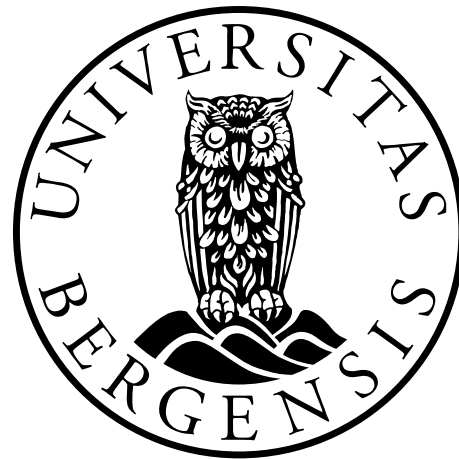


Perceptions of Gender and Sexual Minorities in Rural Thailand

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CHAPTER 1: VISIBILITY AND SOCIAL ATTITUDES

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Who can I become in such a world where the meanings and limits of the subject are set out in advance for me? By what norms am I constrained as I begin to ask what I may become? And what happens when I begin to become that for which there is no place within the given regime of truth? (Butler, 2004 p. 58)

These preceding questions are reminiscent of my own thoughts as I began to consider the position of gender and sexual minorities in Thailand. As a Peace Corps volunteer in the rural northeast of Thailand, I spent two years engaging in school and community development projects in a small town. Like many visitors to Thailand I was struck by the visibility of transgender individuals. Commonly called *kathoey* in Thai, or lady boy in English, they are sometimes described as the third sex. I typically saw several a day in ordinary places like shops or restaurants. While it first appeared that they were accepted, I noticed that they appeared to be confined to a few specific occupations. I began to consider less visible gender and sexual minorities and wonder what dynamics allowed for the visibility of some and the comparative invisibility of others. As I became increasingly integrated into the community, I realized that attitudes toward gender and sexual minorities were more complex than they appeared. As one of my students explained, “we accept, but don’t accept, there’s a space between.” This thesis is an effort to explore that space and consider how social perceptions may possibly affect the way gender and sexual minorities perceive themselves, express their identities, and envision their futures.

1.1. BACKGROUND

In the book *Gender Diversity*, Nanda (2000) emphasizes the cultural variance of sex and gender systems. Nanda explains that many cultures do not distinguish between sex and gender and that sex may not be the dominant factor in constructing gender roles and gender identity. This is the case in Thailand where sexuality and gender are classified together under the category *phet* that can simultaneously refer to “sexual difference (male

vs. female), gender difference (masculine vs. feminine) and sexuality (heterosexual vs. homosexual)” (Jackson & Sullivan, 1999 p. 5). Jackson (2000) explains that masculine/feminine opposition forms the basis of all *phet* categories and as such *phet* categories are more often conceptualized in relation to masculinity and femininity than sexuality (Jackson, 2000). Throughout this research I will use the term gender and sexual minorities to refer to people of non-normative *phet*: individuals who express identities, sexual preferences, and gender roles that differ from normative Thai identities. Specifically, this research included lesbian, gay, transsexual, and transgender study participants.

Jackson & Sullivan (1999) explain that Thailand has a “rich indigenous history of complex patterns of sexuality and gender, with an intermediate category, the *kathoey*...existing alongside normative masculine and feminine identities” (Jackson & Sullivan, 1999) p.3). Prior to the 1960s there were only three widely recognized forms of *phet*: man, woman, and the intermediate category *kathoey*. The term *kathoey* was traditionally used to describe hermaphrodites, or to refer to male or females who behaved in a manner considered inappropriate for their biological sex, and sometimes referred to the third sex. The term *kathoey* appears to have its origin in Thai and Hindu- Buddhist mythology where it represented an equal blending of masculine and feminine (Jackson, 2000). Chongwilai (2012b) indicates that sex between men has been recognized since the time of royal court where it was referred to as *len sawat* (to play at love) and Matthana (1995) points to the historical evidence of Thai female homosexuality that can be seen in temple murals or court poetry that depict sexual activity between women in royal harem and expressions such as *len phuan* that refer to sex between women (in Sinnott 1999, p. 98).

Signs of gender and sexual diversity are still prevalent today. Winter (2009) describes transgender people as “a highly visible feature of some Asian cultures.” Winter relates that Asian cultures have higher numbers of transgender people than those in Europe or North America. While there are no exact figures, Winter estimates that the number of

transwomen¹ living in Thailand is 300,000 or occurring at an approximate rate of 1 in 300 whereas estimates for male to female transexualism in Europe occurs in about 1 out of 30,000 individuals (Winter, 2009). Winter suggests several explanations for these dramatically different rates. The first is that numbers from Western countries typically may include those who have visited medical clinics, been diagnosed with gender identity disorder, or been approved for or undergone sexual reassignment surgeries. Yet in Asian countries, figures often include pre-operative, non-operative, and post-operative individuals (ibid). Winter speculates that cultural differences may also contribute to these contrasting numbers. While Western cultures tend to view gender identity variance as a disorder, Winter and Nanda point to Asian traditions and beliefs that previously held transgender people in respected roles (Winter, 2009; Nanda, 2000). Winter remarks that they have since fallen from these prestigious positions and come to occupy more marginal roles in society, often working in beauty shops, cabaret shows, and sex work (Winter, 2009). Kang (2012) views visibility as potentially beneficial in increasing social tolerance, but notes that visibility may also make people of non-normative genders more liable to be rejected by family or peers and experience discrimination in employment. In a review of literature on Thai gender and sexual minorities, Ojanen (2009) found that “although Thai society does not actively persecute sexual/gender minorities, it often limits the social space available to them” (Ojanen, 2009 p. 5). Jackson (1995) contends that attitudes toward gender and sexual minorities differ between classes and describes Thais from the lower class as the most accepting of homosexuality. However he notes that pressure of conformity in rural communities often prevents homosexuals from living their life openly. Much of the rural lower class resides in the rural northeast region known as Isan. While Isan provides significant economic support to the rest of the country through farming and cheap migrant work, this contribution is often overlooked (Mills, 2012). Social services including health care, education, and physical infrastructure are generally of a lesser standard than those provided in urban regions and Isan is often portrayed as lagging behind and associated with poverty and a lack of sophistication (ibid). As a large majority of research on gender and sexual minorities has been

¹ “Those who are assigned to the male category at birth who present in a non-male gender” (Winter 2010 p. 366)

² See chapters 3 and 5 for discussions of *riap roi*.

³ See appendix I for a chart of identities adapted from Jackson (2000).

conducted in urban areas, I decided to conduct my research in Isan in order to gain further understanding of the experience of gender and sexual minorities in this region.

1.2. AIMS OF THE THESIS

The aims of this research are to examine perceptions of gender and sexual minorities in a community in rural Thailand and consider to what degree society's perceptions of gender and sexual minorities are influential in their self-identification and the potential impact this has on the social space available to gender and sexual minorities. To do so, this thesis will triangulate the experiences related by adult gender and sexual minorities with the understandings and perceptions of students and teachers. The objectives are to investigate how individuals of gender and sexual minority groups are valued and placed within society, assess students' and teachers' understanding of how gender/sexual identity is defined and categorized, and to consider the importance of social recognition in how gender and sexual minorities perceive themselves, express their identities, and envision their futures.

To meet these I aims, I will consider the following research questions:

- What characterizes normative male and female identities in Thailand and how does this inform expected behaviors and gender roles?
- To what degree are society's perceptions of gender and sexual minorities influential in their self-identification and what characterizes the social space reserved for gender and sexual minorities?
- To what degree is social recognition important in how gender and sexual minorities perceive themselves, express their identity, and envision their future?
- How do gender and sexual minorities experience recognition and what negotiations do they engage in as they endeavor to gain recognition?

1.3. ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

This thesis has been organized in eight chapters. In the second chapter, I will present the theories and concepts that will be used to guide the analysis of the empirical material. In

the third chapter, I will review relevant literature while developing pertinent contextual information on the sociocultural setting in which this research was conducted. In the fourth chapter, I will describe my rationale for selecting qualitative research methods and reflect on my experiences in the processes of designing and conducting this research. Chapters five through eight will present the empirical findings of this research. Chapter five will discuss dominant gender norms and relate social perceptions of gender and sexual minorities. Chapter six will recount the experience of study participants as they sought to negotiate and express their identities. Chapter seven will incorporate the perspectives of study participants, peers, and teachers to consider the experiences of gender and sexual minorities in school. In the final chapter, I will present study participants reflections on recognition along with examples from previous chapters to discuss how study participants experienced recognition.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0. INTRODUCTION

An overarching theme of this research is recognition. In the following chapter I will consider relevant theories that reflect the various forms of recognition that are significant in the lives of gender and sexual minorities. The first half of the chapter will present aspects of queer theory that will be used to consider how gender and sexual minorities experience recognition in relation to gender norms, while the second half of the chapter will discuss questions of recognition in reference to both cultural and sexual citizenship. Blackwood and Johnson (2012) contend that queer theory “effectively highlights the possibilities and constraints of different systems of gender/sexuality and because it makes explicit...the relative instabilities inherent in and productive of both normative and transgressive bodies and practices” (Blackwood & Johnson, 2012 p. 442). As one of the aims of this thesis is to explore non-normative gender identities in relation to gender norms, queer theory will be useful in helping to generate a dynamic analysis of gender and sexual minorities as they engage in interactions with various social groups. Therefore the aim of using queer theory is to explore recognition on an interpersonal level. To explore how gender and sexual minorities are recognized on a broader societal level I will apply the concepts of cultural and sexual citizenship. Cultural citizenship was selected to underscore the theme of social perceptions and to help interrogate the effects of popular conceptions and media representations. Sexual citizenship will be used to examine the structural restrictions that may possibly inhibit gender and sexual minorities’ rights or perpetuate marginalization.

2.1. QUEER THEORY

Watson (2005) describes queer theory as a body of theory that explores questions of desire in relation to identity that often employs poststructuralist techniques of deconstruction to understand how the sexual subject is constituted (Watson, 2005). Watson traces queer theory’s origins to gay and lesbian rights movements and feminist and other liberal political movements, noting the influence of psychoanalytic and post-structural conceptualizations of identity, sexuality, and symbolic structures in the theory’s formation. Central questions addressed under the theory consider the constitution of

sexual identities, how these identities are enacted and in what ways these identifications function to enable and/or constrain people (ibid). Watson identifies several key theorists that were central to the initial development of queer theory citing that the term queer was first used by Teresa de Lauretis in a 1991 article “Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities” in efforts to resist what de Lauretis viewed as problematic identity categorizations and the representations they evoke (Watson, 2005 p. 71). Eve Sedgwick, another theorist influential in forming the development of queer theory, described queer as an “open mesh of possibilities” (As cited in Watson, 2005 p. 72). Watson notes, that it is important to recognize that queer theory does not refer to a single theory but rather can include many theories that are continuously developing and that use the term queer with different aims (Watson, 2005). Eng et al. (2005) describe the plasticity of queer theory as a feature. Since the meanings of queer are not determined in advance, they may be adapted to correspond to changing concerns or in response to critique. In their article, “What is Queer About Queer Theory Now?” Eng et al., (2005) explore the use of queer theory in recent years and indicate its persistent usefulness. In particular, they highlight the importance of continuing to question normalization and call for the application of intersectional approaches to queer theory. Drawing on Michael Warner, Eng et al. consider normalization as a form of social violence and explain that hegemonic social structures are maintained through the pathologization of others. Eng et al. refer to the theory’s continued use in “interrogating the social processes that not only produced and recognized but also normalized and sustained identity” (Eng et.al, 2005 p. 4). They recommend that queer theory incorporate an examination of knowledge production and disciplinary regimes, explaining that sexual hierarchies cannot be isolated from other social factors “but must in fact be understood as operating in and through them” (Eng et al., 2005 p. 11).

2.1.1. PERFORMATIVITY AND SUBVERSIVE REPETITION

Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* is often considered an iconic work in queer theory (Connell, 2009) that aimed to draw into question the heterosexism of feminist theory and to question the stability of gender categories (Butler, 1990). A significant contribution of this work was Butler’s emphasis on the performative nature of gender. Butler explains

that in the process of performing gender in the social context one is always positioning oneself in relation to real or imagined actors within socially designed perimeters. Actors are primarily engaged in this process without knowing or willing and the terms that make up one's gender are outside of oneself (Butler, 2004). Butler uses the example of drag to illustrate that gender performances are repetitive and imperfect. Gender is seen as a continued performance and is shown to have "no ontological status apart from the various acts that constitute its reality" (Butler, 1990 p.173). Butler explains that this logic pertains to all genders and argues that normative gender is also performative in that all social actors are engaged in constant efforts to repeat hegemonic norms. Drag thus reveals the fragility and constructed nature of gender and denaturalizes heteronormativity. Butler contends that, "the critical task is to locate strategies of subversive repetition enabled by those constructions, to affirm the local possibilities of intervention through participating in precisely those practices of repetition that constitute identity, and therefore present the immanent possibility of contesting them" (Butler, 1990 p. 188). Subversive repetition may then be seen as a means to question the legitimacy of heteronormativity. In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler qualifies that drag is not the only means of subverting dominant gender norms and that drag performances can in fact reify these norms. Butler explains, "drag is subversive to the extent that it reflects on the imitative structure by which hegemonic gender is itself produced and disputes heterosexuality's claim on naturalness and originality" (Butler, 1993 p. 85). Thus any gender performance that reflects this imitative structure or transgresses norms can pose a challenge to the stability of dominant gender norms.

2.2. DESIRE FOR RECOGNITION AND HEGEMONIC GENDER NORMS

In her 2004 work *Undoing Gender*, Butler continues to critically question normative conceptions of sexual and gendered life. Building upon the concept of performativity, an important theme in this work is recognition. Butler's discussions of recognition elaborate upon Hegel's claim that desire is always desire for recognition. She contends that, "to persist in one's own being is only possible on the condition that we are engaged in receiving and offering recognition" (Butler, 2004 p. 31). Butler extends this claim to consider how the norms of recognition intersect with personhood and possible identities.

One of the central aims of my research is to consider how gender and sexual minorities are recognized and to question the meaning of conferring or withholding recognition for gender and sexual minorities. Although all gender and sexual minorities may not seek recognition it is nevertheless conferred or denied through social interaction. Giving consideration to recognition is thus essential to meeting my research aims because as Butler argues, “if there are no norms of recognition by which we are recognizable, then it is not possible to persist in one’s being...and we are foreclosed from possibility” (Butler, 2004 p. 31).

Butler asserts that personhood is contingent on the desire for recognition explaining that recognition itself is dependent on our relationship to social norms “that we do not fully choose but that provide the horizon and the resource for any sense of choice we have.” (Butler 2004, p. 33). In this sense, relationships to norms are highly significant as they not only influence individuals’ perceived opportunities but also become the basis for self-understanding and social viability. As norms are “ec-static” and outside oneself (Butler, 2004), the question of recognition must be considered with reference to social interactions. With this in mind, I aim to develop an understanding of norms while giving critical consideration to how gender and sexual minorities are recognized in relation to these norms as they interact with various social groups. I will also reflect on how gender and sexual minorities relate to and perform these norms and what they achieve through these performances. In addition, it is imperative to investigate how gender and sexual minorities’ negotiations with norms may affect their self-images and envisioned futures.

