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Negotiating Invisibility: Addressing LGBT Prejudice in China, Hong Kong, and Thailand

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Negotiating Invisibility: Addressing LGBT Prejudice in China, Hong Kong, and Thailand

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Abstract

This research serves as a consolidation of information regarding the global response to LGBT prejudice, and in particular, the response of organizations situated in China, Hong Kong, and Thailand. Interviews with activists and researchers from organizations that address LGBT prejudice served as the main form of data. Findings and subsequent analysis point to the ways in which organizations respond to the lack of visibility of the LGBT community, and how this invisibility is related to various manifestations of LGBT prejudice. Strategies that organizations have developed to respond to LGBT prejudice reveal how organizations negotiate contextual variables in their attempts to promote positive representations of LGBT people, claim space and identity in society, create safe spaces for members of the LGBT community, encourage mutual understanding between parents and LGBT youth, and build agency amongst members of the LGBT community. The discussions proffered in this study are a promotion for deeper reflection of these strategies; suggesting points for reflection that could yield alterations to strategies in order to more effectively address the invisibility of the LGBT community. This study concludes with points for further investigation and the development of policies that target invisibilization factors.

Keywords: LGBT Prejudice, Invisibility, Strategy, Homophobic Bullying, Transphobic Bullying, Biphobic Bullying, Homosexuality, Transgender, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Non-conforming, Activism

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Bullying - A Global Problem	1
What is Homophobic Bullying?	2
<i>Homophobic, Biphobic, and Transphobic Bullying or LGBT Prejudice - The case for inclusive language</i>	4
<i>Effects of Homophobic, Biphobic, and Transphobic (HBT) Bullying</i>	4
Absenteeism and School Dropout.....	5
Depression, Anxiety, and Suicide.....	5
Negative Academic Performance	6
Social Cognition, Sexual Harassment, and Discrimination	6
Emergence of a Global Dialogue	7
Why Focus on Asia?	8
Theoretical Perspectives.....	9
Research Questions	11
Significance of the Study	11
Chapter 2: Context	12
China	12
Hong Kong.....	15
Thailand	16
Chapter 3: Methods	21
Design.....	21
Population and Sampling.....	21
Data Collection	23
Researcher Reflexivity and Positionality	24
Limitations	26
Chapter 4: Findings, Discussion, and Implications	27
Portraits of the Organizations.....	27
Theme: Negotiating Invisibility	28
Challenge: Censorship and Negative Portrayals of Homosexuality in China	31

<i>Strategy: (Web)sites of Empowerment / Flash Mobs of Awareness: Tools for Claiming Space in Society</i>	31
Discussion and Implications.....	33
<i>Strategy: Avoiding the Foreign Press and Keeping Activities Small</i>	34
Discussion and Implications.....	36
Challenge: Lack of Parental Support	37
<i>Strategy: Creation of Parent Support Services</i>	38
Discussion and Implications.....	39
Challenge: Lack of Ministry-level Buy-in.....	40
<i>Strategy: Gather More Empirical Data and Models of Successful Programs to Build a Stronger Argument</i>	41
Discussion and Implications.....	42
Challenges: Teachers’ Perceptions of SOGI and Schools as an Institutionalized Sources for LGBT Prejudice	43
<i>Strategy: Personify Members of the LGBT Community</i>	45
<i>Strategy: Flexible Uniform Policies and Gender-Neutral Bathrooms</i>	45
Discussion and Implications.....	46
Chapter 5: Further Discussions and Conclusion	46
Suggestions for Practice.....	48
Suggestions for Research.....	49
Conclusion.....	51
References	52

List of Tables and Figures

Figure 1: Theoretical Application	12
Table 1: Survey Responses - Research Participant Information and Organizational Characteristics	24

Chapter 1: Introduction

This study emerged from the global call to action to address homophobic bullying in schools. The content presented in this introduction synthesizes the literature and historical events that has bolstered the concern for challenges that LGBT youth face in schools and the proclamation to address such issues. Before delving further into the literature, I define the terms I will rely on when referencing bullying based on one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity (SOGI), while also pointing out a critique that is circulating in the field about the label of *homophobic bullying*. Below, I present the effects that bullying based on SOGI has on LGBT youth. I also point to the global assemblies and publications that reflect the genesis for a global dialogue about LGBT issues in education and from this literature I will explain how I came to situate my research in the context of Asia.

Bullying - A Global Problem

Each day all over the world parents send their children off to school optimistic about the bright futures an education will grant their children; trusting that the school will nurture their children's learning; believing that their children will be safe. Sadly, these institutions that society places so much trust in serve as the setting for a barrage of grave offenses against children – the least of which is bullying. Bullying can take on the form of physical violence or it can include teasing, taunting, using hurtful nicknames, psychological manipulation, or social exclusion (UNESCO, 2011). With the emergence of the Internet and social media outlets, cyber bullying has risen dramatically. Cyber bullying involves harassment through e-mail, cell phones, text messages and defamatory websites (UNESCO, 2012a). In recent years, bullying and school violence has been discussed widely in the media and a better understanding of its widespread prevalence has warranted much concern. Although parts of the world lack strong empirical data regarding bullying, it is becoming increasingly accepted as a global problem. In many parts of Africa bullying is reinforced by “cultures of violence within the family and community” (UNESCO, 2012b, p. 10). In Nairobi, for example, 63.2% to 81.8% reported various types of bullying occurring in public schools (UNESCO, 2012b, p. 10). Bullying isn't just confined to Africa. In parts of Asia the topic has surfaced as an issue that needs to be urgently addressed. In Mongolia, a survey revealed that 27% of students reported being subjected to violence by other children (UNESCO, 2012b, p. 10). Laos was even more severe with 98% of girls and *all* boys reporting that they had witnessed bullying in schools (UNESCO, 2012b, p. 10). One study discovered that 13%

of Chinese students reported being victims of bullying (UNESCO, 2012b, p.10). In a different study, 35.7% of students in the Philippines reported being bullied during the last 30 days preceding the administration of a survey (UNESCO, 2012b, p. 10).

Bullying has been seen as a “normal” part of growing up – in some cases it’s been naturalized in schools illustrated by commonly used phrases like: “let boys be boys”, “it builds character”, or simplifying and devaluating its harmful effects by referring to it as just “teenage drama.”

Bullying is a violation to an education in a safe school environment and it threatens academic achievement (UNESCO, 2012a; UNESCO, 2012b). Bullying undermines fundamental human rights to health, safety, and freedom from discrimination that have been established in internationally accepted principles such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Yogyakarta Principles.

Research supports the idea that while bullying is pervasive and all individuals are susceptible to it, those individuals that are perceived to be different from the majority are more likely to be targeted. In particular, homophobic bullying which targets victims based on their sexual identity, or perceived sexual identity, has been declared by the UN Secretary Ban Ki-moon as a “moral outrage, a grave violation of human rights” and he has urged countries to “take the necessary measures to protect people – all people from violence and discrimination, including on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity” (Ban, 2011; UN News Centre, 2012).

What is Homophobic Bullying?

Homophobic bullying has been defined by UNESCO as:

... a social and systemic phenomenon that occurs in particular kinds of institutions, including schools, colleges, universities and other places of learning. It involves clearly differentiated roles (e.g. victim, perpetrator, witness) and reinforces or creates power-based relationships and existing social norms, with victims selected on the basis of (negatively perceived and culturally defined) difference. Homophobic or transphobic bullying is learned behavior. It represents one (among many) manifestation of violence and intimidation driven by prejudice. The sources of such prejudice are complex and multiple, including elements of the educational institution itself. (UNESCO, 2012b, p. 7)

Homophobia has also been cited as “the irrational fear of same-sex sexual desire and conduct” whereas transphobia has been defined as “the irrational fear of those whose gender identity and/or behavior are either different from their assigned sex, or perceived by others as not conforming to, or as transgressing social norms” (UNESCO, 2012b, p. 11). In much of the

literature that UNESCO has published on the topic, they establish their understanding of the difference between homophobic and transphobic bullying, the different ways it manifests, and the varied strategies to address it, however, they make use of the single term *homophobic bullying* as short hand for bullying based on one's sexual orientation *and/or* gender identity.

Of the little empirical data that we have on the subject, it is clear that this issue is much more problematic than one may presume. Homophobic bullying is the most common form of bullying in the United Kingdom (Stonewall, 2009). A survey in South Africa that was administered to youth who had left school revealed that 68% of gay men and 42% of lesbians reported that they had experienced hate speech at school and 10% had experienced sexual violence (Behind the Mask, 2010). A survey conducted in the USA found that 84% of young gay, lesbian, and bisexual learners had been called names or threatened, 40% had been shoved or pushed, and 18% experienced physical assault at school (Greytak, 2009). A study in Hong Kong reported that 42% of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender learners report verbal abuse and 40% report social isolation in school (Fridae, 2010).

Research conducted in multiple countries shows that homophobic bullying is more likely to occur at the school than in the home or community (Takacs, 2006; Hillier et al., 2010). One study in Canada revealed that more students experienced homophobic bullying than the number of students that actually identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex therefore suggesting that this form of bullying isn't limited in scope to LGBT youth (Stop Bullying! Canada).

Homophobic bullying isn't just perpetrated by students' peers; it has also been linked to being perpetrated by school administrators and teachers. Research done in universities in Lebanon found that students had experienced homophobic bullying from the staff and fellow learners that included blackmail, deprivation of academic rights, and harassment (Helem; UNESCO, 2012a). In Ireland, 34% of learners reported homophobic comments by teachers and other staff members (Mayock, 2009). A multi-country study (India and Bangladesh) revealed that 50% of homosexual men experienced harassment from learners or teachers in school or college (Bondyopadhyay et al., 2005).

Homophobic, Biphobic, and Transphobic Bullying or LGBT Prejudice - The case for inclusive language

It is at this point in my paper that I want to reveal my own errors as a researcher and social justice activist, while also designating the language that I will make use of in the remainder of writing. When I began my research, I relied heavily on the term 'homophobic' bullying as an umbrella term to mean bullying based on SOGI. This inclination was due in part because much of the literature used the term similarly. It wasn't until interviewing participants for my research, and being questioned, even challenged, as to why I'd chosen to use this term that I realized how I was reinforcing layers of invisibility for transgender people and bisexuals who experience transphobic or biphobic bullying, which can be very different in nature than homophobic bullying. These layers of invisibility will be discussed in depth in my findings.

Rather than using the term homophobic bullying to signify various forms of bullying, violence, discrimination, and exclusion directed towards the LGBTQ community or those individuals perceived to be LGBTQ, the remainder of this paper will make use of more inclusive language, signified by the use of multiple terms: homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic (HBT) bullying, and/or the term LGBTQ prejudice. These terms will be used interchangeably for the purposes of describing this phenomenon. For more information regarding the critique of exclusive terminology within the field of LGBTQ rights, I would urge those that are interested to read Gregory M. Herek's (2004) paper entitled: *Beyond "Homophobia": Thinking About Sexual Prejudice and Stigma in the Twenty-First Century*, which explores the limitations of the term *homophobia*.

Effects of Homophobic, Biphobic, and Transphobic (HBT) Bullying

At the onset of my research, I had intended to only look at HBT bullying present in schools. However, through my interviews with activists, I soon became aware that organizations and interventions meant to address LGBT prejudice were not always allowed access into schools, and therefore, some strategies were tailored to address prejudice towards the LGBT community within the larger society. Although not all of the strategies used by the organizations are positioned within the schools, some of the strategies are rooted in addressing the challenges that LGBT youth face and I believe that a better understanding of the effects of HBT bullying on students/youth contributes to the reader's understanding of my analysis of the organizations' strategies.

The effects that HBT bullying can have on students are very extensive. Not only can the traumatic experiences of bullying create psychosocial pathologies, but it can also affect a multitude of factors such as academic performance and school retention. Below, I present some of the research regarding the effects that HBT bullying can have on a student that has spurred the global community to further research this form of bullying.

