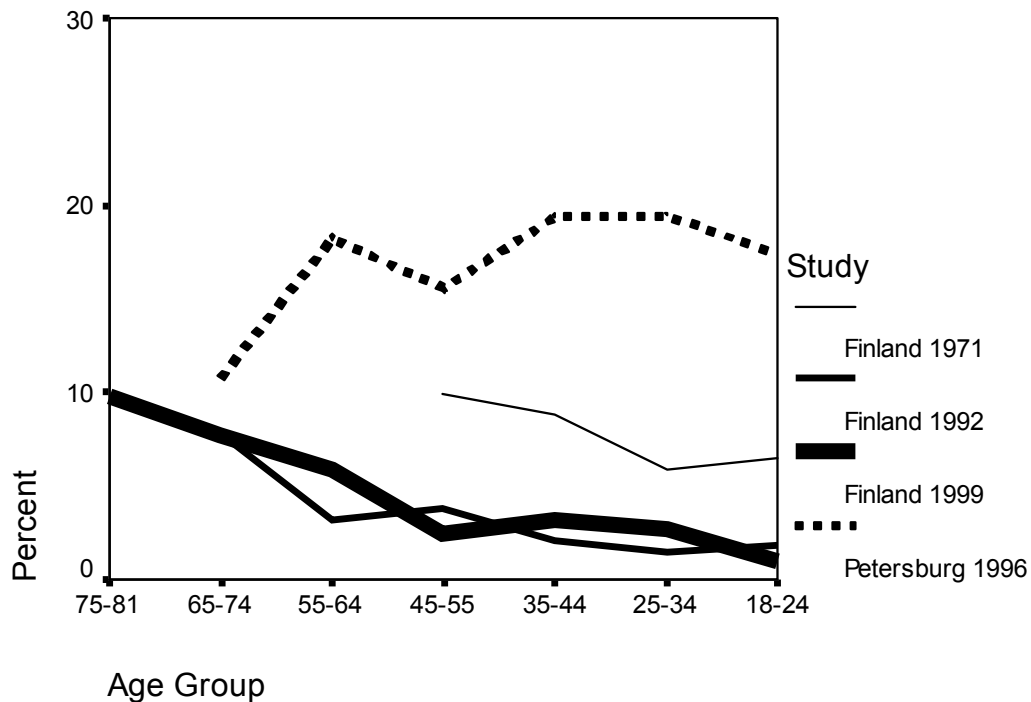
In the early 1970s, the impact of the sexual liberation on the attitudes of young Finnish people can be seen in their permissiveness toward unfaithfulness. In the 1990s, young Finns were less tolerant than older ones toward parallel relations. When trying to interpret the restrictive attitudes of young Finns toward marital infidelity, we should keep in mind that the statements in the questionnaire referred to the infidelity of a husband and a wife, i.e., to the unfaithfulness of legally married persons. As the age of first marriage is high, 28 years, in Finland, our young Finns may have looked upon marriage as a sacred institution into which they first will enter in a distant future. Young people have not yet had time to experience devitalisation of a marital relationship nor been exposed nor felt temptation to engage in extra affairs. It is also probable that the disapproval of infidelity has to do with the strengthening of gender equality attitudes. Finnish men have moved closer to the values earlier held by women (Kontula & Haavio-Mannila 1995a). In addition, the increasing risk of falling ill because of sexually transmitted diseases may also have contributed to the favouring of exclusive marital relationships by the young Finns in the nineties. In St. Petersburg, sexual education is sporadic or nonexistent, and STDs were not generally perceived as such a great threat.

When combining the responses to the statements concerning a husband's and a wife's temporary infidelity, we get a picture of the double moral standards in sexuality. Allowing men more freedom than to women was more pronounced in St. Petersburg than in Finland (Table 4 and Figure 10).

Table 4. Double Morality among 18-54 Year Old, Percent

	Finland 1971	Finland 1992	Finland 1999	Peters- burg 1996	Total
Men					
Does not accept any infidelity	62	75	75	46	65
Accepts infidelity of women only	4	6	3	2	4
Accepts infidelity of men only	10	3	4	36	12
Accepts the infidelity of both	24	16	18	16	19
Total	100	100	100	100	100
N	1076	875	523	632	3106
Women					
Does not accept any infidelity	65	76	84	66	71
Accepts infidelity of women only	3	3	3	10	5
Accepts infidelity of men only	5	1	0	6	4
Accepts the infidelity of both	27	20	13	18	20
Total	100	100	100	100	100
N	1033	837	511	822	3203