Butler views interaction with norms as a relationship of necessary dependence. Norms are necessary because they continue to be reproduced and reenacted through social interaction and serve as an essential point of reference for possible identities. Accordingly, it is relevant to consider gender norms as they relate to hegemonic representations of gender since these can be seen as articulations of desired identities and may dominate the range of possibility. The concept of hegemonic masculinity was developed by R. W. Connell and is described as the currently most accepted strategy of enacting masculinity that serves to legitimate patriarchy and subordinate women

(Connell, 1995). Connell underscores that hegemonic masculinity may only be enacted by a few and there are many ways of enacting masculinity. He refers to this as multiple masculinities and describes these as subordinate to or complicit with hegemonic masculinity (ibid). The concept of hegemonic femininity was developed along with hegemonic masculinity and was later renamed emphasized femininity to recognize that masculinities and femininities are positioned differently in a patriarchal gender order (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Compliance with patriarchy was thus the key concern interrogated in considerations of emphasized femininity (ibid). In the article, “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept” Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) recognize that “gender configurations are also affected by new configurations of women’s identity and practice” as well as women’s integral role in supporting the construction of masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt, (2005, p. 848). They suggest that hegemonic masculinity should “incorporate a more holistic understanding of gender hierarchy recognizing the agency of subordinated groups as much as the power of dominant groups and the mutual conditions of gender dynamics and other social dynamics” (ibid). In light of this integrated understanding of hegemonic masculinity, I will explore the roles of both masculinities and femininities in constructing and maintaining gender norms. I would argue that the idealization of Thai femininity maintained through the concept of *riap roi*² is equally hegemonic in the Thai context and will thus refer to hegemonic masculinities and femininities throughout this thesis. The concept of hegemonic masculinities and femininities will be relevant in investigations of identity construction and can also be applied along with the concept of recognition to add depth to discussions of how gender and sexual minorities are recognized.

Another key theme explored in *Undoing Gender* is norms as a site of resistance. “Gender is the mechanism by which notions of masculine and feminine are produced and naturalized, but gender might very well be the apparatus by which such terms are deconstructed and denaturalized” (Butler, 2004 p. 42). Butler explains that, “there are advantages to remaining less than intelligible, if intelligible is understood as that which is produced as a consequence of recognition according to prevailing social norms... if I

² See chapters 3 and 5 for discussions of *riap roi*.

have no desire to be recognized within a certain set of norms, then it follows that my sense of survival depends upon escaping the clutches of those norms by which recognition is conferred” (Butler, 2004 p. 3). Following, negative recognition or recognition as non-normative may prompt either conformance to or transgression of norms. Thus it is important to consider the type of recognition gender and sexual minorities seek and experience and whether their actions could be characterized as conformance or transgression. “If the schemes of recognition that are available to us are those that ‘undo’ the person by conferring recognition or ‘undo’ the person by withholding recognition, then recognition becomes a site of power by which the human is differentially produced” (Butler 2004, p. 2). It is through this lens that I would like to consider the meaning of recognition for gender and sexual minorities. To gain understanding on the experience of recognition for gender and sexual minorities I will reflect on the ways they are or are not recognized and what implications this has for the way gender and sexual minorities perceive their opportunities and possibilities.

2.3. CITIZENSHIP

Questions of recognition are also essential to discussions of citizenship. Discussions of citizenship often evolve from T.H. Marshall’s renowned work on “Citizenship and Social Class” (1964) that understood citizenship to be evolutionary and cumulative and traced the expansion of citizenship rights from civil to political then social (Marshall, 1964 in Pakulski, 1997). While considered a pioneer study, Marshall’s work is often met with critique. B.S. Turner, another key citizenship theorist, viewed Marshall’s theory as flawed because Marshall’s basis of citizenship is homogenous and only considers social class divisions without considering ethnic or cultural diversity. Turner also finds fault with the idea of cumulative and evolutionary rights, which he considers idealistic, and asserts that Marshall neglects key components of citizenship rights such as cultural rights (Turner, 1997).

Turner (1997) defines citizenship as “a collection of rights and obligations which give individuals a formal legal identity and a particular cultural identity” (Turner, 1997 p. 5). Turner explains the sociological origin of citizenship studies, attributing their emergence

to a desire to understand how the institutions of citizenship function to protect individuals from the negative outcomes often associated with the transition to capitalist societies. The principles of scarcity and solidarity form the basis of Turner's theory. He explains citizenship can be seen as a means to control access to scarce resources in society. Resources are not limited to economic resources but refer also to cultural and political resources. This rationale sheds light on why the terms that define citizenship are so often contested and why the allocation of resources can involve processes of inclusion and exclusion. Turner explains that in a society with wide social inequality, citizenship can function to build social solidarity upon common values and identities (Turner, 1997). However this can also foster negative or exclusionary practices of citizenship concerned with policing borders. Turner applies Max Weber's term social closure, to describe a fear of outsiders or diversity, which he maintains may also contribute to solidarity. These processes of inclusion and exclusion are important in determining who has access to economic and cultural resources (ibid). In order to paint a more nuanced picture of how gender and sexual minorities are involved in these processes, I will explore their experiences in relation to cultural and sexual citizenship.

2.3.1. CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP

Turner remarks that citizenship struggles in the 20th century were increasingly about cultural identity and sees the cultural component of citizenship as essential to citizenship studies (Turner, 1997 p. 9). Pakulski (1997) describes citizenship rights as growing to encompass cultural rights "that involve the right to symbolic presence, dignifying representation, propagation of identity, and maintenance of lifestyles" (Pakulski, 1997 p. 73). Pakulski views cultural rights more as negotiated claims than legal entitlements and suggests that these claims can "deepen" citizenship. She identifies three themes upon which claims to citizenship rights can be made: symbolic presence and visibility, dignifying representation, and propagation of identity. She argues that full cultural citizenship not only includes legal, political and socioeconomic rights but also concerns symbolic representation and cultural recognition (Pakulski, 1997, p. 80). In sum Pakulski contends that, "cultural citizenship involves the right to be 'different', to re-value stigmatized identities, to embrace openly and legitimately hitherto marginalized lifestyles

and propagate them without hindrance” (Pakulski, 1997, p. 83). Mills (2012) suggests that cultural citizenship can be used to consider the struggles faced by marginalized groups to achieve inclusion and social recognition. This concept emphasizes that having the legal status of citizen cannot always be equated with access to rights and protections by the nation state; rather many minority groups can be regarded as having differentiated citizenship. Cultural citizenship can also be seen as a form of subject making whereby inequitable power relations and structures of authority are internalized through cultural practices and beliefs that maintain hegemonic order and dictate the criteria for belonging to a population. Investigations into cultural citizenship can trace cultural performance and self-regulation that constitute citizens as recognizable and as socially accepted citizens (Mills, 2012). In this way it may be linked to queer theory and the question of how the personhood of gender and sexual minorities is recognized and validated. The process of inclusion and exclusion can be related to doing and undoing gender (as described above) in that both processes affect how personhood is constructed through conferring or withholding recognition. Building on this theme, I will examine how gender and sexual minorities are constructed as citizens and investigate whether or not gender and sexual minorities could be considered to have differentiated citizenship. I will consider how and if gender and sexual minorities are represented in the public imagery and what this representation or lack of representation implicates in terms of cultural recognition.

2.3.2. SEXUAL CITIZENSHIP

The perspective of sexual citizenship will be used to assess gender and sexual minorities’ social participation, political representation and rights. In her 1998 work “*Sexuality and Citizenship*”, Diane Richardson maintains that citizenship studies have given insufficient attention to gender and sexuality and that claims to citizenship are often associated with heterosexual male privilege. Discussions of sexual citizenship examine the impact of a person’s sexual status on restricting access to citizenship in terms of social, civil, and political rights. She suggests that analyses of sexual citizenship should “focus on a discussion of rights, struggles for acquisition, and analysis that are concerned with the broader questions of the association of certain forms of citizenship with institutionalized heterosexuality” (Richardson, 1998 p. 84). Richardson contends that when considering

civil, political and social rights, gay and lesbians can be seen as only partial citizens because they are excluded from some of these rights. For example, they are often excluded from legal marriage and lack protection from discrimination. She notes that in many western countries gay and lesbians are afforded some rights but these are often conditional and imply that they should remain in the private sphere and not seek public recognition (Richardson, 1998). She refers to this as politics of tolerance and assimilation; “lesbians and gay men are granted the right to be tolerated as long as they stay within the boundaries of that tolerance, whose boundaries are maintained by a heterosexist public/private divide” (Richardson, 1998 p. 89). However Richardson finds that rights of lesbians and gay men are even limited in private spheres, as they do not have the same rights to families as heterosexuals (ibid). Linking back to the question of personhood, she discusses citizenship in terms of membership in the human race whereby being relegated to the borders of citizenship constructs one as “other” (Richardson, 1998). In the article, “Feminist Politics in the Age of Recognitions: A Two Dimensional Approach to Gender Justice” Fraser (2007) traces the aims of feminist gender theories from advocating for redistribution to increasingly calling for greater recognition. Fraser’s approach may be seen as a synergy of cultural and sexual citizenship and purports that efforts to achieve gender equality should address both redistribution and recognition. In Fraser’s view, “gender “difference” is constructed simultaneously from both economic differentials and institutionalized patterns of cultural value” (Fraser, 2007 p. 27). While Fraser’s arguments are directed toward addressing women, her approach is relevant to gender and sexual minorities as they are also subject to what Fraser describes as “gender misrecognition and gender maldistribution” (Fraser, 2007 p. 23). Butler’s work can also be linked to citizenship studies as it often evokes ideas of greater political representation and inclusion. As she contends “these norms (of recognition) have far reaching consequences for how we understand the model of human entitled to rights or included in the participatory sphere of political deliberation” (Butler, 2004 p. 2). She also argues that “changing the institutions by which humanely viable choice is established and maintained is a prerequisite for the exercise of self-determination. In this sense individual agency is bound up with social critique and social determination” (Butler, 2004 p. 7). Extrapolating on the themes of sexual citizenship, I will consider what rights are afforded to or withheld

from gender and sexual minorities and how this informs their citizenship status. Drawing on Fraser's work, I will apply a similar two-dimensional approach to consider how gender and sexual minorities may experience gender misrecognition and maldistribution in both rights and social participation.

2.4. USE OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of recognition and the theories of cultural and sexual citizenship will be used throughout this thesis to explore the social positioning of gender and sexual minorities. In addition they will be applied to investigate the internalized affect of these processes as they relate to the issues of identity and personhood. The concept of recognition will serve as the main framework for the analysis. In the first two empirical chapters it will be coupled with the concept of hegemonic masculinities and femininities in discussion of gender roles and social relations. The theories of citizenship will be relied on more in the final two chapters, which involve discussions of inclusion and exclusion and larger social recognition.

CHAPTER 3: AN EXPLORATION OF GENDER AND SEXUALITIES IN THAILAND

3.0. INTRODUCTION

Recent works in queer studies have begun to consider the spread of queer identities and cultures. Oswin's (2004) literature review "Decentering Queer Globalization" draws attention to debates in global queer studies that contest the influence of Western cultures in shaping global same sex identities and practices. Oswin notes that previous efforts to chart queer identities have been limited to investigating the influences of the United States and United Kingdom (Oswin, 2004). Citing the influence of Knopp and Brown, Oswin implores queer studies to move away from what Knopp and Brown (2003) describe as "limited and hierarchical notions of diffusion", (as cited in Oswin, 2004) in favor of increasingly complex and multidirectional analyses. Blackwood and Johnson (2012) advocate for a similar approach in their article "Queer Asian Subjects: Transgressive Sexualities and Heteronormative meanings", which compares gender and sexual subjectivities in South and Southeast Asia. They maintain that subjectivities are no longer fixed but are subject to the influences of transnational movements of people, images, and ideas. They refer to the contribution of recent studies of gender and sexual diversity in Asia that highlight the need for culturally relevant analysis and draw attention to transnational movements that operate not just from north to south but also in between Asian Countries. Blackwood and Johnson encourage the examination of the diverse factors that contribute to the formation sexual subjects such as race, class, gender, and nationality. In addition, they recognize the benefit of scholarly debates that consider the influence of colonialism and religious and nationalist discourses in investigations of sexual subject positions (Blackwood & Johnson, 2012).

In the following chapter, I will adopt similar multidimensional approach to trace the development of and influences on gender, sexualities, and identities in Thailand. Peter A. Jackson is a notable scholar of homosexuality in Thailand who has contributed sizably to the body of work published in English on gender and sexuality in Thailand. Fluent in written and spoken Thai, Jackson has over thirty years experience living and conducting research in Thailand. I have reviewed a large portion of Jackson's work and will

highlight some of his key findings that are relevant to this research. In recent years more studies conducted by Thai scholars have become available in English and their valuable insights along with, Jackson's and the contributions of several other pertinent authors will be discussed in this chapter to develop a fuller picture of the situation of gender and sexual minorities in Thailand. This literature has been organized thematically to call attention to important themes and cultural concepts relevant to my research. Situating gender and sexual minorities within a sociocultural context will not only highlight the dynamism of Thai gender and sexual subjectivities but also aid in analysis of the empirical material by illuminating specific sociocultural motivations of the study participants.

3.1. EXPANSION OF IDENTITIES

Jackson's (2000) article "An explosion of Thai Identities: global queering and reimagining queer theory" charts the growth of Thai sex/gender categories from the 1960s onward. Engaging in the debate on the influence of global queer identities discussed above, Jackson critiques the work of Altman, a prominent proponent of Western influences. Altman's global queering model suggests that worldwide understandings of the term gay have grown from the Western concept and that global gay identities were facilitated by globalization. Altman acknowledges indigenous identities, but views Western models as preeminent in forming modern queer identities (Altman, 1996). Jackson does not dispute that changes in queer identities are occurring globally, but warns against universalization and emphasizes that locally specific understandings should be given greater consideration. Jackson refers to the proliferation of sex/gender categories in Thailand as an example (Jackson, 2000). While historically *kathoey* had been used to refer to all forms of non-normative masculinity and femininity, during the 1960s subcategories of *kathoey* emerged to denote true hermaphrodite, cross dressing man, cross dressing woman, and masculine homosexual men. The categories fluctuated for an approximate thirty-year period, at times creating new specific categories, then retracting back into broader identities³. A significant observation that Jackson notes during this period of fluctuation is that women ceased to be included in the

³ See appendix I for a chart of identities adapted from Jackson (2000).

category *kathoey*. A wide range of terminology emerged to refer to specific male homosexualities, while terms for female sexualities did not begin to develop until the 1980's. Jackson attributes this to "cultural privileging of maleness over femaleness" (Jackson, 2000 p. 413). Although Thailand was subject to western influences through tourism and media, Jackson argues that the influx in *phet* categories was mainly indigenous and that even terms borrowed from Western culture were chosen selectively and reinterpreted to fit Thai identities. English words did not necessarily denote new categories but rather were often applied to already existing subjectivities. Jackson points to the role of media, in particular, newspaper, in influencing new categories in public representations. He notes that gender and sexual minorities' relationships to these representations is complex and may involve both resistance to and efforts to identify with culturally recognized categories (ibid). Jackson (2012) explains, that in recent years the Internet has become a new medium through which identity categories are being shaped (Jackson, 2012). In a review of literature on gender and sexual minorities in Thailand, Ojanen (2009) found that the Thai sexual/gender-minority identities recognized presently include kathoey, gay [king, queen, quing (both)], tom [one way, two way, gay (prefers other toms)], dee, les [king, queen], and bi. Ojanen described these categories as "being constantly developed [both within the communities and amongst academics] and adapted to improve the status of each minority group" (Ojanen, 2009 p. 30). In the following sections I will examine these identity categories in greater detail and describe how these categories have continued to evolve. Insights on the variation in Thai/sex gender categories detailed in these works will serve as guidance as I explore the categories in use or known in the research site and consider how masculinity and femininity are relevant in forming identities. Knowledge of these subjectivities will be useful in exploring study participants' relationships to the sex/gender system and in considering how these relationships affect the way study participants prefer to identify.

3.2. MALE TO FEMALE TRANSGENDER/TRANSSEXUAL (MTF)

Matzner (2001) explains that the present day use of *kathoey* commonly refers to biological males whose behaviors, appearance, or identity transgress gender norms. He relates the difficulty of translating *kathoey* to a single word because *kathoey* overlaps

with several English terms including homosexual, third sex, transvestite, and transsexual. In addition, the application of the term in Thailand may be used to describe categories of people ranging from effeminate men to those who have undergone sexual reassignment surgery. Matzner notes that the term may carry positive, neutral, or negative connotations depending on the context in which it is used. However because of the potentially derogative usages, some referred to as kathoey may prefer to identify as *sao prophet song* (second kind of woman) or *phuying* (woman). Matzner also recognized non-crossing males who described themselves as having the soul of a woman (Matzner, 2001).