Absenteeism and School Dropout

When a student is being bullied their motivations for attending school are dramatically affected. School no longer serves as a safe place for learning and instead can seem like a forced, tortuous, and intimidating environment. Consequently, students that are being bullied may feel less inclined to attend school. According to a 2009 GLSEN US survey, nearly one in three LGBT students reported regularly missing classes because they felt “unsafe or uncomfortable” (Stonewall, 2007, The School Report as cited in UNESCO, 2012b, p. 19).

Nearly 29% of LGBT students in a US study reported that they had missed class at least once in the past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable and 30% had missed at least an entire day of school in the past month for the same reason (UNESCO, 2012b, p. 19). According to the same study, “LGBT students were more than 3 times more likely to have missed classes (29% vs. 8%) and more than 4 times likelier to have missed at least one day of school (30% vs. 7%) in the past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable compared to the general population of secondary school students” (UNESCO, 2012b, p. 19). Students also turned out to be 3 times as likely to have missed school in the past month if they had experienced high levels of victimization related to their sexual orientation (58% vs. 18%) or gender expression (54% vs. 20%) (UNESCO, 2012b, p. 19). These occurrences are not unique to the US. In India and Bangladesh, a number of men who have sex with men (MSM) had prematurely ended their education, thus impacting their employability, all due to experiencing homophobic bullying in school (Bondyopadhyay & Khan, 2005 cited in UNESCO, 2012b, p. 20).

Depression, Anxiety, and Suicide

Studies conducted in Latin America reveal that roughly 10% of respondents expressed that: “bullying made their lives ‘hard and sad’, 25% said that the experience made them ‘insecure’ and almost 15% of the Chilean respondents reported contemplating suicide.” (UPCH/PAHO, 2011 as cited in UNESCO, 2012b, p. 21). In the US, a study found that 33.2% of transgender young people attempted suicide (Clements et al., 2006, p. 53-69 as cited in UNESCO, 2012, p.

21). Additionally, in the Netherlands nearly 50% of gay men and lesbians had reported suicidal thoughts, compared to 30% among heterosexual youth (Keuzenkamp, 2010 as cited in UNESCO, 2012b, p. 21). In the US, a National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health found that LGBT youth were much more likely to report suicidal ideation (17.2% vs. 6.3%) and attempt suicide (4.9% vs. 1.6%) than non-LGB youth (Silenzio, Pena, Duberstein, Cerel, and Knox, 2007 as cited in Jimerson, 2012, p. 207). A study conducted in Oregon determined that LGB youth are nearly 5 times more likely to commit suicide than their heterosexual peers (Hatzenbuehler, 2011). Equally disturbing is the creation of the term “bullicide” which is a reference to being bullied to the point of committing suicide.

Negative Academic Performance

Significantly lower grade point averages have been reported by LGBT students who were frequently harassed because of their sexual orientation, and LGBT students were twice as likely not to plan to pursue any type of post-secondary education when compared with a national general sample (Alexander & Santo, 2011, p. 289-308 as cited in UNESCO, 2012b, p. 19).

Social Cognition, Sexual Harassment, and Discrimination

Middle school males “may be targeted for displaying gender-atypical behavior” (Young & Sweeting, 2004 as cited in Felix & Green, 2010, p. 179) and their reactions may be to lash out and be more aggressive towards others in the future (Felix & Green, 2010, p. 179). In 2002, the Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern that “homosexual and transsexual young people do not have access to the appropriate information, support and necessary protection to enable them to live their sexual orientation” (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2002, p. 188 as cited in UNESCO, 2012b, p. 12).

Clearly, LGBT prejudice is not limited in locale, nor innocuous – there are no grounds for complacency, and for some organizations, this is well understood.

Emergence of a Global Dialogue

In recent years, UNESCO has made substantial efforts to raise awareness about LGBT issues in education and created forums for LGBT activists and organizations to connect and develop collaborative strategic plans to address HBT bullying. But, prior to UNESCO's initiatives, there were other organizations answering the call to address HBT bullying.

In 1998, a workshop seeking to address homophobia was organized by Empowerment Lifestyle Services, a Dutch consultancy on LGBT issues in education at the Human Rights Conference during the Gay Games in Amsterdam at the request of Amnesty International and HIVOS (GALE). This collaboration led to discussions about the need for a global network. In 2006, this need was addressed with the creation of the Global Alliance for LGBT Education (GALE), which in 2011, created the first global toolkit entitled: "Working with Schools" which provided schools, school support institutions, and LGBT activist organizations with the tools to address HBT bullying. Over the last 6 years GALE has grown to 650 members.

With 2006, we also saw the creation of the Yogyakarta Principles, a set of principles drafted by distinguished international human rights experts from 25 countries on the application of international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity. Of the 29 principles, 5 principles make direct mention of ways LGBT rights should be upheld in school settings (Yogyakarta Principles, 2008).

In 2011, UNESCO took the lead in addressing HBT bullying when it organized the first-ever international consultation on homophobic and transphobic bullying in schools that ultimately contributed to the creation of two publications: "Review of Homophobic Bullying in Educational Institutions" and "Education Sector Responses to Homophobic Bullying." The discussions continued in the following year when the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), a US-based organization committed to researching bullying in schools and advocating for safer schools, especially as it relates to LGBT youth and educators, solicited submissions for an international research conference, the World Comparative Education Congress in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Submissions from 15 countries were received and contributed to four panels at the conference. Motivated by this global assembly of activists and scholars, GLSEN, in partnership with UNESCO, orchestrated an all-day meeting to prioritize needs, strategize potential courses of action, and pool knowledge to confront homophobic and transphobic prejudice in schools

worldwide (Kosciw, J.G. & Pizmony-Levy, O., 2013). Discussions that emerged from the all-day meeting were articulated in the publication “Fostering a Global Dialogue about LGBT Youth and Schools.”

Why Focus on Asia?

Many strides in LGBTQ advocacy in education have occurred over the past 16 years. The need to address HBT bullying has become a global discourse. However, the international platforms where this dialogue is taking place have consistently lacked representation from organizations in Africa, Asia, and post-Soviet regions (UNESCO, 2012a; UNESCO, 2012b; Kosciw, J.G. & Pizmony-Levy, O., 2013). Similarly, there is a dearth of knowledge about the severity and various manifestations of homophobic bullying in Asia (Kosciw, J. & Pizmony-Levy, O., 2013; UNESCO, 2012a; UNESCO, 2012b).

Organizations seeking to address LGBTQ prejudice in Asia, as in other parts of the world, do so within a tumultuous political landscape that is made even more difficult because it confronts obstacles such as religious opposition, political censorship, and institutionalized prejudice. They face prison, defamation, harm and physical attacks, and even death. LGBTQ prejudice in Asia was played out on the global stage when the 2010 International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) Asia Conference being held in Surabaya, Indonesia was cut short and its participants, who had come from all over Asia, were forced to evacuate due to threats from Islamic protestors (ILGA-Asia, 2010; Wei, 2010).

LGBTQ organizations in Asia have been actively addressing HBT bullying in recent years (Kosciw, J. & Pizmony-Levy, O., 2013; ILGA, 2013). Civil society organizations (CSOs), nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), and intergovernmental organizations have risen to answer the call for prevention and intervention with programs to address bullying against LGBT youth. However, very little research has been conducted that focuses on understanding the strategies that these organizations utilize, the factors that influenced the conception of these strategies, and the ways these strategies have evolved to address new needs and/or obstacles. Given the strain and obstacles that each context presents, one can presume that there’s no panacea of how to address LGBTQ prejudice. This explorative research seeks to better understand the perceived challenges facing the LGBTQ community and the public perceptions of homosexuality and gender identity within an Asian context.

Additionally, this research seeks to explore the unique strategies employed by various organizations in Asia to address HBT bullying. The scope of my research in Asia is limited to three contexts: China, Hong Kong¹, and Thailand.

Theoretical Perspectives

My research is primarily concerned with how the participants articulate their organizational theory of action, which is reflected in their strategies for addressing LGBT prejudice. Drawing from Argyris and Schön's (1974) work on theories of action, "a full schema for a theory of action, then, would be as follow: in situation S, if you want to achieve consequence C, under assumptions $a_1..a_n$, do A" (p. 6). Applying this schema to my study, the situation would be defined as the various forms of prejudice that the LGBT community face, whereby A is/are the strategies employed by organizations to address this prejudice, while considering variables within the context. In order to effectively address HBT bullying, one must also have a better understanding of the social, political, and cultural contexts from which the LGBT prejudice has taken root. This paper will explore some of the social and political factors that have created barriers for the organizations. Consequently, many of the strategies that will be presented later in the paper will illustrate how organizations negotiate these contextual challenges.

While discussing the theory of action, it's important to clarify the difference between an espoused theory and a theory-in-use. Argyris and Schön have clearly articulated this difference below:

When someone is asked how he would behave under certain circumstances, the answer he usually gives is his espoused theory of action for that situation. This is the theory of action to which he gives allegiance, and which, upon request, he communicates to others. However, the theory that actually governs his actions is his theory-in-use, which may or may not be compatible with his espoused theory; furthermore, the individual may or may not be aware of the incompatibility of the two theories. (1974, p. 7)

I argue that if the strategies are a manifestation of the organization's espoused theory of action, then by understanding the strategies that the organization uses then their theory of action can be revealed. I'm not capable of constructing the theory-in-use for the organizations since doing so would require observations and impact studies that are beyond the scope of data that I have

¹ For the purposes of this study, I've made the distinction between Mainland China and Hong Kong even though current political classifications would label them both as China. My deduction for this distinction echoes Deng Xiaoping's conceptualization of the relationship between Hong Kong and China as "one country, two systems" and is based on vast differences in history and unique socio-cultural differences which I sought to explain below in *Chapter 2: Context*.

gathered. Therefore, when I refer to the organization's theory of action, I'm referencing their espoused theory. Additionally, an understanding of the organization's theory of action can shed light on what are the contextual influences (i.e.: socio, political, cultural). Figure 1 shows the articulation of Argyris and Schön's theory of action as applied to this study.

Argyris and Schön's Theory of Action:



Application of the Theory of Action Framework:



Figure 1: Theoretical Application

Research Questions

The research questions and sub-questions for this study are as follows:

- What are the strategies that the organizations use to address LGBT prejudice in their context?
- What about the context influences these strategies?
 - What are the challenges to address LGBT prejudice in these contexts?
 - Where do the organizations see points of entry in the context to address LGBT prejudice?

Significance of the Study

This research seeks to fill a gap of research from the region about the challenges that members of the LGBT community face. The study also aims to consolidate a large body of information from a variety of different resources and platforms on the topic of LGBT issues. I intend for this study to contribute to the field by documenting practices used by practitioners to address LGBT prejudice, and inform burgeoning organizations that wish to begin work in this field of the various strategies being employed. Lastly, the focus for this research is to determine the ways in which reflective and reflexive processes can create proactive and preventive strategies that may be more inclusive, sustainable, and efficacious. I hope this research will shed some light on the strategies and echo the process that Argyris and Schön speak of when they say, “all human beings – not only professional practitioners – need to become competent in taking action and simultaneously reflecting on this action to learn from it” (1974, p. 4).

Chapter 2: Context

This section of the paper attempts to capture some of the salient socio-cultural factors and paint an overview of the political landscapes in which my research participants confront while working to address LGBTQ prejudice. I am merely providing snapshots of the larger discourse on LGBTQ issues in each country where my research is situated, and in no way do I claim to have captured the full picture of the LGBTQ movement in its entirety for each context.