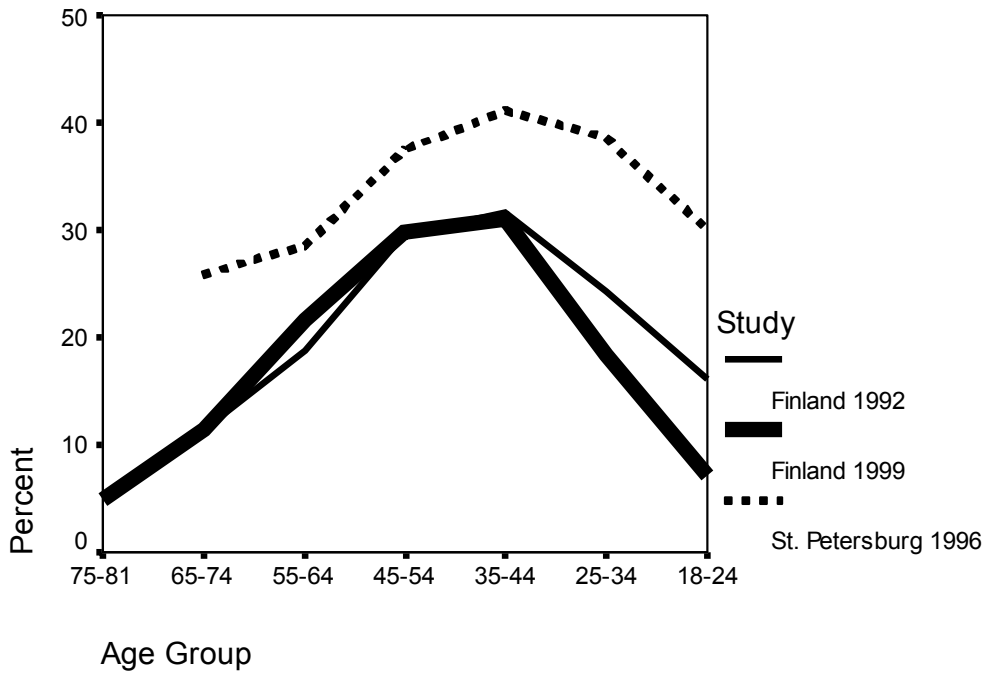
Figure 10. Double Moralism*



* Accepts a husband's but not a wife's temporary infidelity

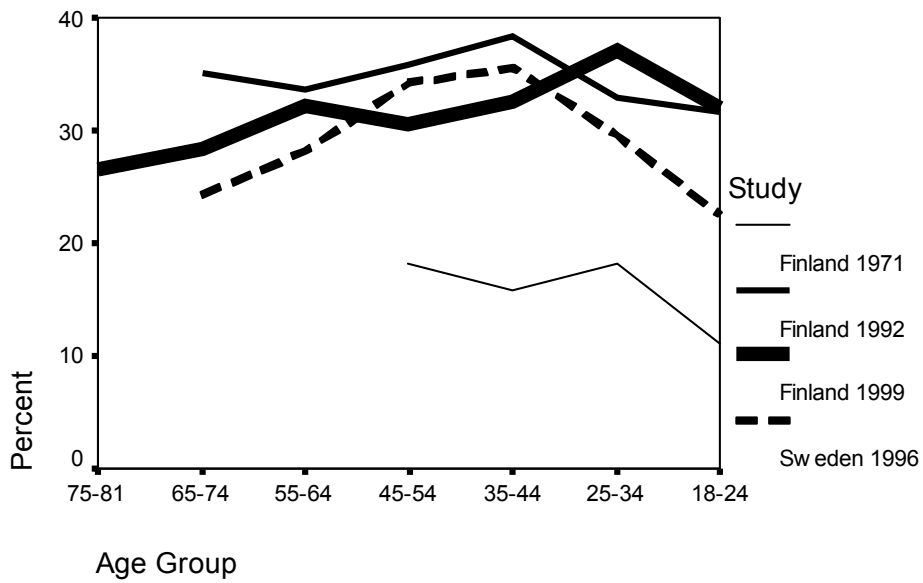
We may then ask how reported behaviour confirms with stated attitudes to infidelity. Attitudes and behaviour are fairly consistent. In St. Petersburg, the same proportions of people, on the average, accepted infidelity and had been unfaithful in their present marriage. In Finland, men's attitudes were interestingly enough stricter than their behaviour. In St. Petersburg and in Finland, infidelity was measured by asking about unfaithfulness during the present marriage (Figure 8), in Sweden during any marriage during the lifetime (Figure 9), and in Finland in both ways. In the early 1970s, Finns were more faithful in marriage than Finns and Swedes were about twenty-five years later. In the 1990s, Swedish women were more faithful than Finnish women. Among men there was no difference between Finland and Sweden.