Winter's (2006) article "Thai Transgenders in Focus: Their Beliefs About Attitudes Towards and of Transgender" is a quantitative study that aimed to assess attitudes toward and information about *kathoeyes*. Winter relates several factors that participants' felt influenced their transgender identity, which include biology, karma, friends, and relatives. Winter observes that studies of Thai transgenderism often describe the relatively high tolerance or acceptance of transgender individuals in Thailand in comparison to other parts of the world. In his own study, 40.7% of transgender participants conveyed that they believe Thai people viewed transgender people favorably (Winter, 2006). Matzner (2001) cautions against describing attitudes toward *kathoeyes* in terms of tolerance or acceptance as these do not fully capture the dynamic social views of *kathoeyes*. Matzner's work "The Complexities of Acceptance: Thai Student Attitudes Towards *Kathoeyes*" used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to gauge university students' attitudes towards *kathoeyes*. Matzner concluded that the students' attitudes were complex and situational and dependent on the relationship to and behaviors of the individual in question. Giving consideration to this literature, I have incorporated triangulation in my research to consider the influences of different social relations in efforts to create a more nuanced understanding of *kathoeyes* and other gender and sexual minorities involved in the study. As the *kathoey* participants in my study were either transgender or transsexual I will use the abbreviation MTF to refer to this group of study participants to avoid the negative connotations associated with the term *kathoey*. Elsewhere in the thesis, the terms used by the participants in the study will be maintained as these can convey attitudes informative of social perceptions.

3.3. FEMALE HOMOSEXUALITY

Meghan Sinnott's article "Masculinity and Tom identity in Thailand" is a presentation of lesbian identities in relation to masculinity and femininity. While Thai female homosexuality has a long history, new terms used to describe their relationships came into use in the 1980s. The term *tom* is derived from the English word tomboy and refers to masculine identified lesbians while *dee* refers to the feminine-identified women that are partners of *toms*. Like *kathoey*, *tom* has a range of usages that can be used to describe diverse identities spanning from masculine women to female to male transgender individuals (Sinnott, 1999). Chonwilai (2012) has recently noted the subtypes *tom* one way (not allowing *dees* to take an active role in sex) and *tom* two ways (allowing *dees* to have an active role) (Chonwilai, 2012a). The relationship between *tom* and *dees* is often conceptualized as butch-femme gender role-playing. Chonwilai and Boonmongkon (2012) point to the influence of patriarchal values on homosexual sexualities that often mimic heterosexual patterns with one partner adopting a masculine role. Sinnott explains that some *toms* view *dees* as bisexual or straight because of their attraction to masculine partners and the perception that *dees* are only temporarily interested in homosexual relationships. Sinnott views these identities "both derivative of stereotypical dominant Thai models of gender and unique formulations based on the specifics of lesbian practices and identities in Thailand" (Sinnott, 1999 p. 116). An important contribution of Sinnott's work is her explanation of *tom* identity, which she describes as constituted through the selective appropriation of normative masculine and feminine qualities. I believe this is applicable to all gender and sexual minority groups and following her lead, I will investigate how study participants relate to norms of masculinity and femininity and will endeavor to discern what techniques they adopt as they negotiate their identities. I will also give consideration to identities that do not fit in clearly with the *tom-dee* paradigm. Homosexual women who identify outside of these roles may be described as *ying rak ying* (women who love women). Chonwilai (2012) explains that the term was created by Anjaree, an organization that engages in advocacy to promote understanding and acceptance for women who love women. The founders of Anjaree coined the phrase in attempts to avoid identification with Western beliefs and describe an identity that

could include women who love women without focusing on sexual or gendered behavior. This is preferred to the term lesbian, which carries negative connotations in Thailand due to the use in psychology that conflates lesbians with deviance and the general public's association of lesbians with pornography made for heterosexual men (Chonwilai, 2012a). I will therefore use the term *ying rak ying* to refer to non-*tom* identified homosexual women in this research.

3.4 MALE HOMOSEXUALITY

As described by Jackson (2000) there are many different categorizations of male homosexuality. Chonwilai (2012) explores diverse aspects of male homosexuality in "Men who Love Men". Similar to *ying rak ying* the phrase *chai rak chai* (men who love men) has recently come into use to describe aspects of homosexual identity without linkage to sexual behavior (Chonwilai, 2012b). Men who have sex with men (MSM), which was borrowed from Western studies of HIV/AIDS, has also been used increasingly as a form of identity in the last five years. However these terms are not well known among the general public, who most often refer to homosexual men as gay or in some areas, still as *kathoey*. Like lesbian, the term gay was first linked to deviance and carried further stigma after being brought into association with HIV/AIDS. However after the mid 1980s the term increased in popularity in part due to Thai gay magazines that helped increase the visibility of gays. Currently gay is the most commonly used term and also includes the subdivisions gay king (insertive), gay queen (receptive), and gay quing (both) (ibid). I will use the term gay in this research, as this was how most study participants identified. Jackson (1995) cautions that although homosexuality in Thailand may be subject to less sanctions than in the West, it cannot be considered acceptable behavior and noted that cultural sanctions against homosexuality are strong. Chongwilai's work further considers prejudice in Thai society toward homosexual men. She attributes this to the medical fields' portrayal of homosexuality as sexually abnormal and patriarchal values that valorize masculinity over femininity. Chongwilai explains that the pressure on Thai men to be strong leader and provide for their family may lead some homosexual men to remain closeted (Chongwilai, 2012b).

3.5. SOCIOCULTURAL SETTING

Peter A. Jackson's 2004 work "The Thai Regime of Images" is a study of Thai modes of power. Jackson describes Thai power as characterized by a strong concern with monitoring action on the surface including public behaviors and representations paired with a simultaneous lack of interest in controlling private domains (Jackson, 2004). Rosalind Morris (2002) contends that throughout Thailand's modernization process, the focus was not concentrated on creating a national subjectivity but rather on creating "the appearance of ideally nationalist behavior...(which) makes performance (of this behavior) the criterion of proper citizenship" (as cited in Jackson 2004, p. 182). In contrast to the encompassing mode of power Foucault described as pervading in Western cultures, Morris views the Thai mode of power as operating only on the surface (ibid). As Jackson elucidates, Thailand can be seen as authoritarian in forming "normative public presentations" yet tolerant of private diversities (Jackson, 2004 p. 182). Thus Thai power can be seen as driven by two cultural logics, one operating in public and one operating in private situations without cultural pressure to resolve any inconsistencies between the two (ibid).

Jackson traces the emergence of the Thai regime of images to Thailand's efforts to resist colonialism. He details these efforts in his 2003 article, "Performative Genders, Perverse Desires: A Bio-History of Thailand's Same-Sex and Transgender Cultures". The article traces the diverse influences between the mid-nineteenth and late twentieth centuries that brought gender norms closer to Western ideals. While a rise in new occupations and an influx of Western mass media supported this transition, state intervention was the driving force of this change (Jackson, 2003). Siam (Thailand's name until 1939) was never colonized by an imperial power but nevertheless fell under their realm of influence. Colonialism was often justified as a civilizing mission to aid barbarous societies. To counter this threat, Siam began a concentrated effort to present the country as civilized and aligned with Western ideals (Jackson, 2003). Jackson identifies three main critiques made by Western visitors prior to the civilization projects initiation: "(1) the 'nakedness' of the Siamese body; (2) the sexual 'excesses' of polygamy; and (3) the similarity of the appearance of Siamese men and women, accentuated by a lack of differentiation between

male and female fashions and hair styles.” (Jackson, 2003 paragraph 26). Deployed by Thai monarchy, initiatives were taken to address the criticisms of Western visitors by constructing positive counter images. Consequently, new forms of power were exercised over the public representations. In addition to the banning of polygamy and public displays of eroticism such as artwork, the state enforced decrees that mandated all adults cover their upper and lower bodies in public and wear gender-differentiated clothing. Careful attention was also paid to the appearance of women who had been described by visitors during colonial times as ugly or barbaric and efforts were made to bring Thai women closer to Western ideals of beauty. After the country transitioned from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy in 1932, civilization efforts continued to be enacted by the premier Field Marshal Phibun Songkhram. One of his efforts to direct citizens and inform proper behavior was the 1942 National Culture Act. Under this act, culture was defined as “characteristics that denote growth, orderliness, national unity and progress, and good public morality” (Jackson, 2003 paragraph 67). Regulations enacted under this measure endeavored to promote what was viewed as “proper” behavior and even required both urban and rural populations to wear Western style clothing (ibid). Not only did Phibun address fashions and behaviors but also extended his reforms of gender to language. Phibun assigned fixed masculine or feminine gender to given names that were formally gender neutral. Gendered pronouns and polite endings also came into use during this period. New gender norms were enforced in all provinces through state services such as school and health services and reinforced with state-controlled broadcasts and the promotion of Western ideals of femininity through beauty pageants. State intervention was justified as a means of deploying constitutional government so that Thai culture would conform to national ideals of civilization (Jackson, 2003). Understanding of this civilizing regime is important because it demonstrates how “correct” performance of gender can be linked to being a proper citizen. What Jackson describes as “refashioning the public gendering of their bodies” (Jackson, 2003 paragraph 39) is of particular interest to my research as it illustrates the relatively recent emergence of currently upheld gender norms and sheds light on why they may be so stringently maintained.

Another important point is Jackson's (1995) description of Thailand as a culture of shame. In a shame culture one experiences anxiety over another witnessing one's wrongdoing and being reprimanded. This is opposed to the guilt culture that characterizes much of the West and refers to the anxiety one experiences when one observes oneself acting or thinking wrongly (Jackson, 1995). Therefore the importance afforded to codes of behavior that govern public representations are particularly informative in Thailand. For example *kala-thesa* is a cultural concept demarcating suitable behavior according to place and time, while the concept of face and reputation illustrate the cultural desire to maintain positive images and avoid damage to reputations (Jackson, 2004). *Riap roi* is another cultural concept referred to yet not elaborated upon by Jackson. Jackson (1995) defines *riap roi* as orderly and behaving appropriately for the situation (Jackson, 1995). It is applied to a variety of situations may alternatively be described as polite, appropriate behavior and dress for the situation, or being neat and well mannered. It is often used as an adjective to describe a person who acts in accordance to these standards. As *riap roi* was used by many of my study participants in describing gender norms, I will discuss the concept further in relation to the empirical material.

3.6. SOCIAL PERCEPTIONS

Chonwilai and Boonmongkon (2012) emphasize that the dominant Thai sex/gender system accepts only two sexes (man and woman), two genders (man and women), and one sexuality (heterosexual) and those who do not fit clearly in these categories are considered abnormal. Divergent sexualities may go unnoticed under what Morris (1994) describes as "the traditional Thai logic of visibility and invisibility, virtually any [sexual] act is acceptable if it neither injures another person nor offends through inappropriate self-disclosure" (as cited in Jackson, 2004 p. 183). Therefore if one presented oneself publicly as gender normative, keeping sexuality private, non-normative sexuality would be tolerated. In recent years, several authors have remarked on the increased visibility of some gender and sexual minority groups. Some have related this to influences from the West to move towards more identity related categories. Kang (2012) attributes this increased visibility to the reformation of gender norms, which magnified gender and sexual minorities transgressions from the gender norms proliferated by the state.

Thailand is often perceived as accepting of gender and sexual diversity due to the visibility of diverse individuals in society, but actual attitudes toward gender and sexual minorities are more complex and can range from mocking to hostile (Nanda, 2000). References in Buddhism to homosexuality and *kathoey*s are limited but Thai interpretations of Buddhism view these states of being as karmic retribution for having committed adultery in a past life. Under the Thai Buddhist belief of karma, moral actions result in happiness while immoral actions lead to suffering. In this understanding homosexuality constitutes a form of suffering not sin and is a fate that one cannot change. Consequently Buddhist attitudes toward homosexuals, transsexuals, or transvestites are most often compassionate or sympathetic (Jackson, 1995). However Allyn (1991) noted that while social tolerance may be central to Buddhism this cannot be equated with social acceptance. He further qualified that “in Thailand, it may mean not saying or doing anything about others behaviors but does not mean one necessarily likes it or accepts it” (as cited in Jackson, 1995).

In contrast to descriptions of Thai forms of power as uninterested in regulating sexuality, the banning of non-normative students from teachers colleges in the 1990’s drew into question Thailand’s reputation for tolerant and non-interventionist attitudes toward homosexual behavior. The Ratchabot Teacher Institute banned sexually deviant students from pursuing degrees in kindergarten and primary education from its teacher’s colleges across the nation. The ban was supported by the Ministry of Education that held the view that gender and sexual minorities were not appropriate role models for Thai children (Storer, 1999). The ban was initiated in 1993 but was not widely known until 1996 when its publication incited protests and political activism that led to the repeal of the ban in 1997 (<http://www.glbtq.com/social-sciences/thailand,2.html>).

Morris’s (1997) article, “Educating Desire: Thailand, Transnationalism, and Transgression” considers the motivations of Ratchabot’s ban of homosexual students in view of wider cultural meanings and implications for those expressing non-normative identities. Her analysis is of interest as it positions gender and sexual minorities as threats

to ideal Thai-ness promoted by the state and views homosexuality as antinationalist. Also of significance is her view of the role of categories of subjective identity. While Western application of queer theory often aims to dispel categorization, Morris considers the categorization and visibility of diverse identities as central instruments of queer movements in Thailand. The enactment of sexual identities removes the ambiguity between being and doing and is in contrast to the “face” of Thai cultural nationalism. Morris suggests that such visible non-normative displays not only threaten individual images but the Thai nation-state itself. As such she interprets Ratchabat’s ban as motivated by state’s desire to control public performances’ “radical subjectivity, rather than official Thai-ness” as part of an effort to eliminate non-normative identities (Morris, 1997 p. 57).

3.7. CHALLENGES IN GAINING RECOGNITION AND EQUAL RIGHTS

Although the degree to which the state is responsible in limiting gender and sexual diversity is debatable, it is clear that gender and sexual minorities lack certain freedoms afforded to other members of society. According to Asian Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW), the recognition of gender and sexual minorities and their rights is still a challenge in South East Asia (ARROW, 2009). Activists in Thailand have highlighted inequities gender and sexual minorities face in areas such as obtaining health care, legal change of name, marriage, education, and employment noting prejudice and discrimination as main challenges. The Thai constitution states that, “all people shall enjoy equal rights and protection under the law regardless of their sex” (ARROW, 2009). Yet at the United Nations General Assembly in 2008, Thailand declined to endorse a statement affirming the human rights principle of universality and non-discrimination regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity and in 2010 Thailand did not oppose the removal of a reference to sexual orientation as a ground of protection in a UN resolution condemning extrajudicial or arbitrary executions (International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, 2010). Although there are no laws that criminalize sexual orientation, discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity continues to be problematic. For example, the Thai Red Cross refused to accept blood donations from LBGTI (lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, and intersex) people

and some life insurance companies denied coverage to gay persons (U.S. Department of State, 2010). Evidence of stigmatization of gender and sexual minorities is widespread in the health field. Despite the high rates of HIV prevalence in some of these groups, 16% among MSM and 10% for Transgender (TG) people (National AIDS Prevention and Alleviation Committee, 2012), the Thai HIV/AIDS public education campaigns mostly target heterosexuals and fail to address the specific needs of MSM and transgender people. The result is that many people in these groups are unaware of their risk for HIV infection and/or are unable to adequately protect themselves (ARROW, 2009). Both the ARROW (2009) report on sexuality and rights and Ojanen's (2009) study of the challenges faced by gender and sexual minorities in accessing health care services in Thailand indicate that the majority of clinics lack the knowledge to effectively treat these groups; deficits include limited knowledge about these groups' sexual practices that may put them at risk and lack of experience treating oral and anal STIs. Respondents in the ARROW (2009) report also reported health workers' insensitivity and stigmatizing behaviors. For example, health workers refused to recognize transgendered individuals' identity and rather insisted that they be treated according to the sex on their ID card. Some transgender people reported that they were mocked by hospital staff, kept waiting longer than other patients, and advised to change their behavior rather than being treated for their illness (ibid).