China

Non-heterosexual identities have had long-standing roots in Chinese history. For thousands of years, homosexuals were written about in Chinese poetry, faced far less persecution and animosity prior to the introduction of Christian-based “Westernization” of morality, existed within all social classes, and were even admired companions to emperors (Hinsch, 1990, p. 4). The inspiration for the title of Bret Hinsch’s book, *Passions of the Cut Sleeve: The male homosexual tradition in China*, references the great devotion and love Emperor Ai had for his “favorite,” Dong Xian, in which the emperor, rather than wake his lover who was resting on the emperor’s sleeve, had cut off his sleeve. The sentiment towards homosexual love in ancient China was “one of acceptance, which accounts for the portrayal of many such men [homosexual men] as successful officials and rulers” (Hinsch, 1990, p. 27). In some parts of China, such as Fujian, same sex love was appreciated and folk tales spoke of the formation of a unique system of gay marriages (Hinsch, 1990). Hinsch (1990) points out that homosexuality and homosexual traditions of China’s past dynasties challenge our Western-centric views of sexuality and challenge our perspectives of normativity. It’s important to note that though lesbianism existed in ancient China, as suggested by literary references, such references are rare. Hinsch (1990) suggests that this could be due to the lack of freedoms accorded to women. Since men controlled the literary traditions, their lack of interest in women’s affairs would explain why little is depicted about lesbian relationships in ancient China.

When one speaks of LGBT issues in China, it’s necessary to consider the influence of Confucian philosophy. Though the Cultural Revolution did much to diminish it, Confucianism still heavily influences the ethical conventions in China. Confucianism places special importance on having children, especially male offspring, as a filial obligation in order that children continue the paternal family line (China News, 2001; China View, 2005; Collateral damage: Homosexuality in China, 2010; Feng et al., 2011). Since its introduction in 1979, the one-child policy has placed the

continuance of the family name in jeopardy; thereby intensifying the burden of familial obligation on only children. Consequently, this obligation has placed excessive pressures on members of the LGBT community to have “traditional” heterosexual marriages. It’s been reported that between 80 to 90% of homosexuals in Mainland China have prepared to marry or have married the opposite sex (China Daily, 2005).

Though homosexuality has been discussed between the lines of poetic verses throughout China’s ancient history, of recent, the subject has been pushed aside to obscurity. Just as unclear is the number of Chinese who identify as LGBT. As of 2006, the Ministry of Health figured there to be between five and ten million homosexuals between the ages of 15 and 65 (Wanli, 2010). However, leading scholars argue that the number could be between 30 to 48 million (China View, 2005; Wanli, 2010). Important to note is that these estimates do not include non-gender conforming, or transgender, peoples and may be very unreliable since few Chinese are willing to acknowledge their sexuality (China Daily, 2005).

In the early 90’s, the limited discussions surrounding homosexuality primarily revolved around curing homosexuality with electroshock therapy or medicinal herbs meant to induce vomiting. Both treatments would be used to discourage erotic thoughts and were intended to associate the painful or uncomfortable reactions with the homoerotic thoughts, thereby reducing the patients’ attractions (Kristof, 1990). Gao Caiqin, a pioneer in sex studies in China referred to homosexuality as being created by “an unhealthy mentality...It is not a sin, but it is abnormal and a mental disease, and it can be cured” (Kristof, 1990).

Political actions have served as an incremental indication that non-heterosexual individuals exist in China. In 1997, the Chinese government revised the criminal code to remove the ambiguous crime of “hooliganism”, which was alluded as the ban on private, adult, non-commercial and consensual homosexual conduct (Mountford, 2010). In 2001, China removed homosexuality from the official list of mental disorders (Mountford, 2010). However, China lacks legislation in support of same-sex marriages, civil or domestic partnerships (Mountford, 2010). In 2000, 2004, and 2006, Li Yinhe, a prominent sociologists, activists, and sexologists submitted proposals for a same-sex bill to China’s top legislature and the People’s National Congress but to no avail as the bill was dismissed in these instances (China View, 2005; Xinhua News, 2006). Anti-discrimination provisions for LGBTQ people at their place of employment do not exist even though the Chinese Labour Law explicitly protects workers against discrimination on the basis of a person’s ethnicity,

gender or religion. The ambiguity of the Chinese government on the topic of LGBT issues is reflective of their stance that is commonly referred to as the “three no’s”: no approval, no disapproval, no promotion. This stance is echoed within schools where homosexuality and gender identity are largely ignored (Mountford, 2010). Sexual education curriculum lacks references to either of these topics (Mountford, 2010).

To date, limited research has been conducted regarding members of the LGBT community in China. Two of the most cited studies were conducted in 2000 and 2008 and made use of Internet surveys, qualitative interviews, and both were small in sample size (less than 11,000 respondents for the largest survey sample), scope, and contained many limitations (China View, 2005; Xinhua News, 2006). *A Review of Homophobic Bullying in Educational Institutions* that was produced by UNESCO lacks extensive data about China. The main finding relative to the Chinese context is that students *and* teachers use the term “*cissy-boy*” to humiliate boys perceived to be lacking masculine characteristics (UNESCO, 2012b, p. 10).

Over the last 30 years China has seen a rise in activism and the emergence of civil society organizations (CSOs) that have initiated what some have termed the “quiet revolution” to address social issues and fill gaps in social services. In 1978, Deng Xiaoping implemented policy reform that opened the economic, political, legal and cultural environment that was the catalyst for the growth of civil organizations (Yu, 2003). Though late to the race, the rise of civil society and/or services organizations that work to address LGBTQ issues is no exception. In 2008, the Parents, Friends, and Family of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) China was founded and was the first Chinese organization which is formed by LGBT individuals and parents, friends, and supporters of LGBT individuals. Many other organizations exist that provide a range of activities, programs, and support for LGBT community members. Some examples of how these LGBT CSOs are assisting include: counseling and support hotlines, youth empowerment camps, grassroots organizing workshops, spaces for gathering and story telling, and resource centers (China News, 2001; ILGA Asia, 2009; Yiqian, 2013). UNDP has also supported the work of community activists and organizational leaders by hosting a community dialogue about what it is like being LGBT in China (UNDP, 2013).

Though threatened by the police to be shut down on numerous occasions leading up to the event, 2009 saw China’s first ever LGBT Pride Festival held in Shanghai. The commencement of the Pride Festival did not occur without facing challenges. Authorities had forced the

cancellation of a play, a film screening, a social mixer, and had prohibited anything resembling a parade – a component typically associated with LGBT Pride events worldwide (Jacobs, 2009). Unfortunately, the harassment by the police isn't a unique aspect of the LGBT Pride event. Police have been reported to frequently raid events, including exhibitions and lectures that focus on anything related to sexuality and gender, and consequently subject the organizers to intense interrogation (IGLHRC, 2009).

Although antigay violence is virtually nonexistent in China, the presence of censorship and institutional harassment are quite apparent. Bans exist for gay publications and plays, and even though gay film festivals have taken place in recent years, in the past they were routinely, and unexpectedly, shut down by authorities (Jacobs, 2009; Tran, 2009). Gay websites are occasionally blocked and those who try to advocate for greater legal protections for lesbians and gay men may face scrutiny from the police (Jacobs, 2009). Despite all of these setbacks for LGBT rights and equality, the gay culture is blossoming with most large cities harboring underground gay and lesbian bars – providing sanctuary and spaces to meet other members of the LGBT community.

Hong Kong

In 1991, Hong Kong saw the decriminalization of homosexuality. The initial 1991 Bill of Rights Ordinance prohibited discrimination based on various grounds, including the “other status” which alludes to SOGI without explicitly denoting it. However, at that time the ordinance only applied to government sponsored discrimination and not the private sector. In 2005, the case between Leung TC William Roy v. Secretary of Justice was interpreted to include sexual orientation. Sadly, though LGBT rights groups have lobbied to the Legislative Council to enact civil rights laws that include sexual orientation, no legislation has been ratified on this topic.

Some activists point to influence of religious conservatism as the main form of opposition for the advancement of LGBT rights in Hong Kong. The socio-political landscape of Hong Kong is reflective of the influence of religious neo-liberal groups (Ching, 2010). Ching speaks to this religious opposition stating:

Normative institutions for the regulation of sexuality including faith-based organizations and megachurches in Hong Kong and to a less successful degree in China, and government bureaucracies across the region have adopted activist strategies to act in unprecedented unison, and with great speed, triggering waves of moral panic in their

campaigns against sexual workers' movements, pornography and queer mainstreaming, in order to restabilize their stronghold and perpetuate their privileges. (2010, p. 1)

The Hong Kong Government has also taken a stance on LGBT issues by advocating for gay conversion therapy. In June 2011, the Hong Kong Government supported training sessions for government social workers that promoted conversion therapy for gays that was facilitated by the Truth and Light Commission, a commonly known conservative evangelical group (Collett, 2011). When AIDS entered the global stage, the Hong Kong socio-political landscape stood witness to dueling opposition between religious fundamentalists and heightened media attention linking the rising AIDS figures primarily to the gay community, while *tongzhi*² activist movements and public demands of sex workers contributed to new visibility within the global gay discourse (Ching, 2010).

Though research conducted on LGBT issues in Hong Kong is limited, gay culture has been flourishing in recent years. In 2009, we saw the first Mr. Gay Hong Kong competition, which has grown in size and expanded to include multiple community-building events leading up to and preceding the competition that include film festivals, parties, and seminars. The Pink Dot event “which is a free, casual and fun outdoor event for families, friends, and colleagues of LGBT to show their support for inclusiveness, diversity and love equality”(www.pinkdot.hk/index.php/en) is a recent LGBT community-building event that is a transplant riding the success of Pink Dot Singapore, which has grown steadily since its beginning in 2009. The International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) has also become an annual campaign in the Hong Kong area in which LGBT organizations and university put on lectures and events to spread awareness of homophobia and transphobia (Glauert, 2014).

Thailand

Hailed as the “land of smiles,” an “oasis of tolerance” (Liljas, 2014, p. 1), “gay paradise,” Thailand’s international reputation for being an extremely open and LGBT-friendly locale seems to be a façade that is quickly eroding as signs of intolerance and LGBT prejudice are beginning to emerge. Thailand’s Tourism Authority has created campaigns such as the ‘Go Thai Be Free’ ads in an attempt to allure ‘pink tourism’, a niche tourism market that markets to members of the LGBT community (Yongcharoenchai, 2013). While foreigners may be drawn to Thailand because

² Mandarin Chinese word which previously meant comrade but now is also used to mean queer or gay

of its image of public tolerance and as place to express themselves, for LGBT Thai nationals, conservatism and discrimination is their reality. The myth of Thailand as a “gay heaven” has been criticized as being “tolerant, but unaccepting” toward same-sex attracted individuals (Boonmongkol et al., 2013; Jackson, 1999; Ojanen, 2009). Likhiteechakul comments on the irony of Thailand’s ‘acceptance’ of the LGBT community stating: “Thailand’s superficially observed ‘tolerance’ for gays and *katoeys*³ is in fact the result of the non-confrontational culture. While disapproval of LGBT people is not worn on most people’s public sleeve, the anonymity of the Internet, however, is rife with homophobic comments made in private” (2009, p. 2).

One source of discrimination is rooted in Buddhist Karmic perceptions that people who are LGBT have committed sins, particularly adultery, in past lives and deserve low social status (Armbrecht, 2008; Jackson, 1995; Likhiteechakul, 2009; Likhiteechakul, 2008). This belief contributes to homophobia in mainstream media in which transgender people are often seen as the butt of a joke, or homosexuals are stigmatized as promiscuous (Bohwongprasert, 2012; Likhiteechakul, 2009).

The forms of discrimination go far beyond jokes or harmful stereotypes, but manifest in grave hate crimes such as murder and rape. The brutality of the murders is horrifying; victims being stabbed multiple times (one case citing 60 stabbings), strangulation, suffocation, burning victims alive, and execution-styled shootings (Poore, 2012; Liljas, 2014). The main type of discrimination targeting members of the LGBT community in Thailand typically are directed at *toms*, butch lesbians or masculine-presenting women, out of disdain for the lesbian relationship (Poore, 2012). The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) has reported that 15 murders of lesbians have occurred between 2006 to 2012, but sadly the Thailand authorities have not investigated these cases, and in most cases the offenders have not had to pay for their crimes (Poore, 2012; Liljas, 2014; *The Nation*, 2010). The police have even dismissed some of the cases as crimes of passion, the fault of the victims, or “love gone sour” (IGLHRC, 2012a; IGLHRC, 2012b; Poore, 2012; Liljas, 2014). A clear violation of the seven international treaties that Thailand has signed and ratified to guarantee the respect for human rights, these hate crimes and their subsequent inaction to seek justice have sparked outrage from the international

³ Also written as *kathoei*. Often referred to as ‘ladyboy’, the term *katoey* is a Thai term that refers to either a transgender woman (male-to-female transgender) or an effeminate gay male. The term may also be used to refer to a third gender, or a kind of man or a kind of woman.

human rights community. These incidents have led to public denouncement of the inaction on the part of the authorities, publicity of the topic, and a formal letter campaign urging the Thai government to respond to seek justice, uphold human rights, and respect the dignity of the victims (Poore, 2012; IGLHRC, 2012a; IGLHRC, 2012b).