Figure 8. Infidelity During Present Marriage*



* or Cohabitation

Figure 9. Lifetime Infidelity



During any marriage or cohabitation, in Finland
in 1999 during any steady relationship

Infidelity was often reported by middle-aged people. Contrary to the young, they have lived long enough for opportunities to emerge for forming new relationships. The greater faithfulness of older people may reflect the internalisation of traditional sexual morals of earlier historical times.

Sex trade

Finally, we look at the most telling changes in the countries under study. We examined both attitudes toward and experiences of paid sex. Attitudes toward paid sex were measured by asking the respondents to react to the following statement: 'I have nothing against people earning money by selling sexual services (prostitution) in Finland/Russia'. In general, people in St. Petersburg less often accepted prostitution than the Finns in the 1990s (Figure 11). In Finland, the middle-aged were the most permissive ones, and men were much more liberal than women. This reflects the impact of the sexual revolution of the 1960s (increased tolerance of prostitution) and the impact of the women's movement and feminist consciousness (disapproval of prostitution as promoting gender inequality). In St. Petersburg, on the contrary, young people were more liberal than older people, and men were somewhat more liberal than women. We assume that this fast liberalising reflects the impact of the sexual revolution of the 1980s in Russia, which has not been accompanied by any strong general concern for gender equality.



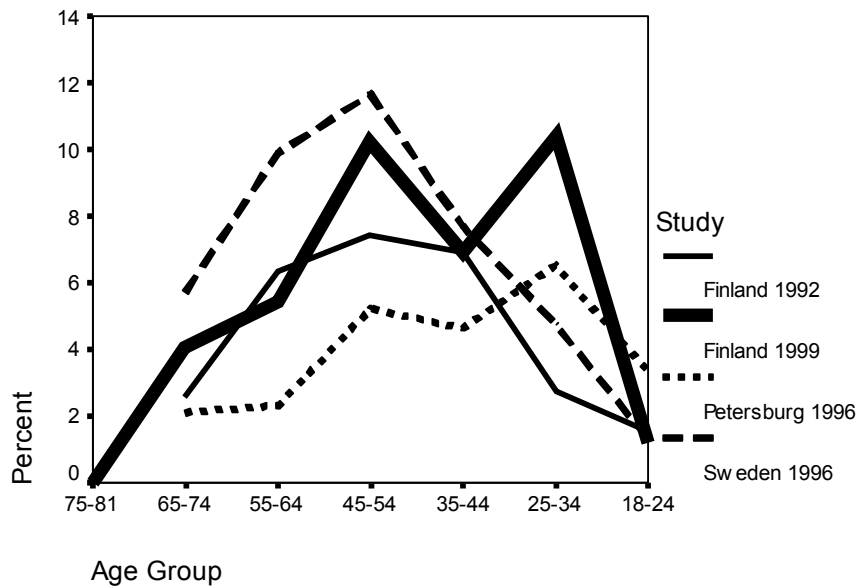
Sex trade in practice was studied both from the point of view of the payer and the paid person. In Finland and in St. Petersburg we asked: "Have you ever been persuaded to intercourse by offering money or similar economic advantages?" and "Have you ever offered money or similar

economic advantages for intercourse? The response alternatives were: “No”, “Yes, but I/they/he/she has said no” and “Yes, and I/they/he/she has said yes”.

In order to be able to compare the Finnish and Russian data with the Swedish ones, we examine only the proportions of people who have given or taken money for sex because only that question was asked in Sweden.

Paying for sex appeared to be somewhat more common in Finland 1999 and in Sweden 1996 than in Finland in 1992 and in St. Petersburg 1996 (Figure 12; the zigzag curve in Finland 1999 is due to the small number of cases). It was characteristic to middle-aged men. This is an important correction to the view often found in the media, where Russian contemporary sexuality is seen as marked by prostitution. It is also a reminder that Russian prostitution is often international. In Sweden, experiences of prostitution declined with age. In Finland, the amount of both middle aged and younger men who had paid for sex increased during the 1990s. This probably reflects the new coming of illegal brothels and street prostitution in Finland, as well as in the neighbouring cities such as Petersburg and Tallinn. Another, in our view less probable or at least less influential, interpretation is that Finnish and Swedish women under-report their selling of sexual services.