Several NGOs have reported that gays, lesbians, and transgendered people were denied entry or employment at some nightclubs, bars, hotels, and factories (U.S. Department of State, 2010). While military sources have explained that gay or transgendered persons are not drafted to the military because of "the assumed detrimental impact on the military's strength, image, and discipline"(ibid). In 2009, a gay pride parade in the north of Thailand was cancelled after participants were met with harassment and violence from a political party (ibid). These instances of discrimination and violence indicate that gender and sexual minorities are marginalized and inhibited from full participation in citizenship. While activists have had some success in advocating for their rights, gender and sexual minorities are still denied equal opportunities and respect in society.

3.8. POINT OF DEPARTURE

The majority of research I have reviewed concerning gender and sexual minorities in Thailand was conducted in urban areas. While some of these studies have included participants from rural areas, these participants were currently living in urban areas. Conducting this research in a small town in Isan has allowed me to explore gender dynamics in a rural settings and has enabled me to elaborate on the experiences of gender and sexual minorities who have remained a part of their community. This is unique as much of the literature relies on study participants who have left their communities. Of the studies presented, some scholars such as Winter have used quantitative methods (2003), while Jackson (1995, 2000) and Costa and Matzner (2007) have used text analysis. Sinnott (2004) was one of the few that used interview based qualitative research. Although studies like Winter's (2003) have given consideration to social perceptions, they have included only gender and sexual minority study participants and relatively few studies have sought to incorporate the perspectives of other relevant social actor besides Matzner's (2001) study which included university students' perceptions. Notably absent are reflections on early life experiences. In using qualitative methods and employing triangulation, I have incorporated the perspectives of secondary school students and teachers along with reflections of gender and sexual minority participants in my research to gain insight on how gender and sexual minorities experience recognition in school and in a rural community. By focusing on recognition rather than acceptance and considering social relations, I hope to produce a more nuanced analysis and contribute to existing literature to increase understanding of how gender and sexual minorities are recognized in the Isan region.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.0. INTRODUCTION

In the following chapter I will provide an overview of the research methodology and reflect on the decisions that guided the planning and implementation of this study. One of the main objectives of this study was to investigate how individuals of gender and sexual minorities are valued and placed within society and as such an investigation of both individual and social perspectives and behaviors was required. Because meeting this objective concerns exploring life histories and everyday behaviors (Silverman, 2010), qualitative methods were deemed most appropriate. The use of qualitative research allows the world to be seen from the subjects' point of view whereby meaning is derived from the subjects' experience of the world (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). As Liamputtong (2007) contends, a qualitative approach is particularly well suited for research with marginalized groups because it is more flexible and sensitive to their needs. In addition, the use of qualitative methods can be effective in highlighting the perspectives of marginalized groups because it provides a space for them to voice their feelings and relate their experiences (Liamputtong, 2007).

4.1. RATIONAL AND STRUCTURE OF RESEARCH

The initial ideas for this research grew from my interest in capturing the experiences of young gender and sexual minorities in secondary school by examining factors such as peer and teacher relationships, educational opportunities, and aspirations. However, because working with the issues of gender and sexuality with young study participants would have been ethically problematic, it was necessary to re-frame the research. Instead I decided to invite adult gender and sexual minorities to serve as the primary study participants and triangulate their related experiences with the understandings and perceptions of students and teachers. Triangulation became an integral component of my research as it allowed me to retain the perspectives of youth. Theory and literature also informed my decision to triangulate methods and study participants. As indicated by Silverman, the use of triangulation enabled the generation of richer information, captured the diverse perspectives of the study participants, and served as a means to cross-checked the data (Silverman, 2010). Butler's theory of performativity and Sinnott's

(2004) conceptualization of *tom* identity as constructed through selective appropriation and retention of masculinity and femininity influenced me to investigate the social construction of gender norms. Matzner (2001) emphasized the need to examine the complexities of group relationships that influence social perceptions of gender and sexual minorities. Following, the inclusion of several social groups was useful in tracking norms that regulate social interactions and are influential in deciding and maintaining gender identities. This was also helpful in gaging and crosschecking social perceptions. Observation and focus group discussions were particularly relevant as they helped inform the social context of the information related during interviews.

4.2. SELECTION OF SITE AND STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Data for this research was collected during three months of fieldwork, from June 2012 through August 2012. The fieldwork was conducted in a growing town that encompasses several smaller villages in the Isan region of northeastern Thailand. I selected this region out of interest in exploring the gender dynamics of a rural location and elaborating on the experience of gender and sexual minorities who have remained a part of their community. The specific research site was selected due to my previous experience in this town as a Peace Corps volunteer where I served as a teacher trainer and community outreach worker. Prior to beginning my Peace Corps service I participated in a training program in central Thailand that included instruction in spoken and written Thai language and cross-cultural training on culture, traditions, and norms. Living with a host family during training, working in Bangkok for over a year, and volunteering in the research site for two years have provided me with many invaluable insights on social relations within Thai culture. This experience and my relationship with people at the research sites were extraordinarily helpful throughout the process of conducting this research. Being already well integrated into the community was beneficial as I was able to use the relationships I had built as a volunteer to negotiate with gatekeepers and gain access to study participants. Contacts in several schools as well as previously established rapport with teachers and students greatly eased the formation and facilitation of focus groups. These were held at two schools where I previously volunteered and included primary school teachers, secondary school teachers, and secondary school students. These groups were

selected to represent diverse perspectives of educators and peer groups and to investigate the role of gender in schooling and to learn more about the experience of students of non-normative genders in schooling.

Three different groups of adult gender sexual minority were included as study participants: *ying rak ying*, MTF, and gay. These groups were selected to draw comparisons between these groups and to represent the diversity of the community. Because confidentiality is particularly important in research involving vulnerable groups (Liamputtong, 2007), the selection of study participants was made carefully. Kong et al. advise additional consideration when working with gay men, lesbian women, and bisexual and transgender people cautioning that sharing experience about their life could be equivalent to another form of coming out (as cited in Liamputtong, 2007). This is an elevated concern in the Thai context where verbal affirmation of sexual orientation is less common. In the early stages of my fieldwork, I became aware that many gay men are not open about their sexuality. While I was interested to incorporate their perspective in my research, I was not prepared to sacrifice the confidentiality of the study participants. This was resolved by using snowball sampling and including some study participants who resided in the region but outside of the community. Two openly gay men from the community were interviewed and another who did not want to reveal his identity to me was interviewed by another study participant who then reported the interview to me. The selection of *ying rak ying* study participants was also approached cautiously and snowball sampling was used to facilitate discrete invitations to participate in the study. Four of the male to female transgender study participants were members of a *men who love men* support group at a local hospital and these interviews were held in the clinic where the group has its meetings. All other interviews were held in the location most convenient for the study participants, which included my home, study participants' homes, restaurants, and coffee shops.

4.3. METHODS

Liamputtong (2007) suggests that research with marginalized groups benefits from the use of flexible and collaborative methods and warns that a single method may not be

appropriate for the group nor fully capture the phenomena studied (Liamputtong, 2007). Accordingly, the techniques of semi-structured life interviews, focus group discussions, and participant and non-participant observation were used in this research. Translators assisted me in all interviews and focus groups. As it was not possible for a single translator to be available at all times, several people assisted me with this task.

4.3.1. SEMI STRUCTURED LIFE INTERVIEWS

Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) explains that a semi structured life interview can be used to highlight the subjects' own perspectives by unearthing themes from the subjects' lived experience. The manner in which the subjects construct their life world can be useful in giving meaning to the phenomena studied (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Semi structured life interviews were conducted with a total of seventeen adult gender and sexual minorities: five male to female transgender individuals, six gay men, and six *ying rak ying* (women who love women). The study participants were between eighteen and seventy-five years old with an average age of thirty-three. The interviews were conducted in Thai and English and followed an interview guide, which focused on biographical information and school experience. The leader of the *men who love men* group was also interviewed about the group's activities. Interviews lasted approximately forty minutes to one hour each. Questions ranged from general to specific and follow up questions were applied depending on the clarity of response and the study participants' perceived comfort level. Interviews began with an investigation of childhood and family life where expectations, childhood dreams, and perceptions of different genders were gaged. Study participants were then asked how they came to identify as a gender or sexual minority and whether they were supported or discouraged in this. Questions addressing school experience focused on interactions with teachers and peers, perceived opportunities or restrictions, and level of satisfaction with schooling. Finally study participants were asked to comment on society's view of gender and sexual minorities and asked if there was anything they would like to change about society or themselves. The study participants were generally very willing to share their experiences and appeared open and honest in their responses. A few of the older study participants had difficulty discussing their gender and sexuality in direct terms and answered in more round about ways.

4.3.2. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Focus groups create an open environment for the expression of personal and conflicting viewpoints on a topic (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Group interaction may facilitate expression of viewpoints on sensitive topics that are not usually discussed (ibid) and were used in this study to investigate students' and teachers' perceptions of gender. Powell and Single (1996) note the utility of focus groups in producing "the rich details of complex experiences and the reasoning behind actions, beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes" (Powell & Single, 1996 p. 449). A total of three focus group discussions were conducted: one with primary school teachers, one with secondary school teachers, and one with secondary school students over the age of sixteen.

The primary school teacher focus group was composed of six teachers between the ages of 24-56 years old and included one male and five female teachers. The group was initially reserved in its interactions and discussed the themes methodically, taking turns to respond to each point. I reminded them that they were free to interrupt each other and voice their opinions at any time, after which the discussion became much more free. The themes included general ideas about gender, gendered responsibilities and expectations in Thai society, treatment of students of different genders, identification of gender and sexual minorities, behaviors and treatment of gender and sexual minorities, school performance and careers appropriate for students of different genders. The secondary school teacher focus group was composed of one male teacher, one female administrator, and three female teachers between 39 -57 years old. The themes were the same as those discussed with primary school teachers. Teachers in this group were eager to share their knowledge and identified many gender and sexual minority groups in the school.

The student focus group included seven girls and six boys, three of whom were male to female transgender. I had not initially planned to include transgender students in this group because I was worried that this may affect discussions about gender and sexual minorities. However gender conforming boys were reluctant to participate and I was concerned that rejecting transgender students could be seen as discriminatory as I did not make any specifications regarding their gender identity in my initial request for focus

group participants. Yet it must be noted that their presence in the group may have potentially restricted the free expression of opinions about gender and sexual minorities. According to Punch (2002), youth are controlled and limited by adults and experience unequal power relations when relating to adults. In order to mitigate this, a peer facilitator assisted during the student focus groups to help translate and facilitate conversation as the inclusion of an adult translator could have restricted the flow of conversation and the authenticity of responses. Students elected for data collection activities to be held at the school because this was most convenient for them. It was noted that students are accustomed to pleasing adults and may feel compelled to give “correct” answers especially during school research. To create a more relaxed environment and distance us from the traditional school setting, I chose to use a computer room where there was space to sit on the floor in a circle and used games to get to know the students in our initial meetings. An effort was made to encourage free participation and remind the students that there were no right or wrong answers throughout our work together. The atmosphere was very lively and most students were eager to voice their opinions. Discussion themes included general ideas about gender, gendered responsibilities and expectations in Thai society, identification of gender and sexual minorities, advantages and disadvantages of different genders, and perceptions and treatment of gender and sexual minorities. A newspaper article was also used to prompt discussion. In addition to the focus group, I was given permission to video record a play, that some of the students were involved in writing and performed in that depicted traditional gender roles.

4.3.3. PARTICIPANT AND NON-PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Participant and non-participant observation were conducted at secondary and primary schools where I assisted with teaching, participated in morning assemblies, attended club meetings, and special events. I also spent time in the community in the market, coffee shop, and restaurants, and attended parties and celebrations. These interactions allowed me to observe gender norms in natural settings and gave me the opportunity to discuss my research with community members and gain their insight. Since leaving the field, I was afforded the opportunity to attend seminar on “Intersex Gender Recognition” at the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand, an activity of the national network of

people of sexual diversity to advocate for equal rights for LGBTI people. I was able to meet several activists and NGO leaders and was brought up to date on the most current legislations and issues relevant to the LGBTI community in Thailand. I also attended the conference “Self-Stigma among Young MSM and Transgender People, Voices From the Communities” that included presentations by young MSM and transgender people in the Asia-Pacific Region. I was able to have discussions with the participants after the conference, which enabled them to elaborate on their presentations. PowerPoint presentations and handouts from the seminars were collected. Notes from informal conversations held in the community and with conference participants were included as secondary data.

4.4. NEGOTIATION OF ROLE

Being back at a site where I was a Peace Corps volunteer, I felt pressured to resume some of my former roles. Because I was asked to assist with some school activities, I felt obligated to spend some time each day at the school. In addition to daily teaching, I assisted with several teacher trainings, English camps, and workshops. This was helpful for observation and helped me to build rapport with students and teachers, but was also stressful, as I felt challenged to play both the role of researcher and volunteer. Even though I made a conscious effort to emphasize my role as a master’s degree student and researcher, a continuous effort to reinstate my to my former role was made throughout my stay. Both a teacher and researcher are respected positions in the community that could have affected my status with study participants. However this seemed to be mitigated somewhat because of my age. The qualifiers *pi* (older) and *nong* (younger) are used to precede names in Thailand and children are taught from a young age to respect older people. Being close in age or younger than most study participants may have helped them to feel less intimidated by me. In addition, I feel being an American was an advantage as study participants viewed Americans as more tolerant toward gender and sexual diversity. As translators were used during most of the data collection, their role in relation to study participants must be considered along with my own. Eight of the interviews were conducted with a fifty-five year old female teacher as translator. It is possible that younger study participants felt uncomfortable speaking about their sexuality

or disagreeing with an older woman in a respected position. The reverse was also true for translators when interviewing study participants of an age greater than their own. Some may have felt uncomfortable asking personal questions to older people and may have had difficulty directly posing some of the more sensitive questions on the interview guide. When possible I tried to arrange for a translator of a similar age and position as the informant to mitigate potentially unequal power relations. I conducted six interviews with study participants in which the main language was English.

4.5. CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Scheduling appointments and working through mediators presented some challenges during this research. I arrived in the field at the start of rice planting season, which meant that many possible study participants were busy at their farms and had limited free time. The secondary school was also involved in many activities and preparations for exams during this period, which required a significant amount of time and energy of the teachers and students. This made scheduling a challenge and limited the time that teachers and students were available to participate in focus groups. To make efficient use of my time during the focus groups, the discussions primarily focused on topics on the interview guide. Supplementary information was gathered during the time I spent with teachers and students as a volunteer at the school which allowed me to explore other concepts further in less formal settings. Working with translators was at times a frustrating process and required negotiation. Some difficulties I encountered included inaccurate translations, translators asking questions on matters I had not planned to investigate, and the use of leading or insensitive and assuming language. When this occurred I brought the issue up with the translators and we discussed how this could be improved in future interviews. These “problems” can also be seen as informative of the perceptions of the community and can be used along with observation and informal discussions to contribute to my understanding of mainstream views.

4.6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The topic of this investigation can be defined as a socially sensitive research in which there could be potential negative consequences for the participants or for the group

represented by the research (Lee, 1990). As such, particular care was taken to ensure that participants were not endangered in any way or emotionally harmed. Since I had to negotiate with several gatekeepers and used multiple translators I was careful to emphasize that the information gathered must be treated as confidential and not shared at any time. The purpose of the research and informed consent were clearly explained and an information sheet written in Thai was given to all potential study participants to support their informed decision to consent to participate in the study. Study participants gave their consent verbally and pseudonyms have been used to preserve anonymity. Special consideration was also given to the student participants in this study; all were 16 years or older and therefore eligible to give consent according to the Norwegian Social Sciences Data Services regulations. Participation was completely voluntary and students were only involved in general discussions of gender and not questioned about their own personal experience.