The pervasive, yet nuanced homophobia in Thailand has boiled to the surface in recent years. Although the shutdown of the Chiang Mai Gay Pride parade in 2009 by political dissenters is alarming, Pairsarn Likhitpreechakul, a human rights activist who was restrained from participating in the parade, points to more disturbing examples of institutionalized homophobia in Thailand. Some examples include Rajabhat Institute's initiative in 1997 to reject students who are "sexual deviants" and in 2004 the Ministry of Culture's plan to get rid of the "homosexual presence" from television (Likhitpreechakul, 2009, p. 3; Likhitpreechakul, 2008; Sanders, 2005; *The Nation*, 2010). Likhitpreechakul comments on the shutdown of the Chiang Mai Gay Pride and the disturbing sentiment within the Thai government agencies stating, "Political dissenters can shut down a gay event but it's actually power-wielding civil servants who can arbitrarily shut down civil rights under the legitimacy of government" (Likhitpreechakul, 2009, p. 3).

The sexual education in secondary schools has also been criticized for perpetuating ignorance and prejudice against non-heterosexual and gender non-conforming individuals. Health education textbooks have been known to warn students against interacting with people who act like members of the opposite sex and encourage students to inform their teachers so that measures can be taken to adjust those kids' behaviors (Yongcharoenchai, 2013). Teachers can also be the perpetrators of prejudice and even violence towards LGBT youth. One example involved a teacher who publicly humiliated a gay boy in front of class, threatened him to stop speaking and acting like a girl or else she would lower his grade, and then slapped him in the face in front of the whole school during the morning flag ceremony. This was all too much for the boy to burden and he went home and attempted suicide by drinking insecticide (Yongcharoenchai, 2013).

Although the LGBT community in Thailand may be more visible in the public sphere than could be seen in other countries in the region, Thailand has been slow in establishing political and public measures to ensure equality for LGBT peoples. As recent as 2002, the Thai government stopped classifying homosexuality as a mental illness and it wasn't until 2006 that the military and some conservative colleges began admitting LGBT people (Armbrecht, 2008; Liljas, 2014).

Although Article 30 in Thailand's constitution explicitly prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, including sexual orientation and gender identity, there are no laws or provisions that have been enacted to ensure equality and non-discrimination for LGBT people (Likhipreechakul, 2009).

There are however, several signs of hope for members of the LGBT community in Thailand. Currently, there is a national debate ensuing about same-sex partnership laws and promising indications that such legislation may be pushed through thereby making Thailand one of the first Asian countries to legally recognize same-sex partnerships (Liljas, 2014). As Jetsada Taesombat, coordinator of the Thai Transgender Alliance commented on the importance that same-sex marriages: "to legalise same-sex civil partnerships would mean that we, as people with sexual diversity, can finally be recognized legally. The most important thing for me and for everyone is to be accepted as part of society" (Yongcharoenchai, 2013, p. 2). Some look to the bill for legally recognizing same-sex marriages as the catalyst for enacting additional progressive laws such as, adoption laws for same-sex couples and changing gender titles for transgender people (Yongcharoenchai, 2013). Others read between the lines of the same-sex marriage bill citing it as another covert means of discrimination against gay couples as the law would raise the legal marriage age for homosexual partners from 17 to 20, whereas the age for heterosexual couples is 17 (Hynes, 2014).

Thailand's international stance on LGBT issues originally spurned much outrage from Thai LGBT activists and the mainstream media when, in 2010, the Thai government abstained from voting in favor of UN resolutions calling for recognition of SOGI as grounds for extrajudicial killings and executions (Poore, 2013). Likely in response to such public pressures, the government began voting favorably and in 2012 it joined 85 other UN member states to vote yes on the first ever UN resolution that denounced violence and discrimination against LGBT people (Poore, 2013).

In 2013, Thailand hosted a momentous event for the Queer Asia movement when Bangkok served as the venue for *Phoenix Rising*, an International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) Asia conference. The conference was especially significant as it followed the wake of the 2010 Surabaya, Indonesia ILGA Asia conference, which protestors had abruptly halted.

2013 also produced the findings of a research undertaking between four key players (Plan International Thailand; UNESCO; the Center for Health Policy Studies, Mahidol University; and the Center for Health Law, Mahidol University) meant to document school climates in 5

provinces. The purpose for the research was to gather evidence on the scope and nature of bullying targeting students who are, or are perceived to be, same-sex attracted or transgender. The study also sought to understand lifestyle factors of secondary school student that might be linked to bullying behaviors; document existing bullying prevention and support interventions; and assess support and educational needs of LGBTQ secondary school students as well as the training needs of teachers with regards to bullying prevention efficacy (Boonmongkol et al., 2013). The findings from the research revealed that generally schools did not have anti-bullying policies, let alone LGBTQ-specific anti-bullying policies. Students being bullied, at times, sought help from teachers and in some cases the students were told it was their fault. Feminine boys protested that the punishment for perpetrators were milder than would have been sentenced had the perpetrators bullied girls. The study also found that teachers need support to learn sexual/gender diversity issues and training on ways to integrate these understandings comprehensively into sexuality education interventions. The sex education often stigmatized sexual behavior and delayed sexual debut beyond graduation. Stigmatized references to LGBTQ students as *sexually deviant* was commonly used, even when teachers were intending to speak in a positive light about LGBTQ youth (Boonmongkol et al., 2013). The study concluded with recommendations for schools, policy makers, and the society at large at ways to best address the LGBTQ prejudice. Findings from the study were presented at a consultation hosted in Bangkok and attended by representatives from government and non-governmental bodies; education, public health, and mental health specialists; LGBT advocates; and officials from embassies which have programs on related topics (UNESCO, 2013). This study serves as a model for the region for its research rigor, scale, and significant findings.

LGBT prejudice is a worldwide phenomenon and is veiled in a variety of cultural contexts and manifested in a multitude of forms. Equipped with a better understanding of the context can shed some light on how contextual factors may have influenced or helped to shape the theory of action and strategies that organizations utilize to address LGBT prejudice.

Chapter 3: Methods

Design

As my literature review illustrates, limited research has been conducted relative to describing strategies applied to the topic of LGBT issues, and especially within the context of Asia. Therefore, this study is classified as exploratory mini case studies where I have chosen to use the organizations as units for comparison to draw conclusions about the similarities and differences of strategies and the challenges faced when addressing LGBT prejudice. My reliance on using case studies for my research design is based off of the understanding that “case studies are the preferred strategy when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (Yin, 1984, p. 13).

My research study is descriptive, rather than prescriptive in nature and therefore, my intent was not to evaluate the efficacy or impact of the strategies that the organizations use for the purpose of endorsing one strategy over another. Rather, my research sought to gain a better understanding of the various strategies in use and how these strategies are influenced by contextual variables.

Population and Sampling

Purposive sampling was the sampling approach that I used to select participants for this study. The selection was also opportunistic as it relied on finding organizations with websites or documents that indicated that the organization was still actively working/implementing project, had organizational documents or a website written in English, and the organizational leadership spoke English and were willing to participate. I chose participants who would be most knowledgeable on the strategies and program implementation for each organization, which usually meant that they were either the head of the organization (or the head of a regional office), or that they were Program Managers for the organization. Most of the participants (6 out of 9 participants) are nationals of the country for which their organization works within. Participants that are foreigners for the country where the organization work, each had multiple years of experience working on a topic either directly or indirectly related to LGBT issues in the country for which they had commented on.

Table 1: Survey Responses - Research Participant Information and Organizational Characteristics

ORGANIZATION	POSITION OF PARTICIPANT(S)	SOURCE(S) OF FUNDING	CLASSIFICATION	LGBT-SPECIFIC	SCOPE OF WORK
CHINESE ORGANIZATION #1	Organization Leadership; Program Manager	Foundations/Grants	NGO	Yes	International; National; Local-grassroots
CHINESE ORGANIZATION #2	Organization Leadership; Program Manager	Government; Foundations/Grants	CBO	Yes	Local - grassroots
INGO - BEIJING OFFICE	Program Manager	INGO	INGO	No	International; National
HONG KONG ORGANIZATION	Program Manager	Government; Foundations/Grants	NGO; Social Service Organization	No	Local - grassroots
THAI RESEARCH INSTITUTION	Program Manager	Government; Foundations/Grants	Research Institution	No	National
INGO - THAI OFFICE	Program Manager	INGO	INGO	No	International; National
THAI ORGANIZATION	Organization Leadership	Foundations/Grants	NGO	Yes	National; Local - grassroots

*NOTE: in the cases where there were two participants for a single organization, I have indicated the two roles the participants play within the organization by listing them both under the “Position of Participant(s)” column

Data Collection

For this qualitative study, interviews and document review were the main sources of data. A survey was also sent to the participants in order to gather demographic information and general descriptive information about organizational activities.

A total of nine interviews were conducted with participants via Skype. Each participant was interviewed once with interviews ranging between 69 – 121 minutes in length with the average interview lasting approximately 86 minutes. Interviews were recorded using an add-on application for Skype and were exported to Express Scribe to assist with the transcription process. I transcribed the first two interviews completely and in subsequent interviews I only transcribed those portions of the interview with information more relative to the developing categories. Data was analyzed by arranging them into categories, which contributed to the emergence of the theme of invisibility.

Discussions with the interviewees, though guided by a set of pre-determined questions, were very much conversational in nature and had a considerable portion of the overall interview set aside for getting to know the background of the interviewee, how they got involved in this topic, and hear anecdotes about working in this field. I feel that the conversational interviews allowed for more authenticity in the responses that they gave me, and it has served me in the analysis of the data because I look at their strategies and theories of action as they personified them, rather than a mechanical, objective description of each strategy.

For each interviewee, I provided them with the informed consent via email in the days leading up to the interview so that they could familiarize themselves with it. During the first couple of minutes of the interview I went over the consent form and highlighted some of the main points, making sure to emphasize that though I would make use of pseudonyms for themselves and the names of their organizations, due to the limited number of organizations working on this specific topic in this particular region, that there was a chance that their organization or themselves could be identified. I also explained that the data would be used for my thesis and could be published or shared with other practitioners in the field.

In order to avoid misrepresenting the participants or the work their organization conducts, I utilized the technique of “member checking,” also known as participant verification, as

described by Rager (2005). I informed participants that prior to any form of publication, I would provide them with the transcriptions give them the opportunity to review the data and quotes gathered from our conversation should they want to clarify points to make sure I'd captured their intended meanings.

After discussing the contents of the consent form and the purpose of the research, I asked them if there were any questions they had. Only a couple of participants reiterated that they would appreciate the opportunity to review the data before being published. All of the participants consented to the interviews without any reservations. Some of the participants were emphatic about granting me the right to use their name or their organization's name, as they saw my research as an opportunity for exposure of their organization's work. I informed them that I would consider doing that, but that for the purpose of continuity, I may decide to use pseudonyms in the end. The participants understood my point and still consented to the interview.

I also conducted a review of documents that included such items as: organizational websites, articles and press releases, promotional video clips, organizational reports, and grey material produced by the organization.