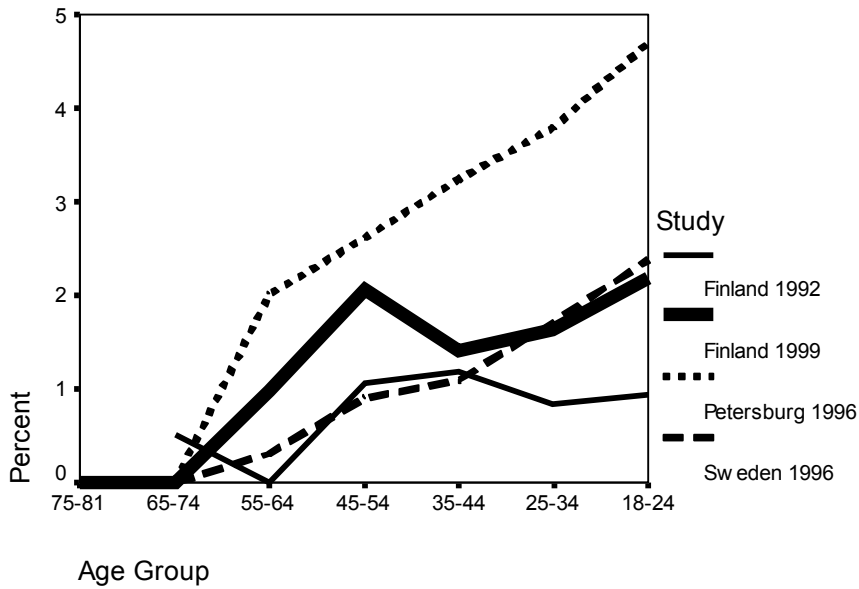
Figure 12. Has Paid* for Sex



* or Given Other Economic Advantages

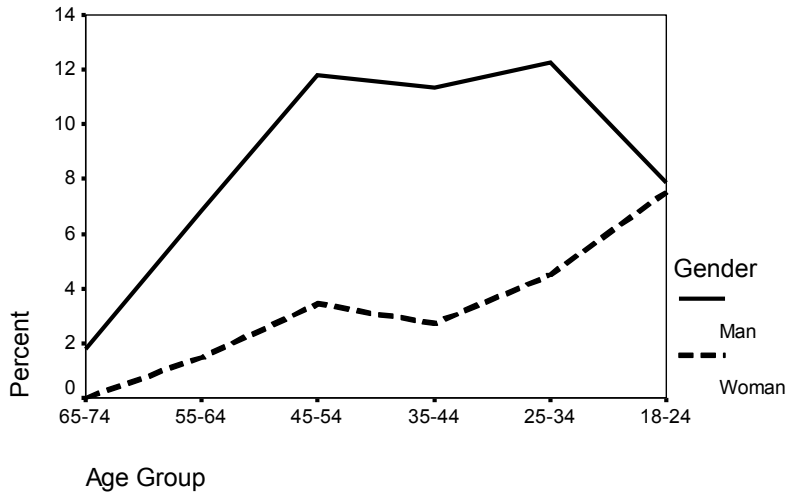
Taking money for sex was a little more common in St. Petersburg than in the two Nordic countries, especially among young people (Figure 13). Many of these experiences probably reflect the receiving of 'other material favours', or prostitution as a form of the Russian *blat* networks of exchange. (Ledeneva 1998). Of the youngest Russian women, eight percent reported having received money or other material advantages for sex (Figure 14). Young Russian men also reported of having bought sexual favours more than Russian men from the previous generations. Here, we see a drastic increase in the polarisation of gender roles in Russia.

Figure 13. Has Taken Money* for Sex



* or Other Economic Advantages

Figure 14. Sex Trade in St. Petersburg



Men who have given and women who have taken money or other economic advantages for sex

CONCLUSION

This article focussed on examining sexual relations in two types of societies: the Nordic countries (Finland and Sweden) and the post-socialist countries (St. Petersburg). Earlier studies have often

assumed a linear axis of progression, modelled on the Western experience, which would go from traditional and polarised to egalitarian and liberal. We have instead attempted to typologise the shifts in contemporary gender and sexual culture in these countries by distinguishing between the processes of liberalisation and gender equalisation. With this distinction, it becomes easier to think of the Soviet Union as both traditional and (relatively) egalitarian. For instance, both the socialist gender system and the traditional Western gender system included double moral standards in sexual behaviour for men and women. We can also think of contemporary Russia as both liberal - for instance with regards to homosexuality - and increasingly polarised. The results are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Typology of gender and sexual cultures in relation to liberalisation and equalization