4.7. DATA ANALYSIS

All of the interviews and focus groups were audio recorded. Interviews conducted in Thai were later translated and transcribed in English with the assistance of a translator. Several different people served as translators and an effort was made to transcribe the recordings with the same translator who assisted with the interview to help maintain clarity and accuracy. My language ability helped me to advocate for more careful transcriptions that were faithful to the interviews rather than the summaries my translators initially provided. Discussions with translators during this process were also informative, often adding additional perspectives and providing insight on cultural norms. Field notes were written by hand then typed in a word processor at the end of each day. After transcription I revisited the interviews frequently and themes that emerged during these processes were noted. The software program open code was used to aid the data analysis process. This was particularly helpful in analyzing gender norms as it helped to quantify the use of descriptors associated with masculinity and femininity. This was also useful in tracking the frequency of key phrases and terminology used by gender and sexual minority participants.

CHAPTER 5: GENDER NORMS AND RECOGNITION OF GENDER AND SEXUAL MINORITIES

5.0. INTRODUCTION

People think, there is an idiom in Thai; men are the front legs of the elephant. Men have to control everything, men have to point out what to do and women and girls have to follow the rules like men are the lawmakers. And I, I believe that women have the same strength to do things that men can do, so that is why I think in the past ten years women came out to call on freedom and their rights. (Arun, gay)

This chapter explores normative masculine and feminine subjectivities and traces how ideals associated with these inform gender roles and expected behaviors. According to Butler (2004) gender and sexuality can be seen as both constituted by and dependent on norms and critically linked to them (Butler, 2004). Therefore in order to understand normative gender roles and how gender and sexual minorities are configured in relation to Thai gender ideologies, it is necessary to discuss gender norms as they are described and culturally situated. This chapter includes reflections from community members and study participants of both normative and non-normative genders and will begin to develop understandings of gender and sexual minorities in the research site.

“The elephant metaphor” related above is often evoked in discussions of Thai gender roles and many study participants made reference to it in our discussions of masculinity and femininity. The ideals conveyed in the metaphor reflect the characteristics that many study participants associated with masculinity and femininity and designate men as leaders and women as followers. Yet the metaphor was also occasionally used by study participants to subvert this configuration. For example, some women asserted that they had the power to control or direct the elephant, which may indicate that these norms are being challenged. If the metaphor is interpreted as a representation of the power of hegemonic masculinity, then women’s use of the metaphor may be seen as a sign of their agency. In this chapter I will explore how individuals of both normative and non-normative genders relate to gender norms and how these norms serve as a locus for

identity against which subjectivities are measured. I will investigate the reproduction and maintenance of hegemonic gender norms and explore how these norms are being enacted or transgressed. Consideration will be given to how gender and sexual minorities are recognized in relation to these norms and what this recognition or lack of recognition may signify.

5.1. THAI MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY

Discussions of masculinity and femininity were held in focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, and in informal conversations. Study participants were asked to comment on what it means to be a Thai man and Thai woman, as well as reflect on their roles and responsibilities. Consistent with the elephant metaphor, the most agreed upon characteristic associated with masculinity was leadership ability. Leadership was seen as a natural or inherent quality. As one focus group participant remarked, “men have leadership in their body” (Female primary school teacher). Strength and responsibility were identified as integral components of masculinity. Some teachers explained that these characteristics were related to the past when men were primarily engaged in traditional livelihoods that require strength such as farming, while others referred to men as soldiers or warriors⁴. Study participants frequently commented that men were more responsible and believed that boys should be given greater responsibility in preparation for their future leadership roles. One teacher explained, “they have to be the leader of the family so we have to give them a lot of responsibility” (Female primary school teacher). Although strength most often referred to physical strength, it could also apply to mental strength. As one study participant described “men are supposed to be strong physically and mentally and they should be the leader, especially in the family... to make a living for the family and be the breadwinner” (Pranom, gay). Here Pranom mentions men’s role as the provider and their duty to care for others. This was a common theme related by study participants who related that it was men’s duty to protect others who are weaker, particularly women. In addition to being able to care for and protect others, an ideal Thai

⁴ Interestingly they neglected to mention women’s often equally significant contribution to agrarian lifestyles both in the past and present. This could suggest the power of imagery of femininity proliferated by the “Thai regime of images” described by Jackson (2003) because although women’s participation in agriculture and small business is sizable this does not coincide with the state image of femininity.

man was portrayed as self sufficient and self-sacrificing. Patience, problem solving abilities, and helpfulness were also associated with masculinity. As Malee described, “a man should be strong and can give advice and help out when others have problems...he should be a leader, a strong man, strong man” (Malee, *ying rak ying*). Here men are seen as leaders and a source of support and are viewed as essential in cementing social functioning. The consistency of these responses helps define and perpetuate a hegemonic masculinity characterized by strength, leadership, and responsibility.

When asked to discuss Thai femininity and women’s roles, study participants’ responses consistently located women in care-taking roles. Study participants often referred to women in relation to their roles as daughters, wives, or mothers, emphasizing their duty to be responsible to others and anticipate their needs. Like many other Asian countries, this is also true in practice. Daughters are typically tasked with taking care of visitors, and expected to serve food or water, while at school female students are often asked to wash dishes. The primary school teachers were in agreement with one teacher’s prescription that “Thai women should be polite, take care of the home and preserve culture” and that “Thai girls should be taught responsibility so they can help in the house, cooking, cleaning, and washing dishes” (Female primary school teacher). In line with the elephant metaphor, women were portrayed as following directions and doing as they are told. One student explained, “women should be sweet, responsible to the opposite sex and take care of their needs, within limit. Do the housework that the parents gave. Stay at home ... know their own role” (MTF student).

Study participants commonly used the phrase *riap roi* when describing femininity or Thai women. *Riap roi* is defined in the dictionary as “neat” (<http://dict.longdo.com/>) but is a complex concept that can be applied to a multitude of situations and behaviors. The concept of *riap roi* most often refers to appropriate behavior and/or dress for a social situation and is an important social rule in Thai society. In the description of Thai girls below, ideal femininity is essentially linked to *riap roi*.

Thai girls should follow Thai culture, they have to be riap roi, which means they should be sweet, not aggressive, nor strong in character but well mannered. They

don't show off, they speak softly; they laugh quietly and cover their mouths. They behave in the Thai way. In our culture, they help and obey their parents, do homework, and don't go out at night. They get dressed riap roi, not too revealing. They are responsible for girls work: housework and cooking. They can cook food well and take care of the family. (Female secondary school teacher)

One female student explained, “women don't flirt, and don't have premarital sex [laughing]. They're well mannered, not masculine and shouldn't act like they haven't been taught good social manners. They have to be *riap roi* and ladies”. Here *riap roi* is used as a standard against which women's appearance and behavior may be measured in relation to ideal or hegemonic femininity. Despite the concept's applicability to society as a whole, *riap roi* was used extensively by study participants to describe femininity yet was not referred to once in discussions of masculinity. The close association of *riap roi* with hegemonic femininity indicates that maintaining this value is integral to being recognized as a good woman. As can be gleaned from the examples above, all study participants had a very clear idea of what it meant for women to be *riap roi* although slight variations were seen in individual definitions. The emphasis on *riap roi* also points to the strong social pressure that is placed on women to behave “properly”. Comments made in the student focus group referred to women “living a structured life” and “knowing their role” and are indicative of the sense of duty women feel to embody this ideal. *Riap roi* may also be viewed as a measure of social acceptance. In this way, the less a woman conforms to this prescribed *riap roi* behavior, the less likely she is to be respected and accepted. I will discuss the importance of being recognized as *riap roi* and of how this may be linked to recognition later on. Nevertheless, the concept is important to bear in mind especially when considered in relation to study participants' identifications and self- representations.

Several scholars of gender and sexuality in Thailand such as Chonwilai and Boonmogkon (2012) and Jackson and Sullivan (2000) maintain that masculinity is valued more than femininity. Jackson (1995) asserts that, “valorization of maleness and masculinity is tempered by a parallel valuing of a range of other status and prestige conferring qualities that can be achieved by both women and non-masculine males” (Jackson, 1995 p. 59). As

can be seen from the study participants accounts above these “prestige conferring qualities” are more encouraged in men and there are high expectations that men exhibit the “masculine qualities” of strength and leadership. Yet the pressure for women to conform to the standards of *riap roi* and gender norms is strong and indicates that hegemonic femininity is also highly valued. This suggests that hegemonic ideals discourage women from transgressing norms of femininity and presenting a challenge to masculinity whereby they might contest men’s position as leaders.

5.2. SCHOOL BEHAVIOR

Discourses of masculinity and femininity can also be seen to inform ideas of how girls and boys should behave and perform in school. Both primary and secondary school teacher focus group participants typically characterized boys as naughty and girls as sweet or beautiful. In addition, Thai girls were consistently described as quiet, well behaved, and obedient. This coincides with hegemonic ideals that relegate women to following directions and performing their prescribed role. In my observations, I found girls to be generally obedient and respectful of teachers. They were also frequently given domestic chores at school such as cleaning or washing dishes, which corresponds with the described need for girls to be prepared for future care-taking roles. Yet despite this rather passive depiction of girls, they were usually active and engaged in the classroom and frequently took on leadership roles. Thus hegemonic ideals were incongruent with lived realities.

Boys were commonly characterized as naughty and aggressive. Teachers generally characterized boys as more responsible than girls but simultaneously described boys as careless or sloppy in their schoolwork. This contradiction is seen in one primary school teacher’s explanation. “Boys are more responsible but most girls do their work better than boys. Boys are not *riap roi* and can be dirty and sloppy in their work or dress.” Teachers often described boys as less likely to be class leader and less willing to volunteer than girls. While I did find in my observations that boys were more likely than girls to skip class or avoid participation, I also observed many exceptions to this and found many boys eager and interested to participate in class. Patience and responsibility were referred to as

both masculine and feminine traits but these were more often highlighted as masculine qualities than feminine. There was some discrepancy between the teachers' ideals and the students' actual performance and study participants themselves noted this contradiction. "We expect the boys to be the leader and volunteer more than girls. Now girls volunteer more than boys" (Female secondary school teacher). Despite the recognized inconsistencies between reality and idealized representations of masculinity and femininity, these exert little influence over dominant discourses. Rather locating school children within prescribed roles serves to further reify gender norms, as teachers were most likely to recognize and encourage hegemonic identities.

5.3. CHANGING GENDER ROLES

It's been changing a lot because in the past Thai women would stay home raising kids and doing housework. But now it's different. They have equal rights and can work outside of the house ... but I think that's good. In my opinion, they should be equal and both men and women should have equal responsibilities in the family like raising kids (Pranom, gay).

As seen here there are indications that gender roles are more fluid than the idealized representations allow. Yet as excerpt from the student focus group discussion below shows that the idea of changing norms is often met with tension.

Male student: *If you are a man you are responsible for many things. Men are leaders and the front legs of the elephant for women. We should respect each other but we have different roles: men's roles and women's roles. Women should do the housework and clean the house, do the role of the housewife. Men should be strong and do the hard work. This is men's role.*

MTF student: *Men and women have the same role. As teenagers they have to go to school and study and when they come back home they have to help their parents. Boys do sports and girls sing, but many activities are the same... they have to do homework and work in groups and hand in the work of the nearly the same quality.*

Female student: *Men should share the housework and earning money is not only men's work, women should also help to earn money. Women can work outside of the house to earn money and if the women are busy, men can do the housework... It shouldn't be that only women do the housework.*

While the male student felt strongly about maintaining normative roles, it is clear that the other students are more willing to challenge these ideas, which may be indicative of changing social perceptions. The students' ideas also appear to be based on experience and signify that gender roles are more flexible and equitable than hegemonic representations allow. This was also affirmed by my observations in the community where there was a large presence of women working and running businesses and in friends' homes where most chores and household tasks were shared amongst all family members.

Changes were also seen in the career choices available to men and women. When questioned about appropriate careers for men and women, participants were optimistic and pointed to increasing equality between men and women. In discussions about what professions were open to women, focus group participants agreed there were many, listing beautician, teacher, doctor, and engineer; prime minister as choices. They explained that men and women were equal and that their career choices are based on ability not gender. The group then went on to describe careers for men, which included pilot, teacher, construction worker, driver, lawyer, policeman, soldier, agriculture, and gardener. "Everything" one teacher asserted. While the participants made an effort to highlight equality, some of the options associated with men and women were still very stereotypical. In addition, some women perceived obstacles in achieving higher-ranking positions, explaining that the majority of these are still dominated by men. When asked why there weren't more women in leadership roles, one female teacher commented "men need to be the leader all the time. Some women wish to... but some people feel serious and worried about this. Women are ready to do everything but Thais always choose men over women for leadership positions, they don't normally accept women as leaders". The challenge women perceived in gaining high ranking positions may relate back to the

recognition of leadership as a masculine quality. Women's exclusion from leadership roles may be seen not only to reflect normative ideals also but the perceived possibilities associated with gendered identities. Others were more optimistic and made reference to the newly elected female prime minister. "Before Thai women didn't have much of a chance to study. Today everyone accepts women and gives them opportunities. Now we have a female prime minister. We have female policewomen" (Female primary school teacher). Such a view recognizes the positive outcomes of transgressing norms and is suggestive of the possibilities this may open.

Though both students and teachers exhibited a clear relationship to hegemonic gender norms, most expressed abilities and desires to move beyond these. Challenges to dominant norms and change over time are fundamental factors that contribute to hegemonic gender norms. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) refer to this as "construction and reconstruction" and explain that, "these changes call forth new strategies in gender relations and result in redefinitions" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005 p. 846). The anecdotes related in this section reflect changes and challenges to dominant ideals that may indicate that hegemonic gender norms are being redefined. Connell and Messerschmidt also note that women's changing roles can that affect gender configurations. It is clear that some recent changes such as the currently serving female prime minister have begun to affect dominant ideology.

5.4. DEPICTIONS OF GENDER AND SEXUAL MINORITIES

The categorizations "not a man" and "not a woman" were often used to describe gender and sexual minorities. As such, the understanding of gender and sexual minorities is intrinsically linked to masculinities and femininities and the degree to which these associated characteristics are expressed. This expression was used by a variety of people including gender and sexual minorities themselves. One translator used these categorizations within several interviews. In a discussion with one *ying rak ying* study participant she asked, "When did you realize you are not a woman?" While in a different interview she asked a male to female transgender study participant, "When did you realize you were a woman?" Another such instance was related by a gay study

participant. Pranom recalled, “Some people also teased me asking, why do you act like a woman?” In these usages being categorized as a man or woman (or not a man or not a woman) was related to appearance, mannerisms, or behaviors. In an effort to further explore these categorizations, I questioned the student focus group about these understandings explaining that in my country gay men are still considered men. They emphatically disagreed and one student explained, “Real men like women and gays like men, so they are not men” (Male student).

In this understanding, sexuality is tied to gender and sexual interest in the same sex negates ones membership in that sex. This categorization can also be seen in gender and sexual minorities own self-representations as it is used here by a MTF study participant. “I am a women kha⁵, because if I was gay then I would like other gays but I don’t. I like real men” (Bodey, MTF). When I prompted the students about whether similar categorizations apply to *toms* one female student explained that, “*Toms* are different from men and *kathoeys* and are not real women. I don’t like *toms* because they just play football and they aren’t accepted in society”. This student’s association of *toms* with playing football ties them to masculinity and also indicates how behaviors can bolster identities. Keeping in mind this student’s earlier description of women as “*not masculine and ... have to be riap roi and ladies*” her rationale in describing *toms* as “not real women” can be understood. In this student’s understanding of *toms*, their inability to conform to riap roi behavior disassociates *toms* with femininity. For Pranom, being recognized as a woman can be seen to negate his masculinity; yet at the same time he is also not recognized as a “real woman”.

Percentages served as common measurements of masculinity or femininity. In a student focus group discussion, a conversation of percentages evolved from a dialogue about the difference between genders.

Male student: *Men and kathoeys are not different; we all play sports the same: men play football, kathoeys play volleyball. Men are not 100 %. No one is 100%.*

⁵ Polite feminine ending used in speech.

Female student: *Are you 100 % man?*

Male student: *90 %. Men are sometimes like women. Sometimes I feel lonely or sensitive like a woman. Are you 100% woman?*

Female student: *No, because I can be really strong like a man and if I were very weak, a man would make me do everything for him.*

Here specific characteristics are associated with masculinity or femininity and possession of associated qualities affects the degree to which one is seen as masculine or feminine. The students recognized the challenge of meeting ideal masculinities and femininities and the female student strategically noted the advantage of possessing some “masculine” qualities. In his observation that “no one is 100%”, the male student recognizes that although meeting this ideal masculinity may be unrealistic, he still endeavors to do so.