Researcher Reflexivity and Positionality

My interest in the topic of this research is due in part because of my passion for social justice and career aspirations of working on advocacy for LGBT issues. At this point in my study, I would also like to point out those aspects of my identity that are intertwined with the research topic. As Wagle and Cantaffa (2008) point out, "rather than hide behind a false veil of neutrality and disembodiment, we name our identities in relation to our research participants" thereby acknowledging the need to be reflexive in the process (p. 136). My identity as a gay man is tied to the work that my participants do and provides me with the possible role of "insider" (Foster, 1994) who shares solidarity with the target audience of this research and who can identify, to some degree, with the forms of LGBT discrimination and oppression that my participants seek to address. However, my identities as a white, American also mark me as an "outsider," (Foster, 1994) who's status as a foreigner may grant me certain privileges that shield me from experiencing some of the forms of prejudice that my research participants referenced. Additionally, though society may lump my identity as a gay male in with the larger label of being

a “member of the LGBT community,” I do recognize that “research conducted by insiders cannot capture the total experience of an entire community” in that the challenges and privilege I may face in society are not representative of the challenges, needs, and privileges granted to lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender people (Foster, 1994, p. 144).

My Catholic upbringing cast a lot of judgment on the topic of homosexuality; being gay thereby equated to immorality and mortal sin. Conversely, the West is also associated with being more accepting of homosexuality, even promoting “pride” of the topic. The complexities of my identity are dredged to the surface in this regard, in which, my identity of being a homosexual serves as a dichotomy and is given greater convolution due to other aspects of my identity as a Westerner and my religious past. I did not want my personal biases to influence my participants’ responses, so during the interview process I was intent on guarding any judgments that I may have personally held about the political or religious influence that the participants may have referenced (Rossman & Rallis, 2011).

Having lived in China for two years, I did have a chance to gain a better understanding of the culture and language, even going so far as to pick up slang used within Chinese LGBT circles. However, though this shared understanding of the context helps with my analysis, during the interview I made sure to limit the expression of my understanding of Chinese culture and language so as not to “claim” understanding of, or appropriate, Chinese culture. I made sure to reveal my understanding of Chinese culture, even Chinese LGBT culture, purposively and with the sole intent of freeing up the interviewees from having to explain nuanced cultural traits at length.

I think it is important to note these aspects of my identity that intersect, and can even conflict, with the subject of my research. I make a point to draw attention to these to offer the reader a better understanding of my positionality and subjectivity with which I approached my research topic.

Limitations

Limitations for this research include:

Time: Interviews with the participants were limited to both their availability and mine.

Language Barriers: For a majority of my participants English was not their first language. Though all of the participants have fluency in English, it's possible that some of the nuanced meanings could have been interpreted differently. Additionally, I am not fluent in the mother tongue languages of the participants so there is the possibility that some vernacular, slang, or cultural component was omitted by the participants or misinterpreted on my part. I was also unable to capture the content written in the language of the host country that was posted on the organizational websites.

Inability to Conduct Observations: I did not have the opportunity or means to visit these three locales and observe the activities implemented by the organizations.

Small Sample Size: My understanding about each organization is reliant on only the document review and the accounts of a single, or sometimes two, individuals related to the seven organizations. Interviewing multiple people with varying levels of involvement with the organization would provide a more comprehensive of the strategies used by each organization, but I opted to limit the number of interviewees for each organization in favor of involving more organizations from various contexts to contribute to the comparative nature of this research.

Limited knowledge of China, Hong Kong, and Thailand: This was my first time conducting a comparative study within these three contexts. I have a very limited understanding of Chinese/Han, Hong Kong/Cantonese, and Thai culture.

Chapter 4: Findings, Discussion, and Implications

Portraits of the Organizations

The following descriptions for each organization are based on the document review that I conducted. By no means a summation of all of the activities and facets of the organization, these portraits merely provide a general understanding of the goals of each organization, what they see as the purpose for their work, and a short description of the activities they implement relative to addressing LGBT prejudice or supporting the LGBT community.

Chinese Organization #1: The work done by this organization are primarily online where they create webcasts and documentaries to promote LGBT culture and advocate on LGBT issues in Chin. This organization also organizes offline public events to support the LGBT community and promote LGBT culture in China. The organization's expertise in filmmaking has also led to workshops that the organization facilitates to provide young filmmakers with the skills to create powerful documentaries.

Chinese Organization #2: This organization primarily focuses their work on HIV/AIDS prevention and testing. The organization also provides counseling services for recently diagnosed AIDS patients. The organization also provides a support hotline that is run by volunteers from the LGBT community. The organization is situated within a large capital city in South West China. The work that the organization does at the university-level is primarily to support networking amongst LGBT groups. The organization has supported more than 10 LGBT groups, as well as 6 LGBT university student groups at the larger universities in the Chengdu area.

Hong Kong Organization: The organization has over 75 years of history as a social service provider, but the branch responsible for addressing the needs of the LGBT population started 6 years ago and is the only social service provider for members of the LGBT community and their parents in Hong Kong.

Intergovernmental Organization - Bangkok Office and Beijing Office: An intergovernmental organization with offices all over the world, the two locations that

participated in this study were the South East Asia Regional Office located in Bangkok, Thailand and the China Country Office located in Beijing. The branch of the organization that participated in this study primarily deals with HIV prevention and health promotions. The organization's efforts for HIV prevention are through outreach programs targeting MSM and transgender people. Though a large part of the work that the organization does in health promotions is meant to target the education sector, work done on HIV prevention in schools is quite limited.

Thai Research Institute: The institute is composed of a consortium of researchers who specialize in public policy analysis, education, social services, and public health. Their work focuses on conducting school climate research and advises the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Public Health.

Thai Organization: The organization's genesis grew out of the efforts of lesbian feminist activists who advocated for lesbian issues to be incorporated in the women's movement and the society at large. The organization is the first organization in Thailand to advocate for LGBTI human rights. Past projects have sought to address discriminatory school acceptance practices. Recent efforts have focused on campaigning on the topic of marriage rights in Thailand. The mission of the organization is to promote justice and equality on the topic of genders and sexuality issues in Thailand.

Theme: Negotiating Invisibility

In this section, I begin by presenting the overarching theme of **invisibility** that emerged from the interviews. After a description of the theme, I will describe the categories of challenges that reflect contextual influences and from which the theme of invisibility emerged. Next, I describe the strategies that the organizations have developed as a result of, and/or informed by, the challenges of the contexts.

For the purpose of readability and succinctness, I've opted to include the **Discussion** and **Implications** within this section following the description of each strategy. I feel that this is preferable rather than pushing it off into a later chapter where the references made to each strategy could lead to confusion.

By far the most salient theme that stood out in my research was the concept of invisibility – the ways in which members of the LGBT community in China, Hong Kong, and Thailand are unseen,

hidden, alienated and/or excluded from society. Before presenting the interview findings, I think it's important to point out the ways that the literature foreshadowed the emergence of the theme of LGBT invisibility from my findings and how it contributes to, and is synonymous with, LGBT prejudice. Below, I present illustrative portrayals of the theme of invisibility that can be found in the literature in order to serve as a point of reference for the lived narratives and articulation of invisibility that emerged from the interviews with the participants.

A point that continually came up in the literature was the lack of legal recognition of LGBT people – a much more tangible form of discrimination. The following excerpts demonstrates this common theme found in the literature:

As Commissioner for the National Human Rights Commission, Tairjing Siriphanich, stated: "People of different sexual orientations have always been in a grey area. We [society] can accept them at some unofficial level, but when they want to legalise it, that is not easy to do since public opinion might not be in favour. (Yongcharoenchai, 2013, p. 2)

The literature points to different manifestations of invisibility. There are the institutionalized, direct forms of discrimination that selectively target the LGBT community by restricting their human and legal rights in ways that are clearly defined. Another manifestation of invisibility are the passive forms. The excerpts below demonstrate these concepts:

Although homosexuality in China has never been defined as illegal, homosexuals have had to endure the silent scorn and ridicule of "normal people." Sex in the West has become a crucial topic of discussion in political studies, sociology, history, and philosophy, whereas in China it remains obscured in shadows and is not regarded by people as a topic suitable for civilized public discussion. (Li, 1998, p. 28)

Invisible violence is more harmful than visible violence. At least there are ways to prevent and treat physical violence. But there is no way to prevent invisible violence. Once it wounds the heart, it is difficult to heal. (Yongcharoenchai, 2013, p. 3)

When referencing rights, the participants for this study often referenced these passive forms of invisibility – the exclusion, omission, and marginalization. One participant referenced the inequality of human rights as signified by the lack of voice for the LGBT community:

As I told you, China...to be LGBT is not illegal, but it's not legal as well. That means that the Chinese culture, they have a long history of LGBT persons, or LGBT people, but they don't talk about it. That means you can exist, but you cannot talk to me. That means you cannot claim your rights to me.

(Chinese Organization #2, Participant #1)

The same participant went on to explain how LGBT prejudice is defined in a Chinese context as compared with the West. Below are the participant's remarks on the topic:

Although, China is not as homophobic as the Western world because people do not physically hurt you much...They just don't care about you...We call Chinese homophobic way as a quiet violence. They don't care about you. They treat you like you are nothing, you don't exist – that's what we think, the Chinese way...You don't even have a chance to talk about it. If you want to talk about LGBT issues people say that: 'I don't want to talk about that. I don't want to hear that.'

(Chinese Organization #2, Participant #1)

As we progress forward in these findings, building a better understanding of the formation and implementation of strategies used in non-Western contexts to addressing LGBT prejudice, it is important to reflect on what this quote speaks to, which is, that LGBT prejudice can be pervasive but not always easily distinguishable. The following findings section lays out the various categories that emerged during the research. These categories point to the challenges that practitioners have both confronted and been influenced by, in their attempts to address LGBT prejudice. Given a better understanding of these challenges, we can also gain a better understanding of the manifestations of LGBT invisibility.

"We call Chinese homophobic way as a quiet violence. They don't care about you. They treat you like you are nothing, you don't exist – that's what we think, the Chinese way."

(Chinese Organization #2, Participant #1)

Challenge: Censorship and Negative Portrayals of Homosexuality in China

In China, both organizations cited the lack of positive representations of homosexuality in the media as a motivation for their work. Strict censorship by the government of television, film, and radio contribute to the difficulty of promoting positive messages about the LGBT community. One participant spoke to the effects of media censorship saying:

It's not, still not, very visible [referring to the LGBT community] because we have this kind of censorship on the media, so the censorship are – this one big part is like any homosexual content cannot be shown on TV or movies, so I think that's also a big thing to kind of, how to say – stop people, to understand, to know about the LGBT people because there's not any image in the mainstream media, or TV, or movies.

(Chinese Organization #1, Participant #2)

In the cases where LGBT issues are depicted on mainstream media, they tend to alienate or stigmatize members of the LGBT community. Participant #1 from Chinese Organization #1 reflects on this issue stating, “the only times that it [LGBT issues in China] would be featured on TV or newspapers would be mostly a kind of negative way...LGBT people would still be portrayed as hooligans or sick people.”

Strategy: (Web)sites of Empowerment / Flash Mobs of Awareness: Tools for Claiming Space in Society

Organizations in China have looked to online platforms to promote LGBT culture, raise awareness about issues affecting the LGBT community, and promote “more empowering images of LGBT people” (Chinese Organization #1, Participant #1). Chinese Organization #1 has relied on using webcasts as a tool for increasing the visibility of LGBT issues in China. Playing off of the Chinese cultural interest in talk shows, Chinese Organization #1 modeled their first webcasts after a talk show format. However, over time they favored a more documentary-style, one that the organization leadership felt would forge a stronger emotional connection with the audience.

Organizations rely on online forums to serve as platforms to post webcasts, videos, news clips, and publicize events. One reason why there is such a reliance on the online presence is because the Internet poses a harder challenge for government censorship. One participant comments on this point:

The Internet was still a place where you could actually show LGBT-related content without being deleted from the Internet straight away. So, in that way, it was a good format because you could reach potentially, like, millions of people and it wasn't as closely censored as magazines, or books, or films, or TV, or whatever.