<i>Sexuality</i> Gender relations	<i>Traditional</i>	<i>Liberal</i>
Polarisation	Nordic countries until the 1970s - double morality - homosexuality and prostitution less tolerated	Russia in the 1990s - double morality - homosexuality and prostitution tolerated - pluralist sexuality practiced
Equalisation	Soviet Union - women's sexual initiative less tolerated - homosexuality and prostitution not tolerated	Nordic countries in the 1990s - less double morality - homosexuality and women's sexual initiative more tolerated - infidelity less tolerated

In all our cases, young people were more egalitarian than older people in their attitudes and behaviour related to sexual interaction between and inside gender groups. Young people supported women's sexual initiative, used women-friendly positions in intercourse, accepted

homosexuality and admitted same-sex interest. These results indicate a *general trend toward increasing equality in sexual life*. Similarly, there is a *general trend towards liberalisation*, shown in a greater tolerance and experiences of various sexual practices. Within this general common framework, however, there were interesting differences. These can be attributed to the move from a traditional and polarised society towards an egalitarian and liberal society in the Western cases, and to the move from a traditional and egalitarian society to a liberal and polarised society in the Russian case.

Our example of a traditional and polarised society was Finland in the 1970s. It had relatively many female home-makers, a high tolerance of sexual double morality, used the traditional 'missionary' position in intercourse, and was faithful in marriage. At that time, particularly the older people were negative toward women's sexual initiative and homosexuality. Today, Finland and Sweden both represent a liberal and egalitarian society. This could be seen in the low number of home-makers and the decreased tolerance of male infidelity and double morality. Attitudes toward women's initiative in sexual contacts, homosexuality and prostitution were more liberal in Finland than in St. Petersburg. However, the youngest generations in both countries were quite similar in their views on these issues.

Our results also showed that a new kind of sexual morality had emerged among the young Finns in the 1990s. They were liberal toward gender roles in sexual contacts and same-sex relations. At the same time, they demanded exclusiveness in the marital relationship. Their attitudes toward sex trade were negative and paying and receiving money for sex was also rare. However, the egalitarian picture of the Nordic countries was also contradicted by the fact that the middle-aged men often reported buying sexual favours. In this respect, especially Sweden represents double morality.

The Soviet period of sexual culture has not been the focus of our analyses here. In the scheme above, it would fit in the category of an egalitarian and traditional society, as the *communist gender equality* included informal double morals and inequality in the private sphere.

Contemporary Russia has been characterised by its increase in both liberal attitudes and practices

and gender polarisation. However, these changes often appeared big mostly when compared to the Soviet era. Compared with Finland and Sweden, Russia was often merely 'catching up'. In practice the sexual life of Russians was quite liberated. The woman-friendly (other than man-on-top) position in intercourse, reported infidelity, same-sex interest, and taking money for sex were more common in St. Petersburg than in Finland and Sweden.

The bigger gender inequality in Russia was seen in the economic sphere, where our data shows that more Russian than Nordic young women were full-time homemakers. This life-form was part of the traditional polarised gender system, which prevailed in the West until the seventies. In St. Petersburg young people did not condemn infidelity or prostitution, and often reported having taken money for sex. The double morality - accepting male but not female infidelity - was also much more common among St. Petersburg men than Finnish men and women.

In the light of this study, the interesting tension between the processes of liberalisation and gender equality in sexual values and practices appears as a common trend for the European post-war countries. In Russia, liberalisation began during the Soviet Union and was speeded up by the free press and the commercialization of the 1980s and 1990s. In the Nordic countries, liberalisation reached its height in the 1970s. Today, liberalism and permissiveness are sometimes questioned from the perspective of gender equality and/or a new morality. In Russia, on the contrary, liberalism has undermined the arguments for gender equality from the Soviet era. Other 'traditional' attitudes, such as condemnation of homosexuality, seemed to disappear faster than prejudices against women's sexual self determination. Women's sexual autonomy was in our examples supported in the Russian data only when it came as a by-product of a liberal attitude (e.g. the use of several positions in intercourse). It was not supported when presented as an explicit question of women's sexual behaviour, such as women's right to take sexual initiative or to practice as much infidelity as the husband does.

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