Jackson (2000) describes *phet* categories as more influenced by masculinity and femininity than sexuality. However in the conceptualizations that designate gender and sexual minorities as “not a man” or “not a woman” sexuality was also significant as the sexual preference was at times the basis for the use of these descriptors. Percentages were more often used to describe normative individuals. The use of percentages reinforces the norms associated with masculinity and femininity, but could also serve to challenge hegemonic gender norms. The appropriation of these fixed masculine and feminine characteristics by both normative and non-normative study participants can be seen as a form of subversive repetition, which threatens the strength of hegemonic norms by exposing the fragility of masculinity and femininity.

5.5. GENDERED EXPECTATIONS AND BEHAVIORS

Women have many more responsibilities. Women have more patience than men. After work, men can go out and drink. Come home late, never on time (Male student).

In discussions of advantages and disadvantages of gender roles, men were generally perceived to have fewer restrictions while women’s behaviors were more guarded and they were perceived to have more responsibilities. Many behaviors that were seen as

unproblematic and even expected for men were perceived as unacceptable for women. The phrase “going out at night” was often used to refer to these behaviors that included smoking cigarettes or consuming alcohol, and having pre-marital sex or sex with multiple partners. While these behaviors could serve to enhance the degree to which one was seen as masculine, this type of behavior conflicts with *riap roi* behavior and would be considered “bad” behavior for women. *Mai* (not) *riap roi* is a disapprobatory descriptor often used refer to people who deviate from acceptable behavior.

Differentiated expectations for men and women were often related to the idea that women are soft and need protection. Several students elaborated on the differences in gendered expectations for behavior during the student focus group discussion. One explained, “If you are a man you can go out and your parents wouldn’t worry about you, but a woman is the soft sex and can’t go out like a man” (Female student). Another added, “Men are stronger and harder working than women. They are very patient and their parents don’t worry much about them. Women are the weak sex and cannot take care of themselves. They are weak hearted and gentle” (Female student). In both cases ideals of gendered expectations are echoed and rearticulated in the students’ descriptions and can be seen to influence their own perceptions and opinions of what men and women can do. These are also reinforcing and reproducing the hegemonic gender roles of men as breadwinners and women as care takers. The preceding views related by students and study participants indicate that the gendered characteristics associated with men allow them to adopt a more carefree lifestyle whereas women are more concerned with conforming to these ideal gendered characteristics. These ideas are also related to morality and a desire to be recognized as a good person.

Some study participants suggested that being recognized as neither a man nor a woman may confer some advantages. Piow explained:

I think that I have more opportunities than others. I think I've got more than others because lady boys⁶, sao praphet song... if you are a girl and go with a boy, or a boy and go with a girl, people will gossip. Your parents would complain. But if people see two boys together they don't see it as a problem. And we can go with women too and it's not a problem. I can do more things than men and women. You cannot tell me what to do because I am free to be like this. I can do anything that good people do. I feel special and can do things that others can't do. (Piow, MTF)

Here by being transgender, Piow feels that in not being recognized in a normative gender role, s/he is not subject to the social sanctions that would apply to people of normative genders and can thus enjoy freedom from the moral judgments people of normative genders might be subject to. One *tom* study participant related that in assuming *tom* identity she avoided some restrictions on freedom that women experienced. As Eh explained, "I changed because I like it and it's easier for me...where to go, what to do." Eh enacts her *tom* identity by engaging in some of the behaviors described as *mai riap roi* for women. Thus by transgressing the norms that make her recognizable as feminine, through both the act and its reproduction, Eh not only gains greater freedom but reinforces and asserts her *tom* identity. Eh's identification with a non-normative subjectivity enables her transgressions and in this, even as a subordinated group, *toms* may appear to have more agency than women because *toms* are not held to the high standard of femininity that women are. Although she still is likely to be judged by *riap roi* standards her assumption of *tom* identity decreases the expectation that she conform to these ideals. Gender normative women may feel less free to challenge their prescribed roles because there is a stronger expectation that they embody hegemonic feminine ideals.

Käng's (2012) argues that, "social evaluation and moral legitimacy underscore the contemporary terrain of gender/sexuality in Thailand" (Käng, 2012 p. 476). This is evident in evaluations of *riap roi* since being *riap roi* is very much about proper behavior and also linked to hegemonic femininity. Thus those expected to be *riap roi* (normative

⁶ Commonly used phrase that refers to MTF.

women) were subject to more moral scrutiny than men while normative men, MTF, and *toms* did not face the same high expectations. For a MTF being recognized as *mai riap roi* could threaten claims to femininity and increased the likelihood that MTF were associated with negative stereotypes. Therefore adopting *riap roi* behavior would be advantageous for MTF who endeavor to be recognized as women because it may help substantiate their claim to femininity and contribute to being recognized as a “good” person, which could serve to mitigate stereotypical representations.

5.6.IDENTITY CATEGORIES AND STEREOTYPICAL REPRESENTATIONS

In the following section I will describe some stereotypes typically associated with each category of study participant and discuss the terms commonly used to describe gender and sexual minorities in the research site. Macrae, Stranger, and Hewstone (1996) define stereotypes as “mental associations between category labels and trait terms” and note that these can be transmitted and maintained culturally to promote shared values (Macrae, Stranger, & Hewstone, 1996 p. 9). While many study participants related negative stereotypes, positive beliefs about gender and sexual minorities were also prevalent.

5.6.1. GAY

Most study participants referred to gays as *gay*, *kathoey*, or *tut*.⁷ One gay study participant related several sub-categories of *gay*: *gay king*, *gay queen*, *gay both* (can perform both insertive or receptive sex roles), and *bisexual*. These may be known in the research site but were used less commonly in speech. A few community members described the sub-categories *gay king* and *gay queen*. “Gay kings are stronger and like men. Gay queens like a women, soft and effeminate but dress like men” (Female translator). People generally associated being *gay* with effeminacy and gays were typically described as polite, weak, and well dressed. Both normative and non-normative participants noted that many gays conceal their identity and just act like “normal men”. Those who posed as ordinary men were perceived to be successful at work and study. Study participants were aware of many behaviors typically associated with gays. When asked how gays were viewed in his village, Arun explained:

⁷ Descriptor used to describe effeminate men roughly equivalent to faggot.

They think that it's a strange creature in society or in the village but they don't mind having them in my village because the character of gay is like a funny person. Everywhere gays are, funny things happen because they talk loud and they're always showing a smiley face. (Arun, gay)

He later referred to another stereotype: gay people have bad tempers and often have mood swings. These two contradicting representations show gays as both sources of amusement and potential threats. June, another gay study participant, referred his effort to rise above stereotypes. “ I think now in Thailand if someone is gay it seems they want to have a lot of sex only. With social networks, there are a lot of gay chat rooms. Gay rooms, lesbian rooms . . . and you have to have positive thinking. It's very important.” In this view, gays are primarily recognized by their sexuality and other aspects of their personality are negated. June views association with stereotypes as a barrier to favorable recognition that must be overcome. His reference to “positive thinking” indicates that though he may at times find these ideas disheartening, he is determined not to let stereotypes affect him.

5.6.2. MTF

Male to female transgender individuals were commonly called *kathoey*; just a few participants in the focus groups used the term *phet ti sam*⁸ possibly due to the formality of the situation. One community member explained that when some children see a *kathoey* they laugh at them and some men tease them. In my observations I found it was not uncommon for people to shout *kathoey* or *tut* if they passed MTF individuals in the community. Chonwilai (2012) classified *tut* as derogatory term however, when I asked a shop owner about the use of the word *tut* she didn't believe that it was negative. She explained how she might use *tut* when speaking with her young nephews if she felt they were speaking too femininely or being overly affectionate, asking “are you *tut*? You have

⁸ The third gender (more polite/formal way to refer to MTF).

to be a man.” Though her example shows *tut* is not always used maliciously⁹, it is also demonstrative of the strong social preference for masculinity and represents an effort to discourage deviance from it. Nevertheless MTF may be upset by these terms. They preferred to refer to themselves as *sao praphet song* (second type of woman), *phuying* (woman), *phet ti sam* (the third sex), or less commonly lady boy.

Male to female transgender individuals were often described as “two in one”: possessing the best parts of men and women. They were characterized as better than women because they possess special abilities such as talent at delicate craftwork and entertaining and are seen as superior to women in their performance in these areas. Because of the physical strength afforded to them by their male biology, they were also seen as capable of doing hard work. Some MTF study participants also prided themselves in their ability to display both male and female characteristics. Conversely many viewed male to female transgender individuals as over the top and immodest, explaining that they dress too revealingly and show off too much. They are believed to have strong characters and draw attention to themselves with loud and exaggerated behavior that would be inappropriate for women (*mai riap roi*). Many times they were described as *dalok*, which can mean funny or entertaining. Other stereotypes more specifically associated MTF with immoral behavior.

Sometimes kathoeyes cause problems, use counterfeit currency, hurt old people, and steal money, If I did many good things and another kathoey did a bad thing, everyone would think badly about kathoeyes. Only one piece of bad news could erase all of the good things. (Note, MTF)

Note’s reflection above shows the ease in which gender and sexual minorities may be linked to stereotypical characteristics and behaviors. MTF were often associated with being promiscuous and carrying HIV. As Aff, a MTF study participant, mentioned, “I’m afraid of HIV because if a *kathoey* has HIV people will condemn *kathoeyes* and blame

⁹ For example people similarly shouted *farang* (foreigner) at me as I passed. In this case it was more of an observation of something amusing or novel.

them for bringing HIV to society.” This stereotype was also related in a conversation I had with a female primary school teacher. The teacher explained that many *kathoeyes* in the village are promiscuous and have HIV. When I asked her how she knew this, she responded, “I can’t be sure but just by their behavior, and they are not *riap roi*.” She further extrapolated that “Women can control, but men cannot control their desire to have sex and *kathoeyes* are like this too” (Female primary school teacher). Here being not *riap roi* made MTF more susceptible to being stereotyped but it was also recognized that the possession of “male” characteristics such as excessive sex drive hinders them from adhering *riap roi* behavior.

5.6.3. YING RAK YING

Knowledge of female homosexuality in the community was limited and most study participants could not conceptualize female homosexual behavior outside of the *tom-dee* paradigm. While there are several polite ways to refer to male to female transgender individuals, no one in the community was able to identify a polite way to refer to *toms* including *ying rak ying* study participants themselves. As a result any female who expressed interest in another female and exhibited somewhat masculine behavior was usually called a *tom*, even those who did not identify as *tom* themselves. *Toms* are associated with much of the same stereotypical behavior that is associated with men such as drinking alcohol, smoking, and having several girlfriends at the same time. This association of *toms* with promiscuity was demonstrated during several interviews when two different translators took it upon themselves to ask *tom* study participants if they had many girlfriends at once. In general, *toms* were described as less accepted than other genders and less talented or capable. As one teacher explained, “a lady boy has more abilities than a man or a woman, but a *tom* has less than everyone” (Female primary school teacher). *Toms* were depicted as not being able to study well and as aggressive or overly confident. Similar perceptions were voiced in a discussion I had with a class of grade 12 students. When I asked the students “What are *toms* like?” the responses included “I don’t like them”, “no comment”, “they’re not smart”, “they have too much confidence”, “some are cute”, and “a little smart”. When I further questioned them on

whether *toms* were accepted, none responded affirmatively with responses ranging from “less than a lady boy” to “50/50”.

Here some students directly expressed dislike for *toms*. This is a strong indicator of the degree to which *toms* are ostracized because Thai culture is generally indirect. It would be more typical to avoid the question as the student who replied “no comment” did. Though they were sometimes perceived to possess athletic ability, which could be linked to strength, it was only in *toms*’ own self-representations that they were seen to possess some positive characteristics of masculinity such as leadership. On the positive side, *toms* were widely recognized to be more compassionate and more capable of meeting women’s emotional needs than men. In this view they retain their link to femininity. Yet *toms* were most often associated with negative stereotypes with few non- *ying rak ying* study participants recognizing any admirable characteristics. Many community members view being a *tom* as a choice and believe that *toms* can change and “become a woman again”. The participants in the secondary school teacher focus group agreed with their colleague when she said that “*Tom* is not from the genes maybe its because they feel sad about a past relationship or man treated them badly. They can change into a lady in the future” (Female secondary school teacher).

5.6.4. CAREERS

The careers identified as available to gender and sexual minorities were stereotypical and more rigid in comparison to those available to men and women. This can be seen in the following primary school focus group participant’s response when asked what kinds of careers gender and sexual minorities could have.

For kathoeyes, stylist or beautician. But a tom or dee could not do this; only a kathoey can do this very well. Kathoeyes can be volleyball players (they have to be on men’s team) or make up artists. They are really good at volleyball. Designer. Tom’s are good at takraw¹⁰ and football. Most takraw and football players on the

¹⁰ A sport similar to volleyball but played with a rattan ball in which players use their feet, knee, chest, and head.

national team are toms. They're like a man. Gay men they are like men, they can have normal occupations and dee can have any normal women's occupations.

Similar views were conveyed by the secondary school focus group when they were asked to discuss appropriate careers for gender and sexual minorities. “Boys who become girls have many careers but girls who become boys, we haven't seen any careers for them, not many. *Toms*, most of them are athletes. Some are bodyguards. Most are athletes. Many look after movie stars or are a personal assistant” (Male secondary school teacher). Again *toms* were ranked lower than other gender and sexual minorities and normative genders and seen to have very few career options. In contrast to the growing equality cited between men and women, there is no mention of equality for gender and sexual minorities and the career options open to them are very limited. In addition, the primary school focus group specifically noted that gender and sexual minorities should not be teachers. “*Pit phet*¹¹, *kathoey*, *tom*, *dee*, should not be a teacher because teachers are role models. But nowadays there are some teachers that are *kathoey*. And *toms* too but I think many students will look up to these *pit phet* and might be influenced by them” (Female primary school teacher).

Several study participants referred to the influence of media in forming their perceptions. It can be seen to both dispel and propagate stereotypes. For example a friend of mine explained that she felt a little scared of gay queens because she heard on the news that they often kill each other. Yet in another instance she described how her opinions changed after seeing a movie about a gay man who was feminine at home and masculine at work. “I thought it was really sweet how he took care of his little nephew. At first I didn't like gay men, but then I realized it was because of the hormones” (Shop owner). Here being gay is related to hormones and seen as something out of the individual's control. Whereas *toms* are to perceived to be making a choice to deviate from *riap roi* behavior and may be seen as more transgressive. One primary school teacher credited the media with broadening social views of *kathoeyes*, “In the past if a family had a child that *pitphet* they couldn't accept them but now it's ok today because television and

¹¹ Literal translation: mistake gender. Sometimes used to refer to gender and sexual minorities.

newspapers that have helped opened our minds about *kathoey*” (female primary school teacher).

In this section, stereotypes were influential in social perceptions and sometimes in gender and sexual minorities own self-images. The representations of gay men as funny and bad tempered confer a form of recognition that could be marginalizing or damaging and may limit social mobility. Similarly the use of the word *dalok* to describe MTF is similar to Arun’s description of the perception of gays in his village and such categorization may prevent them from being taken seriously. Study participants of normative genders often attributed the behavior of MTF and gays to biology or retention of “male” characteristics such as sex drive. As such the responsibility for their transgression from hegemonic norms was somewhat diminished. However, *tom* identity was described as a choice and thus their transgression was seen as conscious and more disruptive. Because *toms* are seen as willfully disregarding gender norms this may contribute to the comparatively low level of acceptance they experience in comparison to MTF and gays. Also of significance is the lack of recognition for female homosexuality outside of the categories *tom* and *dee*. As Butler describes, “identities cannot be claimed if they have not first been imagined elsewhere” (Butler, 2004 p. 32).