(Chinese Organization #1, Participant #1)

Chinese Organization #2 has relied on the Internet to compliment their activities and serve as a conduit to spread their message. Orchestrating small (5-8 people) 'parades' on the university campus for highly generic events like World AIDS Day, the organization makes sure their logo and name is visible. In doing so, the organization feels that it provides a discrete way for LGBT students and their allies to learn about the organization and that later, perhaps in private, the LGBT students can search for the organization online to learn more. This strategy of discretely publicizing the organization under the guise of a larger generic event allows for audience members who may identify as LGBT to be directed to resources and contacts for the organization without the risk of publicly exposing their sexual orientation or gender identity. The result of this strategy may have large benefits of spreading awareness about issues affecting the LGBT community and forging LGBT community networks, but as He Xiaopei, an LGBT activist in China points out, it could also yield positive impacts on the individual for "when you find that you are not alone, that there's a group of people just like you, it gives you the confidence to be yourself" (He Xiaopei as quoted in Yiqian, 2013, p. 2).

The same organization has also utilized the Internet to disseminate the information presented during a small-scale flash mob. The flash mob involves volunteers who wear shirts or have small signs with information to debunk commonly held negative myths/stereotypes about members of the LGBT community, or they may have information that promote positive aspects about LGBT culture. The organization selects locations, such as large subway stations, with easily accessible entrances and exits. These flash mobs are small in number (less than 25 people), which the organization believes minimizes the chances of attracting the attention of authorities, thereby minimizing the risk to volunteers of being apprehending. One unique component of this form of advocacy is that it serves as a display of allyship by involving volunteers that are both gay and straight. The organization's intent is for bystanders to take pictures and videos about the flash mob and when the photos get posted online; incidentally, the information presented during the flash mob also gets widely disseminated. To ensure the likelihood that the

information is spread online, efforts are made by the organization to plant photographers in the crowd to take pictures and post them.

Discussion and Implications

From the literature review, document review, and interviews, it was established that the context of China, with its strict censorship by the government, creates a context in which the LGBT identity is either unseen in the media or falsely represented. In general, when considering the strategies being utilized, one must reflect on *where*, in society, are efforts being focused. In this case, the strategies being utilized by the two organizations in China are meant to combat censorship by circumventing the dominant forms of censorship – the organizations are not strategizing to get positive representations of LGBT people on the mainstream media (i.e.: television, radio, magazines); they are not directly trying to draft anti-discriminatory policies that mainstream media would have to abide by; they are not combating the censorship where its power is greatest by creating an LGBT television station. Rather, they are taking the battle to digital platforms – arenas that are less regulated. It's important for practitioners to reflect on what the online forums, websites, and formats for disseminating information represent – they represent claims for space; space to have voice and also to claim personhood – to no longer be invisible. In the same manner, their offline activities are claiming space in public spheres. The use of the flash mob format is an intrusive, but not overtly obtrusive, interruption of public spaces. The flash mob format with its volunteers emerging from the crowd – previously unseen, now clearly visible – is a symbolic representation to society that members of the LGBT community coexist in such spaces but refuse to remain hidden in the shadows.

These strategies uncover points for reflection for practitioners and activists that can help to inform their practice. One point of reflection is how claiming safe spaces in society could help to build agency amongst the members of the LGBT community. This leads to the next question to address: Where/what are the safe spaces in these particular contexts? Online? Offline? If offline, then where exactly? At educational institutions, or in densely populated public spaces? And, if the strategy seeks to build agency, then how can practitioners capitalize on the networks that currently exist to yield a greater impact? What is the nature of the networks that are forming online? What are the types of discussions occurring within these digital spaces? Additionally, the strategies above challenge practitioners to consider what are the barriers for addressing the censorship directly. Taking into account the context and the risks involved, what are the

avenues for dismantling the censorship mechanisms? Is dismantling such mechanisms even possible? Reflecting on these questions could provide insight into the ways in which practitioners could serve the LGBT community better. Are identities in the online networks providing perspectives of the LGBT community members that tend to go unheard? Are these networks inclusive of all voices within the LGBT community? The answers to these questions could inform the direction for subsequent strategies such as the need for stronger policy advocacy, support groups, or inter-group dialogue to compliment the online activism.

Strategy: Avoiding the Foreign Press and Keeping Activities Small

According to Participant #1, the films and webcasts that Chinese Organization #1 had created hadn't been promoted highly on mainstream media. In fact, only on a few occasions did TV stations unexpectedly use clips from the organization's productions, without any effort to obtain consent. The TV stations went so far as to blot out the logo for the organization. However, Chinese Organization #1's interaction with mainstream media in the events surrounding Mr. Gay China reveal why some organizations encounter issues with hosting events, while also offering a strong strategy for executing successful events.

In 2010, as the Mr. Gay China began to gain visibility in the public eye, and the event had begun to be promoted on foreign and Chinese media, the competition was suddenly shut down by Chinese authorities. The reason authorities had given for shutting down the event: that the proper permit paperwork for a show with performances hadn't been filed. The event organizers contested this ruling, maintaining that they'd filed the paperwork days in advance (Chang, 2010). Participant #1 from Chinese Organization #1 clarifies their organization's role with the event and paints an explanation that alludes to why the event was shut down:

We first made a news item in which we interviewed organizers of Mr. Gay China, in which we also encouraged people to apply and enter the competition. So, at a certain point just before Mr. Gay China was going off, or was, yeah, about to happen, it suddenly got picked up by foreign and Chinese media.

Participant #2 from Chinese Organization #1 reveals one strategy that they believe has led to the success for their organization's past events – events that hadn't been shut down. Participant #2 points out that “huge” events tend to get shut down and when asked to clarify what they meant by “huge,” Participant #2 explained that “huge means they get involved with a lot of media coverage.” The participant elaborated, pointing out that the Chinese government is especially

concerned with the foreign media outlets. Herein lies the strategy that Participant #2 draws

“I think Western media is definitely a poison for events.”

(Chinese Organization #1, Participant #2)

from their experiences, stating that: “I think it’s been mostly also people being shutting [sic] down when big things involve with [sic] too many Western media. Yeah, I think Western media is definitely a poison for events.”

Avoiding “huge” events that involve the foreign press, Chinese Organization #1 has found much success promoting their events through “informal contacts with people at bars” and conducting offline-screening premieres for each episode that they created (Chinese Organization #1, Participant #1). Making use of resources within the LGBT community, the organization has hosted premieres at gay bars and the Beijing LGBT Center. The organization sees themselves as a “queer media institution” thereby, serving as a resource and platform to promote the videos produced by other pro-LGBT organizations, such as PFLAG (Parents and Families of Lesbians and Gays) (Chinese Organization #1, Participant #1). Participant #1 attributes their success of building a large network of people from which to work with, and inspiring new organizations to create their own independent webcasts, as a result of cross-promoting the work (i.e.: videos) of other organizations on their website.

Chinese Organization #2 echoes a similar lesson about keeping their activities small. One such example is how the organization keeps their ‘parades’ on campus limited in numbers. Participant #2 states, “once you have so many people in the parade you will become a very [sic] big news on campus, so once it comes to a [sic] big news on campus the leaders of our university will talk to you. It’s not a good news.” In the cases where the promotion of an activity gains too much attention, the approach of promoting online can serve as a deflector of responsibility. Participant #2 from Chinese Organization #2 explains that, “if the activity grow bigger [sic] enough to lead to the leadership of our university to know that, we can say: ‘It’s a kind of trick, or it’s a fake one.’ So, they cannot say things to us, or they cannot get someone in trouble.”

Although both organizations did offer words of caution about the tactic of involving the foreign media, Chinese Organization #1 has focused special effort towards providing an English version of their website and adding English subtitles to the videos that they produce and post on their

website in order to inform those abroad about current LGBT issues in China. This programmatic decision also intends to build contacts for the organization with the global LGBT movement.

Discussion and Implications

These strategies reflect yet another way in which organizations have had overcome censorship. In these cases, the organizations have had to negotiate the goal of gaining more visibility for LGBT issues and culture, but not drawing so much attention to their actions that they get shut down. It's a dilemma created by the censorship of the context whereby the organization essentially must straddle visibility with invisibility – trying to push the boundaries for the societal acceptance of the LGBT community, but risking reactions that could be at the cost of the entirety of the organizations' efforts. Comments made by these organizations during these interviews reflect the belief that the best course of action was to stay small and promote their activities at the grassroots level. However, this strategy, and the dilemma it addresses, reveals another point of reflection for practitioners – one which requires us to address the question: What is the cusp of “huge” events/activities and when is the negotiation to make activities smaller come at the deficit of sustaining the queer movement?

Another point for reflection relative to those practitioners from the West that wish to contribute to the queer movement in Asia (myself not excluded) is that we must evaluate how our involvement may bring about unnecessary, even detrimental, attention to an organization's events. Equipped with this understanding, Western practitioners involved in the queer movement in Asia must critique our own involvement, or intentions, and we must be willing to put our egos aside when we are asked to not participate in events.

Two unique characteristics of the strategy used by Chinese Organization #1 was how the organization collaborated with gay-friendly businesses to host events and the way they used their website as a resource for promoting the work of other LGBT organizations. This approach could be interpreted as building agency within the LGBT community. The spaces created at these events served as forums for sharing narratives of various lived experiences for members of the LGBT community, thereby building a better understanding of the ways in which LGBT prejudice manifests in that context, and possibly informing the practitioner's strategic planning in a way that is more inclusive of such narratives. However, one implication for positioning an organization's effort within LGBT spheres of influence is that it limits how the work engages and can be approached by the larger society. If the purpose of the strategy is to address the ways in

which invisibility of LGBT people contributes to LGBT prejudice, then the strategy should build in ways to recruit heterosexual, and/or cis gendered, allies in order to truly address the oppression. Herein lies a point of reflection that is influenced heavily by Freire's notions of challenging oppressive systems and striving for liberation when he says:

In order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation, which they can transform. This perception is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for liberation: it must become the motivating force for liberating action. Nor does the discovery by the oppressed that they exist in dialectical relationship to the oppressor, as his antithesis – that without them the oppressor could not exist – in itself constitute liberation. (Freire, 2000, p. 49)

Addressing LGBT prejudice is not a battle that only members of the LGBT community should take up, such an approach, as Freire's work emphasizes, won't adequately address the systems of oppression because it won't be challenging the oppressor's positions and exertions of power. It can be argued that in order to achieve the greatest strides towards equality, the queer movement must involve the oppressors; it must involve heterosexuals and cis gendered allies. The implication here being that strategies should not only address how LGBT people are invisible in society, but also how engaging, challenging, and involving heterosexual and cis gendered identities/allies may *not* be visible in the strategic planning and/or implementation.

Challenge: Lack of Parental Support

Hong Kong's strong cultural ties to Confucius teachings contribute to the pressure parents place on their children to marry and have children. As seen through a Confucian lens, "homosexuality threatens the principle of human reproduction: Confucianism emphasizes that people should procreate to carry their family bloodline" (Feng, 2011, p. 559). This familial obligation makes it considerably difficult for LGBT youth to come out to their parents and often times may be answered with much disapproval.

Additionally, the parents of LGBT youth internalize the strong social stigmas associated with homosexuality and may find it difficult to deal with their role as a parent of an LGBT child. The following passage demonstrates this issue:

A part of the society has a very strong view on that [homosexuality], like saying that homosexuality is a kind of sin, and then people will get AIDS, all these sorts of stigmas. So, primarily the stigma attached to the gay people, but as parents, particularly the Chinese parents, have a very strong link to their children so if the society considers the

children as a kind of sin, or kind of problem, kind of failure – the parents will also take that into their self-identity.

(Hong Kong Organization Participant)

Strategy: Creation of Parent Support Services

In response to the rejection that LGBT youth may receive from their parents when they come out to them, or to support those parents who are having a hard time adjusting to their child's sexual orientation, the organization in Hong Kong has found it necessary to support the LGBT youth by providing support services for their parents. The organization claims the parental support services are considered to be one of the most important "community treasures" of their project.

When asked why the parent support service is such an important part of their project, the participant explained that although Hong Kong does have some other gay organizations, for some reason the parents don't trust them. One possible explanation could be related to the nearly 75 years of experience that the Hong Kong Organization has in providing social services. The participant explained that many of the parents of the LGBT youth might have actually been to their center when they, themselves, were children – to use their services or play – and this could have built in attachment and/or trust in the organization. The participant from the Hong Kong Organization went on to clarify that "because we are a mainstream organization, we are not a gay organization, so parents will think that we are neutral and because we are social workers, they think that we are professional."

