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### The Russian Government, Unreliable Scholars, and Homophobic Disinformation

Fiona Celli

*Binghamton University--SUNY*

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## (ANTI)-GAY PROPAGANDA

How homophobic disinformation in Russia is putting queer lives at stake



PRESENTER:  
**Fiona Celli**

### **BACKGROUND:**

For decades, Moscow has remained one of the least gay-friendly cities in Europe, despite the fact that it is considered one of the more progressive parts of Russia (Stella 459). In the 1980's, the Russian government and its healthcare partners refused queer HIV patients care due to a stigma surrounding the disease (Comuniello 2). In 2013, the Russian government enacted a law preventing young children from learning about queer identities (Gay Propaganda Law). For years, homophobic scholars and journalists have promoted an anti-gay sentiment throughout their work (Moss). Disinformation campaigns like these still remain very present in Russian society to this day, causing more and more damage to the queer community each day.

### **METHODS:**

- I applied Freelon and Wells' definition of disinformation to analyze the impacts that Russian disinformation campaigns against queer people have affected this community over time.
- I also used Kuo and Marwick's theory of disinformation in respect to marginalized communities in order to understand the impacts that disinformation has on less privileged groups, such as queer people.

Homophobic disinformation campaigns in Russia have remained one of the largest threats to the queer community in this nation and have caused irreversable damage, including loss of lives during the AIDS epidemic, feelings of isolation and increased risk for mental health issues, as well as being at a higher risk for STI's due to a lack of education about safer sex practices in queer relationships.



### **IMPORTANT TERMINOLOGY**

- Russian scholars and journalists use the universalizing view of queerness to promote an anti-gay sentiment throughout Russia as well as promote the idea that queer people are "bad" because they "chose" to be this way.
- Minoritizing: being queer is not a choice (Moss 18).
- Universalizing: being queer is something that you can choose or choose not to be (Moss 18).

### **RESULTS:**

- Disinformation disproportionately affects marginalized groups due to an already existing prejudice that is increased and encouraged by the malicious information being spread by "reputable" sources such as the Russian government and "scholars" at Moscow State University (Moss 24).
- As a result, queer people have lost their lives due to the disinformation about the AIDS and HIV crises.
- As a result of the Gay Propaganda Law, queer children are unable to understand their own identities, will not be able to learn about safer sex practices, and feel isolated from their peers and the rest of the extremely heterosexual society they live in.

Bibliography



Gay rights activists marched against the law in St Petersburg in 2013. Banner reads: "We demead the repeal of the shameful homophobic law! Let's stop hatred and discrimination together!" (BBC News)