5.7. DISCUSSION

In this chapter it can be seen that the hegemonic norms promoted by the Thai state are still prevalent. Morris (2002) comments on the states’ efforts to cultivate the appearance of ideal nationalist behavior and contends that the performance of this behavior is a measure of “proper citizenship”. As was noted by Jackson (2003), conforming to appropriate gender norms is an essential component of this ideal behavior. Chonwilai and Boonmongkon (2012) maintain that Thailand’s system of two normative genders and one normative sexuality arose from state efforts to shape dominant ideology by constructing truths and sexual values that were supported by the medical field and religious injunctions. When magnified with the understanding of gender norms related in this chapter, it can be seen that dominant ideology promotes what Richardson (1998) refers to

as hegemonic heterosexuality. This indicates that a proper citizen in Thailand is both heterosexual and of a normative gender.

While literature on gender and sexual minorities in Thailand often refers to the strong pressure to exhibit masculinity, study participants also placed a strong emphasis on conforming to feminine ideals. The use of *riap roi* in relation to femininity makes explicit that embodying a specific type of femininity is integral to being recognized as a good woman and gaining social acceptance. Study participants appeared more cognizant of multiple masculinities and femininities when reflecting on current gender configurations rather than when relating to hegemonic ideals, as was noted in discussions of percentages and the appropriation of masculine and feminine characteristics. The association of characteristics with masculinity and femininity can serve to reify hegemonic norms but may also open possibilities for subversive repetition. Butler (1990) contends that, “the repetition of heterosexual constructs within sexual cultures both gay and straight may be the inevitable site of the denaturalization and mobilization of gender categories.” Examples of both normative and non-normative individuals challenging these ideals may indicate that gender roles are changing and suggest that a reconstruction of hegemonic norms is occurring.

But gender and sexual minorities in Thailand not only have to transgress hegemonic norms but may also need to subvert the stereotypes associated with their identities. Not only are these stereotypes detrimental in terms of cultural representation, they may also be potentially harmful to gender and sexual minorities social mobility. Steele (1997) describes stereotype threat as “the social-psychological threat that arises when one is in a situation or doing something for which a negative stereotype about one’s group applies. This predicament threatens one with being negatively stereotyped, with being judged or treated stereotypically, or with the prospect of conforming to the stereotype” (Steele, 1997 p. 614). When stereotype threat occurs individuals may experience pressure to continuously disprove the stereotype and their performance in areas in which the stereotype is relevant may also be affected. Steele contends that although stereotype threat can apply to any member of the group about which a stereotype exists it can be

particularly harmful to those who are identified with a domain in which the stereotype is relevant¹². Steele argues that “an emotional reaction caused by the threat could hamper performance in an identified domain” and can cause disassociation with the domain (ibid). This could be particularly problematic in important domain like school and have far reaching consequences beyond the domain. Even positive stereotypes that associated gender and sexual minorities with specific niche areas could be potentially constraining. This type of representation could inhibit the possibilities of gender and sexual minorities imaging themselves moving beyond these set spaces. Continued consideration of how gender and sexual minorities are recognized as they interact with norms, stereotypes, and social groups will help to develop of fuller understanding of how the gender and sexual minorities’ experience recognition and envision their futures.

¹² The theory of domain identification posits that success in a domain (school, sports, job etc.) is more likely if one identifies with this domain; domain identification is preceded by an assessment of one’s abilities and the likelihood for success in that domain (Steele,1997).

CHAPTER 6: SPHERES OF RECOGNITION, NEGOTIATION, AND EXPRESSIONS OF IDENTITY

6.0. INTRODUCTION

In Thailand, in Isan, people don't understand about this. They don't like it. They think a woman should get married with a man, but really deep in my heart, I had another feeling. I wanted to be a man. My mother couldn't accept this because most people have expectations that a woman should get married to a man. When I was young she couldn't accept me because I was like this...My mom wanted me to change and my older sister wanted me to change but I couldn't change because it was in my blood. (Eh, tom)

Eh's recollection above is illustrative of gender and sexual minorities relationship to hegemonic gender norms and begins to illuminate how this relationship is pertinent to the way they view themselves and how they are recognized by others. Butler (2004) underscores that "norms of recognition function to produce and de-produce the notion of human" meaning that a person's ability to relate to and perform certain socially accepted norms affects the degree to which they are recognized as socially viable beings (Butler 2004, p. 32). For study participants, the influences of social groups and negotiations with social norms were integral throughout their process of identification as a gender or sexual minority. As "coming out" is rare in Thailand, sexual orientation and gender identity are usually expressed by showing rather than telling. Study participants used different strategies to show their identity, which included the modification of physical appearance, speech, and behavior. In this chapter, I will relate study participants' experiences as they began to negotiate and express their identities. By examining how gender and sexual minorities interact with norms, I will consider the ways in which they experience and seek recognition. The importance of family and cultural mores will be explored to reflect on how these factors influenced study participants' decisions to express or conceal their identities.

6.1. NEGOTIATING IDENTITIES

Study participants from all categories experienced periods of uncertainty sometimes involving suppression or negotiation before being able to express their gender or sexual identity. Confusion during this process was most emphasized by gay and *ying rak ying* study participants. *Kathoey* and *tom* identities were the most commonly recognized non-normative identities in the research site and as a result these study participants may have experienced less confusion about how to identify. Nevertheless negotiation with norms was also a critical precursor to identity expression for all study participants. Difficulty or inability to conform to prescribed gender norms was a common experience often involved in identity negotiation as Pranom described below.

When I was growing up I was confused about, about what I should be like. How should I be like a man or how should a man or a boy behave. I was, I was attracted to boys or men and that made me confused. I thought, 'why don't I like girls instead?' And I started to hate myself and hate that feeling and wanted to change it. But I, I couldn't... I tried to like a girl, I tried to act like a man but it's not in my nature. I just couldn't do it. (Pranom, gay)

Though acutely aware of gender norms, Pranom was uncertain where to place himself. He felt confused about his attraction to other men and his inability to exhibit normative masculine behavior. The stress that he experienced due to these feelings was so great that he even left school for several years. During this period, both Pranom's self-recognition of his non-normative identity and the fear of how others would recognize him appear to have contributed to self-stigmatization that inhibited his social development and meaningful social inclusion. While he later graduated from university and became a successful business owner, he looks back on the time as painful and confusing.

6.1.1. AVAILABLE IDENTITIES

Butler (2004) points to the difficulty of imagining oneself in an identity if one had not first been presented with the possibility for its existence. Therefore the limited knowledge

of gender and sexual diversity conveyed by Pranom and several other study participants may have contributed to difficulties in negotiating their identities¹³. Bom explained, “they don’t know the meaning of gay or lesbian in this part of the country” (Bom, gay study participant). Krit, another gay study participant, also remarked on this limitation, “When I was young I thought gay was the same as lady boy.” Such lack of knowledge may have limited study participants’ perceptions of available identities and resulted in long periods of confusion for several gay study participants. This may also have been shared by some *yink rak ying* study participants, some of whom had difficulty describing female same sex relationships outside the *tom-dee paradigm*. When asked the question, “What would you prefer to be called?”, only *ying rak ying* participants who identified as *tom* answered directly while the other participants’ responses suggested complex relations to identity labels. For example, Nat expressed strong dislike for the term *tom* but had difficulty responding to the question. After some prompting she responded, “I would like them to call me by my name. I really don’t like it when they say the *tom* has arrived. I don’t like it. I wonder if *kathoeyes* feel the same way...I don’t like it. I don’t like it when they say *tom* and *dee* are coming.” At the end of the interview she reiterated her dislike for the term *tom* explaining:

I have had the genes of a man since I was young but I don’t like people to call me tom. I don’t want to use this word. I don’t want other people calling me tom. I want them to call me by my name and I want society to accept me more than this. Not tom and dee have arrived. It’s like I told you before I don’t upset anyone and I don’t do anything bad for society.

Nat was clearly distressed by being recognized as a *tom* and appears to view the label *tom* as a sign of disrespect and indicative of a lack of positive social recognition and acceptance. *Toms* are often viewed negatively and the label *tom* not only serves as a specific identity marker but also carries the stereotypical characterizations associated with *toms*. Thus recognition as a *tom* involves negotiation with a new set of norms, the stereotypes of the non-normative. While Nat may resist conforming to many of the norms

¹³ It is important to note that those who spent time in Bangkok had considerably more knowledge about gender and sexual diversity and were aware of a greater number of identities.

of femininity, transgressing these norms makes her subject to scrutiny by the stereotypes associated with *tom* identity. Since Nat was quite comfortable displaying masculine qualities, her averse reaction to being called *tom* appears have been more in response to the associated stereotype than reservations about expressing a masculine identity. Nat may also have reacted to the way in which *tom* was used. People often shout out *tom* or *kathoeys* when they see a person of a non-normative gender presentation. This may feel objectifying and also serve to differentiate gender and sexual minorities from people of non-normative genders. Based on her difficulty choosing what she would prefer to be called it seems Nat may not have been aware of the terms used to describe female same sex relationships. This may extend to other study participants as well. Som-O said she didn't mind being referred to as a *tom* but didn't know what she would like to be called while Malee conveyed uncertainty about being a *tom* but also could not say what she would prefer to be called. It may be that study participants felt uncomfortable verbally affirming their identity as this is rare in Thailand or it is possible that they did not feel the need to identify as anything.

6.1.2. REFLECTIONS ON SOCIAL PERCEPTIONS

As was seen in Nat's case, study participants often linked identities to stereotypes. Aff made reference to stereotypes often attached to *kathoeys* as she described her mentor.¹⁴

I had a mentor who is kathoeys. Some kathoeys have a lot of sex, it doesn't look good and it is not socially accepted. My first mentor was like this but then I found some other mentors who were better models for me. (Aff, MTF)

Aff's statement indicates the degree to which stereotypes inform social perceptions of *kathoeys*. The influence is so great that even Aff herself is seen to rearticulate this stereotype. Her efforts to distance herself from stereotypes underline a consciousness of the link between behavior and social acceptance. Since she endeavors to be recognized as

¹⁴ Some MTF study participants, like Aff, had mentors as they were beginning to express their identity that offered advice ranging from what type of cosmetics to buy to what type of hormones to take.

a woman she is conscious that she must be subject to the same norms as women in order to be recognized as such.

Note experienced tension as she struggled to express an identity that excluded her from complete recognition.

I felt confused about my life. Since I'm not completely a woman and I can't have children, would a man accept me? Would my boyfriend accept me? Would his family accept me? ... If you get dressed like this some people do not understand you or do not accept you. Sometime I thought that other people hated me. I worried that people may not accept me dressed as a woman. (Note, MTF)

Before acting to express her identity Note gave careful consideration to how she would be recognized and whether or not she would be accepted. Note also refers to other ideals associated with femininity such as motherhood. This may be related to the idea that women must fulfill social expectations to marry and have children to be considered complete women (Chongwilai & Boonmongkon, 2012). While Note deeply desires to be recognized as a woman, her own self-recognition as “not completely a woman” and her inability to meet the expectation to become a mother designate her as incomplete. Note struggled with these concerns and her intense desire to live life as a woman. Eventually the discomfort she experienced dressing as a man led her to adopt a female identity and begin living as a woman. This commitment to expressing her identity is significant. Two other MTF study participants¹⁵ in this research dress as men even though they identify as women. These study participants attributed their inability to dress as a woman to school rules. However Note is also subject to these rules and was still able to make this step. This indicates that these rules may be less of an obstacle than the other study participants suggested and other factors such as fear of unfavorable recognition or perceived lack of social support may also influence these study participants' decisions to conceal their feminine identity. Winter (2009) notes that individuals in gender transition often face difficulties because of the stigma attached non-normative identities and suggests this may

¹⁵ Both Bodey and Piow identify as women but dress as men.

discourage some people from making a gender transition. Thus it is possible that stigma may have dissuaded study participants from asserting a feminine identity or that they were still in the process of gender transition.

Note's desire for recognition as a woman is strong and she like the other MTF study participants, is careful to behave in ways she perceives as socially acceptable in order to achieve favorable recognition. Both Aff and Note related an understanding of what is required to be recognized as a woman. The explicit reference to acceptance in these cases indicates the significant influence that desire for social recognition exerts on individual identity. This desire can also be seen to motivate some study participants who considered adopting normative roles as Malee did. "I felt in my heart that if I was a woman and I have to have a family, it would be better than this. But now I don't know if it's better than this or not. I have thought about this a lot. Whether it would be better if I had a family?" (Malee, *yink rak ying*).

6.1.3. RELATION TO MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY

The accounts above indicate that the "outness" of the study participants is quite varied and for some, identities are still being negotiated. However those who wished to express their identity did so by showing rather than telling. I will detail later how "showing" was used by study participants as a form of coming out. It also represents a crucial means of reinforcing gender identity. Eh illustrates this as she describes other *toms* "They want to show. Show man, because a man drinks and smokes... I have another *tom* friend who is always drinking and smoking one pack per day. Smoking, smoking. But she's like a man, she wants to show man" (Eh, *tom*). This relates to the idea of selective appropriation described in Sinnott's (1999) work *Masculinity and Tom identity in Thailand*, by which the selective appropriation of masculine and feminine traits is used to form *tom* identity. As seen in Eh's description of *toms*, appropriating characteristics typically considered masculine, and conforming to masculine stereotypes can help bring *toms* closer to being recognized as masculine and solidify their male identity.

Study participants' recollections of childhood were often characterized by gender non-conforming behavior. Aff recalled, "I liked to sing and wear girl's clothing. They had beautiful clothes and were cute and sweet and gentle. They were polite and dressed beautifully...I wanted be a woman, a lovely woman." Here it can be seen that Aff was cognizant of gender norms from a young age and saw wearing girl's clothing as a means to gain recognition as feminine. Like many MTF study participants Aff viewed gentleness and beauty as key to establishing a feminine identity. For Gam clothes were not only outward displays but were also linked to her identity and self esteem. Gam remembered "I wore pants to school and would change to a skirt at school. Then I would change again and wear pants back home. I felt shy when I would wear a skirt and saw a girl I liked. If I wore pants I would feel confident" (Gam, *tom*). Not only did study participants feel more at ease in the clothing of their desired gender, in Gam's case her confidence was also adversely affected by wearing gender appropriate clothing. Wearing pants helped Gam feel closer to her masculine identity and helped her feel more comfortable and confident. In Nat's self description, association with masculine behavior was used as a claim to masculinity. As she recalled, "I was like a boy I didn't like to play with dolls. I liked to play with marbles and I liked fighting like a boy. I didn't like to play with dolls or jumping rope, I played like a boy since I was young." (Nat, *ying rak ying*).

These instances reflect the study participants' awareness of hegemonic gender norms and demonstrate the powerful influence this has in informing gender and sexual minorities own ideals. These self representations may also be viewed as a means to gain further recognition by confessing to non-normative behavior. In *The History of Sexuality: Volume I*, Foucault described confession as a method of using speech to "transform pure knowledge and simple consciousness in a real way of living...truth...is not defined by a correspondence to reality but as a force inherent to the principles and which has to be developed in a discourse" (as cited in Butler p. 162-163). Thus while gender and sexual minorities in Thailand generally abstain from coming out directly, here by confessing to transgressing gendered norms they can be seen to use speech indirectly as a means to assert their identity. In doing so they "constitute a truth of themselves through the act of verbalization" (Butler, 2004 p. 163). In Jessica Benjamin

theory of recognition, communication is similarly integral to recognition whereby communication is seen as an ongoing process that acts as a mechanism and example of recognition (Butler, 2004). Study participants also asserted their identities by emphasizing their distance from prescribed gender roles. This relates to Benjamin's view of negation whereby the other is understood as not me (ibid). Malee employed negation to distance herself from femininity and amplify her masculinity.