The organization also points to their message to LGBT youth and their parents as a key to success. The participant explains their approach in the following quote:

When we talk about how we work with parents we'll say that we are not in a position to persuade, like often, parents will ask us to change their children – we will refuse that, but on the other way, we are also not in the position to help the children to change the parents so that the parents will accept their children. What we perceive our position is to help both to have a mutual understanding with each other and have a better relationship.

(Hong Kong Organization Participant)

The organization feels that by packaging this message of "mutual understanding" in a way that doesn't challenge one's parenting and isn't perceived as being confrontational, can yield a more

receptive response from the parents. The Hong Kong Organization Participant describes this approach as an attempt “to appeal to their [the parents’] empathy. And then, people could understand, and then at the same time we convey the message in a very affirmative way.” Coincidentally, the participant felt that their message and how it’s packaged, when compared to the more aggressive ways in which other gay organizations problematize the parents for not completely accepting their LGBT children, seems to have minimized any critiques and attacks that the organization may have received from the church.

Discussion and Implications

The strategy used by the Hong Kong Organization to provide parental support services brings with it valid points of discussion around the negotiation of scope for a strategy. Per the participant’s comments above, one notes that parents may associate homosexuality with sin, which could be reflective of the strong influence of the Church in the Hong Kong context. Here we see two contributing cause agents of invisibility – the judgment of the Church and the judgment of parents. The Hong Kong Organization recognizes the power and influence that the Church has within the public and private sector (points that are echoed within the contextual description of this paper which denote the government-sponsored, but religiously affiliated conversion therapy trainings of social workers). Considering this point, the organization has made a strategic decision of scope to not engage with the *invisibilizing* factor of the Church. They have been very calculated in the way in which they frame their work so as not to confront issues with the Church. Rather, the organization saw an entry point by way of their long-standing history of serving the community. This relationship between the organization and the community allowed them access to, and receptiveness by, parents of LGBT youth. By supporting the parents, the organization was actually addressing a direct cause for invisibility – the parental judgment that could cause an LGBT youth to not claim their identity within their familial circle – by creating safe spaces for mutual understanding, awareness, and learning. Additionally, it is important to note that the organization could have created a support group that would indirectly address invisibility by supporting those being invisibilized (the LGBT youth) but it would fail to attack a source for invisibility (the parents). Instead, the organization has taken a strong stance in supporting the parents, and by default addressing a cause for LGBT invisibility.

The legacy and composition of the Hong Kong Organization is another important concept for practitioners to reflect on. The organization has garnered a trusting relationship with the

community by way of years of professional and respected delivery of social services that has enabled them to engage with community members in ways, and on sensitive topics (i.e.: LGBT issues), that other organizations would find it difficult to do. Additionally, the neutrality of a social service organization versus an LGBT-specific organization seems to be a key factor that the organization attributes to the receptivity from parents of LGBT youth to listen to them, whereas the parents would otherwise feel that bias of LGBT-specific organizations would be working against them and their parenting would be subject to attack.

Challenge: Lack of Ministry-level Buy-in

In China, the Intergovernmental Organization – Beijing Office explained that the Ministry doesn't consider homophobic bullying to be a problem. The organization's approach to advising the Ministry is not solely for the purpose of convincing the Ministry to include more information about sexual orientation issues in the curriculum, rather the organization prefers to focus their conversations on convincing the Ministry to recognize a broad framework for sexuality education, which encompasses and serves as an entry point for discussing SOGI. In response to pleas to address sexuality education, the Ministry usually replies with the following two responses: The first is that they think sexuality education is too narrow and that it is already adequately captured in the current national health education curriculum. The second argument is that Ministry-level officials don't think that sexuality is as big an issue, even amongst university students, as the organization claims it to be. Consequently, when the organization tries to present data regarding sexual behaviors, including relevant research on the topic of sexuality, the Ministry-level officials question the validity of the research stating that the ministry or the Chinese government didn't conduct it. Accordingly, when the Ministry of Education isn't receptive to including sexuality education as a way to make the national curriculum more comprehensive and inclusive, the result yields two negative effects: 1) sexual education can't be discussed thoroughly; 2) rules out the avenue/ability to introduce issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity.

Subsequently, the opposition of the Ministry of Education to not invest in sexual education is not due in part because the curriculum they are currently using is so thorough and effective. In fact, China doesn't currently have a national curriculum for sexuality education. One participant spoke to the quality of sexuality education in China stating:

A lot of people know that the sexual education in China is pretty bad, especially for these young people, but no one can change it because that's kind of a social norm. They think you are teaching them sexuality; you are teaching them to be gay, or something pretty bad, to them.

(Chinese Organization #2, Participant #1)

In Thailand, the Intergovernmental Organization echoed the same message of apathy to address the issue of sexual diversity in schools:

In many places, including in Thailand, the education sector will say that it's not an issue and that people are, well, first they'll say that they don't have any gay students in their schools or that the proportion is so small it doesn't make any difference and there's no reason to do a study, and then if they do agree that they might have LGBT students in their schools, they'll say they don't think that it's an issue.

(Intergovernmental Organization – Bangkok Office Participant)

Strategy: Gather More Empirical Data and Models of Successful Programs to Build a Stronger Argument

The research participant from the Intergovernmental Organization – Beijing Office expressed that one area where their organization will be placing efforts in the years to come will be to document the successes and collaborations with other organizations. The organization seeks to collect more empirical data to build an argument for the need (of sexuality education) and, “demystify some wrong beliefs held by many people that sexuality education is not possible with primary or middle schools” (Intergovernmental Organization – Beijing Office Participant). The organization wants to show policy-makers and school administrators that there *are* programs that are have been active for years and are showing signs of success on the topic of teaching more inclusive sexuality education curriculum. This approach of building a better argument by way of more empirical evidence and examples of successful models is an initiative shared by both offices of the Intergovernmental Organization. As the Bangkok Office Participant put it:

It's important to us to see what's going to move the ministries...for the Ministries of Education, it's not necessarily the health aspect that's going to be most interesting, for them. But, the issue of; finding what is the argument that will move them and I think that some of the education, participation, performance, you know the outcomes of all of the countries, you know – everywhere, are interested in what their young people are going to do next and how education is equipping them to contribute to society; to contribute to the economic performance of a country, employment, etc.

The participant from the Intergovernmental Agency – Beijing Office suggested that the best way to gather data relative to LGBT issues in schools would be if the data collection purpose isn't focused solely on LGBT, but framed under a larger study theme. In this particular case, the participant cited "harmonious schools" as one study theme that their organization thinks could capture data for LGBT issues in education.

The Intergovernmental Organization – Bangkok Office Participant spoke to the difficulty of getting access to schools in order to gather data specifically on the topic of HBT bullying. Similar to their counterparts in China, the Bangkok Office found that the best way to get access to the schools was to couch the study under a larger theme, in their case, they couched it as a study on bullying and violence in general with HBT bullying accounting for one aspect of a study that had many other parameters (i.e.: bullying because you came from a rural area, bullying based on darker/lighter skin color, etc.). As the Intergovernmental Organization begins rolling out programs to collect data, the Bangkok Office Participant brought up a very important point that could be a concern for practitioners in the field to get behind and address. The Participant stressed that a big challenge that they've confronted with the research process is that researchers are not using universal instruments, asking the same questions, or employing the same research methods. Consequently, this has led to difficulties in comparison and analysis of findings from different locales.

Discussion and Implications

What is the argument that will get the Ministries of Education to take action and address LGBT prejudice in schools? – That is what the Intergovernmental Organization – Bangkok and Beijing Offices have set their sights on determining. This organization sees their avenue for addressing LGBT prejudice within the educational systems of both countries by way of advocacy within the Ministries of Education. Efforts put forth to gather additional empirical data and models of successful projects under the framework of larger, more generic themes are what the organization feel will allow for less opposition during the collection process, and ultimately is assumed to motivate ministerial buy-in and action to address LGBT prejudice. This strategy to push the Ministries of Education to respond to the needs and address the challenges that LGBT people encounter schools echoes the same criticisms towards governmental inaction that human rights practitioners in the region have begun to express. The quote below demonstrates this shared vision of activism:

The Human Rights Commission needs to be more proactive and visibilize violence and denounce stigma,” says IGLHRC regional program coordinator Grace Poore. “And local NGOs need to press the government to eradicate violence against LGBT people. (Liljas, 2014, p. 2)

While reflecting on this strategy, one concerning aspect emerges which is that responsibility seems to have fallen on the LGBT community to come up with the evidence of the forms of oppression they face; the oppressed have to burden, as well as solve the oppression, while the government absolves itself of allyship. Some questions I pose that could alter the strategy to some degree include: Would it be fruitful to teach ministry-level officials the notions of intersectionality, which would open up discussions to the concept of allyship? Should efforts be focused towards Informing ministry-level officials about what allyship looks like, and how one cannot claim allyship but must continually evaluate the ways in which their actions may be an exertion of privilege, and/or oppression? By centering efforts on the idea of allyship, programming would encompass forms of bullying and institutionalized oppression that extends beyond those directed towards the LGBT community. The allyship trainings would encompass racial prejudice, discrimination towards ethnic minorities, gender inequality, classism, etc. In doing so, such a strategy would reflect what the Intergovernmental Organization Participants spoke of in which their programming and research is more likely to be supported when framed in a broader, non-LGBT specific manner.

Challenges: Teachers’ Perceptions of SOGI and Schools as an Institutionalized Sources for LGBT Prejudice

An issue raised by the Intergovernmental Organization –Beijing Office Participant is that although the university teachers are encouraged to integrate the topic of gender diversity and gender equality into their courses, the teachers expressed that their own opinions of having a homosexual child would be those of pity for their children. The teachers expressed pity because of all of the challenges the children would face in their future life (i.e.: marriage, employment, etc.). In Hong Kong, though teachers ask the Hong Kong Organization to execute SOGI awareness workshops, the participant for this study said that it’s clear that the teachers don’t think that SOGI is a big issue. Teachers also feel that its not important to them because they don’t think it’s their profession or business to cover these topics, so they will invite a social worker to facilitate discussions on the topic.

The pity teachers have for homosexuals and/or their apathy to educate themselves and/or their students about SOGI could explain why some LGBT students don't look to their teachers as supportive resources. In some cases, LGBT youth attempt to hide their identity from their teachers for fear of the negative ramifications to their roles on campus that could follow. One participant speaks to this occurrence stating:

So, that is [the] kind of pressure from the classmates, and as for those pressures from teachers, in fact, some students cannot come out to their teacher because he [the student] wants to get some position in the university, or the college, because those positions, or those jobs, from the college they require a good fame. So, the LGBT [students] are not regarding [sic] as a good fame. It will influence the position you can get.

(Chinese Organization #2, Participant #2)

According to one participant from China, LGBT student groups are not officially recognized on campus. In China, university bulletin-board sites (BBS) are one way that universities recognize

student groups as being official. The participant for this study revealed that sometimes the LGBT student groups are not granted access to these forums. Consequently, the LGBT student groups don't have the access to services that official student organizations are entitled to, such as, planning lectures or offline gatherings on campus.

“If I were gay, I cannot do something on behalf of our school, in public, especially in the media – TV or radio...because they do not want to be the topic, the ‘hot topic’ – the headline of the newspaper that a gay can be the representative or in the leadership.”

(Chinese Organization #2, Participant #2)

In Thailand, the Intergovernmental Organization Participant commented that their research revealed a similar situation occurring in Thai schools. LGBT students in their study said that they hadn't been considered for student government position or that they were not *in* visible roles or activities that the school hosted for the public. The participant mentioned that the students had been “systematically excluded” from such roles/activities. For those events in which the LGBT students, primarily the transwomen students, were encouraged to take part in usually consisted of narrow events such as flower arrangement competitions or cheerleading that reinforced caricatures and limiting stereotypes of transwomen that are promoted widely in the mainstream media.

Through their research on school climate, the Thai Research Institute found that transgender students, and students in transition, faced exceptionally tough situations due to their transgender, or gender non-conforming identities. One such situation involved the strict uniform policy at schools in which students must wear gendered uniforms (shorts and button up shirts for males; skirts and blouses for females) during the exam period. In order to be admitted to exam testing, students must present their government-issued identification card, which lists their sex assigned at birth. Students must be wearing the gendered uniform that aligns with the sex noted on their identification card. This poses extraordinary difficulties for transgender students, or students in transition, who do not identify with their sex assigned at birth but nonetheless must dress in the gendered uniform that they do not identify with during the exam period, or else risk failing their exams. The trauma inflicted on these students and the anxiety of a process that directly rejects their claim to identity can negatively affect their performance on the exams, not to mention the psychosocial effects brought forth from institutionalized prejudice and intensified taunting and teasing from their peers. In the same study, the Thailand Research Institute also found that transgender students and/or gender non-conforming students expressed much anxiety about using bathroom facilities at their school based on previous cases of taunting, even sexual harassment, from their peers. One rare case cited that the student had actually suffered from a urinary tract infection as a result of choosing to not use the bathroom at school over excessive periods of time.

Strategy: Personify Members of the LGBT Community

One strategy to personify members of the LGBT community that is implemented in schools in Hong Kong is to invite gay teenagers to come to the schools and facilitate workshops where the gay youth talk about their experiences. In these cases where the students facilitate the workshop, social workers orchestrate the logistics and serve as liaisons between the volunteer gay youth facilitators, the organization, and the school. However, the organization hasn't always been granted permission to allow gay students to come to the schools. In these instances, the organization makes use of documentaries or drama in the workshops as a more engaging way of introducing the topic of sexual orientation.

Strategy: Flexible Uniform Policies and Gender-Neutral Bathrooms

The Intergovernmental Organization – Bangkok Office and the Thai Research Institute both cited actions that they've observed, on rare cases, in schools that have recognized implementing a

need to address LGBT prejudice, particularly transprejudice. One school had created a gender-neutral bathroom – an attempt to address the insecurity and discrimination that gender non-conforming, transgender, and students in transition have stated that they have experienced in such vulnerable spaces. Another action that the Intergovernmental Organization and the Thai Research Institute have been advocating for is to allow for flexible uniform policies that would respect the identities of gender non-performing and trans students by allowing them to choose which gendered uniform that they most identify with. This policy would be an affront to the current, rather stringent, policy of requiring students to wear uniforms that match their assigned sex at birth that is stated on their government ID.

Discussion and Implications

The functions of these strategies are meant to claim identity and address passive invisibility. Passive invisibility manifests as either not being thought of as existing, or the refusal to acknowledge one's claims to identity. The latter strategy actively seeks to break down the much larger active invisibilization of transgender oppression that occurs as a result of transgender individuals not being permitted to change their gender on their national ID's.

Chapter 5: Further Discussions and Conclusion

In response to LGBT prejudice, activists and researchers have mobilized in a multitude of ways to achieve equality and claims to personhood. Applying Argyris and Schön's theory of action schema, discussed in the theoretical foundations section of this paper, we can formulate the theory of action for the organizations in this study based on their strategies to address LGBT prejudice. This study found revealed contextual challenges that contributed to LGBT prejudice and served as barriers for organizations to support the LGBT community. Some of the contextual challenges that were revealed in this study include:

1. Various kinds of censorship by mainstream media, government, and public institutions;
2. Negative portrayals of the LGBT community in the media;
3. Authorities shutting down LGBT-related events;
4. Parental pressures and rejection that may be rooted in conservative or religious values;
5. And a lack of ministry-level support in the field of education.

In response to these challenges, and as a means of addressing LGBT prejudice, the organizations within this study have employed strategies that include:

1. Creating online platforms to connect members of the LGBT community, promote positive representations of members of the LGBT community, and disseminate information about the LGBT community;
2. Executing flash mobs to promote accurate information about the LGBT community;
3. Holding events in venues that are gay-friendly and promoting such events by word of mouth;
4. Creating parental support groups that build off of the legacy and trust earned from non-LGBT specific, social services organizations in the area;
5. Directing efforts towards collecting more empirical data in the years to come in order to build a stronger argument for the need to address LGBT prejudice.

I argue that if the strategies are a manifestation of the organization's espoused theory of action, than by understanding the strategies that the organization uses then their theory of action can be revealed. I have identified two theories of action used by organizations to address LGBT prejudice in the contexts for this study. One theory of action that is reflected in those strategies meant to address the contextual challenges of negative portrayals of the LGBT community or of censorship, as carried out by the mainstream media, the government, public institutions, involve a theory of action which hinges on claiming safe spaces (online) and/or claiming identity/space in the larger society. The strategy which seeks to address parental pressures and/or rejection are also illustrative of a theory of action meant to create safe spaces, but the purpose of these spaces are intended to be free from judgment (either on the parenting of the parents or the sexuality/gender identity of the youth) and encourage mutual understanding and increased communication between youth and their parents.

One interesting consideration that can be drawn from these findings and discussions is the idea that when asked directly to articulate their organization's theory of action to address LGBT prejudice, most of the participants found it difficult to articulate. In some cases, the participant wasn't really sure what their organization's theory of action was, regardless of the fact that they had strategies to address LGBT prejudice. Granted, most of the organizations had an organizational mission statement and values, but for many of them they hadn't considered how they see their actions contributing to change. Though my study sought to understand the organization's theory of action, I believe my research was able to initiate a dialogue about strategies and organizational goals amongst the participants. It is my hope that the interview process has triggered a reflective process that will hopefully lead to further conversations amongst a network of activists working to address LGBT prejudice about whether, and to what extent, their organizational theory-in-use, meaning the strategies being employed and actions

being implemented (i.e.: online promotions, flash mobs, parental support groups) are actually matching up with their espoused, or believed, theory of action. In the end, I argue that the exploration conducted in this research to reveal the strategies that organizations use to address LGBT prejudice could yield reflections on an organizations' theories of action, and ultimately theory-in-use, thereby addressing one of the pitfalls of activism that is referenced by Argyis in the following quote:

That they [an organization and/or practitioner] are largely unaware of these theories-in-use; and that both the unawareness and the counterproductive actions are due to highly skilled, internalized, and hence, tacit, automatic reactions. If individuals reflected on their actions correctly (which is unlikely because of their theories-in-use), they would become aware of the counterproductive aspects of their action. (Argyis, 1993, p. 27)

In the discussions and implications sections above, I have provided points for reflection for practitioners, which can help to inform the development of new strategies. Below is a summation of some of the important points made in previous sections.

Suggestions for Practice

Where are the points of reflection built into the strategic planning? What are the important points that a practitioner should reflect upon while developing a strategy to address LGBT invisibility? I argue that starting with the practitioner's own identities, identify those identities for which the practitioner is not representative of, and the recognition of the absence of such identities, can yield strategies that I argue are more inclusive. During strategic planning, it's important to include intentional moments to reflect on the invisible voices in the room and how the strategy would affect them, either supportively or detrimentally. If strategists/practitioners are not aware of the other identities/invisible identities then you are falling into the trap of passively invisibilizing identities.

Equipped with this understanding, Western practitioners involved in the queer movement in Asia must also critique their our own involvement, or intentions, and we must be willing to put our egos aside when we are asked to not participate in events. The implication here being that strategies should not only address how LGBT people are invisible in society, but also how engaging, challenging, and involving heterosexual and cis gendered identities/allies may serve as an indication of allyship, but it also could contribute to increased foreign press and detrimentally impact the strategy.

Lastly, while practitioners consider the future of LGBT activism, it is important for them to consider how youth contribute to the Queer Movement by bringing innovative, culturally sensitive, digitally relevant ideas for activism. One suggestion for practitioners that are seeking to support NGOs and CBOs that are addressing LGBT prejudice would be to provide activist trainings. Activist trainings that focus on providing LGBT activists with the skills and tools for advocating with the arts and making use of online platforms could build off of current strategies used by organizations profiled in this study. Advocacy trainings could help to establish campaigns that demystify commonly misinformed beliefs about members of the LGBT community, promote positive representations of the LGBT community, and inform communities about the rights of LGBT peoples. One type of training could be an arts advocacy training, which bridges theatre, visual arts, and music, in an effort to provide creative outlets for LGBT activists that also follows in the path set out by activists in this study that have made use of film and music to create documentaries and execute flash mobs.

Suggestions for Research

The explorative nature of this research helped to identify key strategies for addressing LGBT prejudice and how the context influenced the formation/implementation of these strategies. However, there is still much to be researched on the topic of addressing LGBT prejudice, both in Southeast Asia and around the globe. Future research could include longitudinal evaluations to determine the efficacy of strategies; their reach, influence, and the dissemination of their message. Additionally, further research could be conducted to transpose an organization's espoused theory of action with the theory-in-use, as determined by monitoring and evaluation methods, to determine to what degree they match up.

In discussions with study participants, it became clear that many of the strategies that their organizations employ are put into motion by the efforts of youth. Similarly, nearly all of the strategies seek to support or speak to youth. Considering this point, it's important to further explore what are the ways that youth can contribute to the dialogue surrounding the issue of addressing LGBT prejudice? Are youth being asked to have a seat at the table with NGOs, INGOs, and policy makers when strategic planning occurs? What are the mechanisms in place that ensure that policy makers hear the voices of LGBT youth? These questions are all important questions for further research considering that, if answered, they could influence the strategic planning for addressing LGBT prejudice.

Another topic for further research relates to the ways activists rely on online networks for building agency and providing support/information to members of the LGBT community. Research that would explore the nature of the networks that are forming online and that document the types of discussions occurring within these digital spaces could inform future strategies in order to more effectively meet the needs of the LGBT community.

Taking into account the context and the risks involved, what are the avenues for dismantling the censorship mechanisms? Is dismantling such mechanisms even possible? Reflecting on these questions could provide insight into the ways in which practitioners could serve the LGBT community better. Considering the sociopolitical contexts that may be too imposing to advocate for freedom of speech and revocation of censorship policies, it's still worth questioning what are the barriers for addressing the censorship directly and if efforts should/can be directed towards dismantling the censorship mechanisms. Such a feat would open up new avenues for widely disseminating positive/accurate information about the LGBT community. These considerations would serve as a starting point for policy analysts, international law experts, and human rights advocates interested in advocating on behalf of the LGBT community and ensuring that they are not invisible under the law or within the media.

Further research could also explore how institutions contribute to invisibility and investigate the ways in which invisibility is experienced. Lastly, future research could seek to identify layers of invisibility in a community and expand on the concept of invisibility as a factor that contributes to LGBT prejudice.

Conclusion

The contexts of China, Hong Kong, and Thailand have presented unique challenges for organizations that seek to address LGBT prejudice. This research unveils some of these contextual challenges including: censorship (as carried out by the mainstream media, the government, and/or public institutions), lack of parental support, lack of ministry-level buy-in, teachers' perceptions of SOGI, and schools as sources of LGBT prejudice. These challenges revealed a common theme of invisibility – the ways in which members of the LGBT community in China, Hong Kong, and Thailand are unseen, hidden, alienated and/or excluded from society. Through the interviews and a deeper analysis of the strategies, it became evident that the strategies sought to address concept of invisibility of the LGBT community by making use of theories of action meant to promote empowering and accurate information about the LGBT community, create safe spaces, provide claims to identity, and forge mutual understanding. Strategies reflecting these theories of action involved the creation and use of online platforms, the execution of flash mobs, the formation of parental support groups, and the personification of LGBT students. This study comes at a critical time for the global Queer Movement; a time when LGBT activism in Asia is either beginning to grow roots, searching for models to build off of, or stepping forward to contribute further to the movement, fueled by LGBT community members' claims to identity in public, especially digital, spaces. In the wake of these developments, this research provides recommendations for further research and suggestions for reflection for practitioners in hopes of creating strategies that are more inclusive and effective in promoting LGBT culture and addressing LGBT prejudice.

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