My character is a little bit like a man. I behave like a man. I'm laid back not fussy like an average women...But like this I am strong, I am strong and can take care of myself. If I was like a woman I couldn't take care of myself or my family. But like this I can take care of them...I'm the person who works. It's like I am the responsible person that does everything in the family. Does everything instead of my father and mother. It's my character to be the leader and they look at me like this. They think I am bleang ben [like a tom, have deviated from prescribed gender]. (Malee, ying rak ying)

Here Malee made reference to several ideal characteristics of masculinity: leadership and responsibility while at the same time she emphasized her deviation from femininity as advantageous. In this way she unproblematicizes her gender nonconformity and asserts her masculinity at the same time. By drawing attention to the social recognition of her transgression, "they think I'm bleang ben", Malee seeks to validate her claim to masculinity. Bodey's characterization of men featured a similar opposition of masculine and feminine. In this explanation negation was used to illustrate MTF individuals difference from men. "They're like an ordinary friend, manly, stronger. They're not like us, we're soft we can't carry heavy things or do hard work. Or we will complain, we're like women, weak and not strong. We are afraid to lift heavy things" (Bodey, MTF). Presenting masculinity and femininity in opposing binaries helps to define Bodey's self-conceptualization and reinforce a feminine identity.

Hegemonic gender norms can also be seen to influence selective appropriation or retention of masculine and feminine qualities. Despite her self-identification as *tom*, Gam's recollection below reveals an attachment to hegemonic femininity.

I used to smoke and drink a lot but now I don't smoke only drink. When I see other women who smoke, like toms I think it's not nice. I don't like it and when I saw how other women looked when smoking I thought it looked bad and I thought how people would think of me when I am smoking so I stopped. I still drink but not too much. (Gam, tom)

Even though Gam identifies as a *tom* and generally aligns herself more closely with masculine gender norms, she is evaluating herself in relation to hegemonic femininity in upholding the view of smoking as unacceptable for women. This is in agreement with the general view of *riap roi* behavior for women where some drinking is permissible but women who smoke are viewed with repulsion. This is another indicator of the strength the discourse of *riap roi* exerts on hegemonic femininity in that even those who seek to distance themselves from femininity still maintain some allegiance to it.

Although they conform to certain norms, MTF identities can also be understood as transgressing norms because they blur the boundaries of normative masculine and feminine identities sometimes creating an amalgamation of the two categories. MTF study participants often experienced dual recognition in that they were often depicted as two in one or described as having the best qualities of men and women. While most desire to be recognized as women some MTF choose to cultivate or preserve masculine qualities rather than negate them. Many MTF expressed pride in the retention of some masculine traits. As Aff explained:

I feel that kathoey is someone who can do everything. I can do men's things that girls don't have the ability to do. For example, men are not soft or polite. Women cannot be strong. I can be sweet. I can work hard to carry chairs, and tables and

do everything to help my family with their business (at their furniture store). I enjoy this. (Aff, MTF)

It is clear from the preceding accounts that all of the study participants engaged (or are engaged) in a process of negotiation. This can be related to the influence and value afforded to hegemonic representations of masculinity and femininity and the strong cultural preference for heteronormative gender and sexuality. The degree to which study participants' expressed their identities ranged from closeted to completely open, but the majority fell somewhere in the middle, neither consciously concealing nor flaunting their identity. The rarity of publicly asserting an identity may be related to the Jackson's (2004) description of Thai state power as promoting normative public presentations but overlooking private deviation from normativity. Also of importance is Jackson's (1995) classification of Thailand as a shame culture; he explains that unlike many Western cultures that make judgments based on abstract notions of right or wrong, Thais are "much more concerned with how they appear to others and how they measure up to other's expectations" (Jackson, 1995 p. 41). Participants in this study were often concerned with meeting social expectations and meeting parental expectations was of paramount importance. The desire to gain positive recognition from family members was largely influential in expressions of identity.

6. 2. THE ROLE OF FAMILY

Most importantly, I will make society accept me so my family can be happy (Aff, MTF).

Family plays an extremely important role in Thai society. Feelings of social obligation and consideration of others (*greng jai*) belie most social interactions but perhaps the strongest of all is one's obligation to family. The need to be a good son or daughter and the pressure to behave in this way can be seen to influence individual behavior. Study participants expressed a strong sense of duty to and respect for parents as well as concern for their approval.

6.2.1. ATTITUDES TOWARD NON- NORMATIVE EXPRESSIONS

Throughout their process of identification as gender or sexual minorities, study participants were subject to both supportive and disapprobatory responses from family members. Aff explains:

I feel free to be myself and my family gives me freedom because when some people are kathoeys their family cannot accept them. The family wants to keep it secret and cannot accept this. And they don't let their children dress like this or take hormones, and they wouldn't let their child have an operation (sex change). My mother supports me with everything. (Aff, MTF)

Here Aff's freedom of expression is related to the support and understanding provided by her family. Aff recognized that such supportive attitudes aren't always forthcoming for gender and sexual minorities. However even Aff's situation is contentious in itself as the family she referred to throughout the majority of the interview is her aunt's family whom she began living with at age 11. She made only brief mention to her biological mother and avoided speaking about her biological father. This reluctance to provide detail about her biological parents may indicate that they were less supportive of her non-normative gender identity.

Study participants most commonly experienced conflicting messages. In most cases, at least one family member disapproved of the study participant's gender non-conformity, at least for a period of time. This can be seen in Arun's account below.

My family supported me and taught me good things like the teachings of Buddha, the way I could apply that to my life and how to behave in the society even though I am a little bit different from average people. They always told me, 'if you are a good person you will be able to make society accept you.' But at first my aunt's husband couldn't accept what I am. He tried to influence my aunt and told her "give him hard work, give him hard work so he can be a man. He can do work

*hard and be strong.” But he still cannot accept me and won’t even look at me.
(Arun, gay)*

Note was subject to similarly mixed messages.

My grandmother couldn’t accept me. She didn’t want me to wear a skirt because society couldn’t accept me because society is very traditional. If everyone saw me wearing skirts and makeup, society wouldn’t accept it. Sometimes I wore it and if there was a problem I hid. But my parents didn’t have a problem, they understood. They didn’t want me to be a girl but since I’m like this they understood. They said, “you can find a job and finish your studies, be a good person and don’t cause problems and that’s enough. (Note, MTF)

In the accounts above, family members expressed attitudes ranging from support to disapprobation upon recognizing the study participants’ non-normativity. Another common theme in these descriptions was that “being a good person” was perceived as a means to acceptance. In this understanding, being recognized as a good person may mitigate the stigma attached to gender and sexual minorities and can be seen as a means to counter stereotype threat. Study participants perceived society as not fully accepting of non-normative genders and held the view that they could make society accept them. The desire of study participants to be recognized as a good person was a recurring theme throughout the research that I will discuss later on in more detail.

6.2.2. INFLUENCE ON EXPRESSION OF IDENTITY

In some cases families’ responses were significantly influential in study participants’ expressions of gender identity. Such was the case with Nat. Throughout our interview, Nat expressed deep concern about her mother’s opinion of her and a strong desire for her mother’s acceptance. She mentioned her mother over twenty times throughout our forty-minute interview.

I first felt like I wanted to be with a woman about two years ago, when I was 33, because at this age my mother was able to accept it...I'm open because my mom can accept this. If you ask me if I care about my mom yes, I care. If my mom didn't like one of my girlfriends I couldn't continue being with her. I'm not quite sure how much she knows about me. She is old, about 70 years old so I'm not sure how old people think. But I think my mom accepts this and my brother too, he knows I'm old enough to make my own decisions and am able to take care of myself so he doesn't worry. I think that at first he didn't like it but after he saw that my mom didn't say anything about this he didn't care. It depends on my mother. (Nat, ying rak ying)

Although in several other instances in our interview Nat refers to being “born this way” and being not like a woman, emphasizing her distance from femininity, she was not able to engage in a relationship with a woman until recently after she perceived that she gained her mother’s acceptance. While she cannot be sure what her mother or brother think, because no one has said anything to her directly admonishing her behavior, she equates this lack of critique with acceptance. Other study participants’ consideration of their family was so great that they prioritized the families’ concerns over their own. Bom’s concern for his family is so deep that he lives in secrecy, concealing the fact that he is gay.

They still don't know. But they have started to be suspicious and ask, “Why don't you have a family? Why don't you have a girlfriend?” And then I just try and change the subject. They wouldn't understand. I am afraid that they wouldn't accept me and I care about their feelings. I feel tired of trying to suppress the feeling of being gay and not being able to show it, especially around family. It's tiring. I tried to get used to it but it's not easy. It's hard for me being gay in a small community. But I try to forget things like this and focus on taking care of my parents. (Bom, gay)

Bom’s fear that his family wouldn’t accept him is so great that he is unable to express his identity. Instead he actively conceals his identity by adopting normative masculine

behavior. In doing so he endeavors to save the face of the family and protect them from the potential shame of having a non-normative son. For Malee, parental acceptance was related to the degree to which non-normativity was expressed.

My parents worked very hard, they knew I was like this but they weren't serious about it because they were busy working. When I was young my parents didn't control me too much, I was a bit naughty like a boy. If I went somewhere I would go and behave like a boy not like a girl. When I was about 17 or 18 years old, I fell in love with a girl but my mother and father couldn't accept this. I knew that they knew I was like this but they couldn't accept me having a girlfriend. When I told my father I liked girls he said, 'If you are like that then I won't stay here.' He was going to leave because he couldn't accept me. If I am like this, I have to be like this but if I am like this and have a girlfriend he couldn't accept that. I wanted him to accept the person who I loved. I felt tortured. I wanted my father to accept me like an ordinary person but he couldn't accept me. And I spoke strongly with him and stood up to him for the first time. I thought about leaving home. I wanted...I wanted to leave and fight, have a life by myself. I could have done that and done what I wanted, I think, if I stay alone it would be different than living with my family. Sometimes I feel like if I am alone, I have my own private world, I could choose to do whatever I want but if we live together I have to restrict myself. I can't be like that, but if I had gone away on my own I don't think that I could have spent my life like that. (Malee, ying rak ying)

As Malee described, her parents were aware from her behavior that she was like a boy, yet while this showing was tolerated, the transition to doing was not. Differentiated acceptance related to the degree to which non-normativity is expressed may be related to Morris's (1997) view that the enactment of sexual identities removes the ambiguity between being and doing and is in contrast to the "face" of Thai cultural nationalism. This could also apply to the "face" of the family and parental disapproval could be traced to desires to save face. Rather than risk being socially recognized as non-normative and threaten breaking the face of the family, like Bom, Malee submitted to a life of

restriction. Although Malee has a girlfriend, her girlfriend is married so Malee only communicates with her over the phone. She still lives at home with her parents and while her appearance is somewhat masculine, she does not show off in other ways. While she recalls considering leaving home to live a freer existence, her sense of obligation to her family was too strong and she was unable to carry out these plans.

Other misgivings expressed by family members were related to their children entering a relationship and reflect a common conception that non-normative individuals could be easily taken advantage of. Pranom explained, “my sister is worried that someone will steal from me or take advantage of me because that happened to people we know.” On other occasions family members equated expressions of non-normative behavior to vulnerability and expressed a desire to protect their child from potential harm. Ploy recalled:

I had a boyfriend but my mother couldn't accept that, she didn't want me to have a boyfriend. My mother forbid it and didn't like it. So I just wrote letters to my boyfriend because we didn't have mobile phones then. My mother would say I shouldn't have a boyfriend because she didn't want people to deceive me and use me just for money. She heard on the news about people taking advantage of kathoeyes. She was afraid about that someone would do that to me. She said, “don't marry; you should stay single”. But I couldn't do it, so I had a boyfriend.
(Ploy, MTF)

Since Ploy's mother was otherwise accepting of her living as a woman, her decision to forbid Ploy from having a boyfriend seemed mainly motivated by her desire to protect Ploy rather than a desire to suppress her identity. It can be seen that family members were also concerned with social perceptions and endeavored to shield study participants from experiencing negative recognition and from being taken advantage of.

6.2.3. ATTEMPTS TO CHANGE GENDERED BEHAVIOR

Several study participants recalled family members attempts to change their behavior. This is seen in both Arun's reflections and in the quote from Eh in the opening of the chapter. Arun's uncle thought that hard work could make him a "man" while Note's grandmother prohibited her from wearing women's clothing. Gam explained, "I think people still want me to be like nature and not to be a *tom*. If you are a woman you should be a woman. Once my brother told me that I shouldn't change nature. He felt really angry because I was like a man he would ask why don't you wear a skirt like a woman." Malee recalled her father's attempts to change her behavior.

There was a time when my father used to introduce some men to me because he wanted me to change because he knew I was like this. But he wouldn't tell me that this person would meet me. The men would look at me and laugh because I am like this and I couldn't be their girlfriend. I didn't meet their expectation. He would know, he would know I was like this. (Malee, ying rak ying)

Since Malee's father was more concerned with her interest in same sex relationships than her appearance, his was more concerned with selecting more "appropriate" partners for her. June related similar pressure from his father to get married.

Yes, he wanted me to get married but I told him no. I don't want to... I don't have a lot of money; I have very many reasons for making excuses like this because many people don't know. Many people don't know about my daily life, so now I am quite a man. Because after school I stay home alone, sometimes I'm bored with everyone. I choose some friends for chatting and I write on Facebook to show my thoughts and feelings. I feel alone and especially since my mom died you know I feel alone, I feel everything. Sometimes I feel looked down on. (June, gay)

Because June felt that he could not get married, he felt pressure to show that he is a man in other ways and has sacrificed his chance for companionship and happiness to please

his family. The preceding anecdotes reveal that the pressure to exhibit normative behavior is quite strong and that normative behavior is encouraged even when study participants made efforts to assert a non-normative identity. This pressure has led some study participants to conform to normative roles and repress their sexuality, yet others were more determined to express their identity.

6.3. SHOWING OUT

When I came back from Bangkok I had long hair and put on makeup like a woman and I put on women's clothes and my mother ran to hug me. When I left I was a man but when I came back I was a woman. (Ploy, MTF)

As seen in the example above, study participants did not verbally “come out”; rather those wishing to express their identity did so by showing rather than telling. Study participants commonly employed strategies to show their identity, which included the modification of physical appearance, speech, and behavior. Study Participants adopted clothing and hairstyle, mannerisms, pronouns and parts of speech, and behavior associated with idealized masculinities and femininities to express their identity. Arun described, “At first I was shy to tell them and then they could see because of the way I walk, the way I talk, and the way I behave quite girly. So they must realize I am gay for sure” (Arun, gay). Both Ploy and Arun’s cases represent conscious efforts to convey their identity. The event described by Ploy is particularly significant because it marked the moment that she fully adopted and gained recognition as a woman. It also represents Ploy’s “coming out” to her mother and is symbolic of parental acceptance.

However the degree of intentionality in gender expressions differs from person to person as is illustrated here by Pranom’s response after I asked when his family knew he was gay. He replied, “Uh I’m not sure, I’m not sure they do. They know but I never told them...but I think they know, they can tell, they can see. And they are just o.k.” Here Pranom is neither trying to conceal nor flaunt his sexual orientation. Yet further discussions revealed his lack of comfort in being completely open.

I just want to say it's not very easy for being gay especially around here. People don't know very well what gay is. That they don't really understand because you know sometimes I get a feeling like I want to have a boyfriend but it's not possible or you are afraid of how your family is going to feel about that. Or what other people will think about you if you have a boyfriend and you walked together hand in hand. It's not possible even if you want to do it or you want to have it.

Concern for how others would recognize him and desire to be recognized positively by his family can be seen to limit his possibilities. While Pranom earlier stated that he wouldn't mind if people in the community knew that he is gay, social perceptions clearly play into his ability to express his identity so much so that he sees having a boyfriend as impossible. This relates to the distinction between showing and doing and indicates that Pranom perceives lower levels of social acceptance when the abstract notion of sexual orientation is made concrete through action. Similar motivations can be seen to influence Bom's decision to conceal that he is gay. Rather than using showing as a form of coming out, for Bom it served as a means to conceal his identity. He explained "most of the time I try to act like man, like what a man should be" (Bom, gay).

6.4. DISCUSSION

I began this chapter with Butler's (2004) reflection on norms of recognition and how the performance of norms relates to intelligibility and social viability. As was seen in this chapter, study participants desire for recognition was complex and situational and exerted significant influence on their lives as they negotiated their identities. In turn, study participants' experience of recognition affected the manner and degree to which they expressed their identity. Desire for recognition varied case by case but included the desire to be recognized for who one is, to gain validation of a non-normative identity, and the desire to be recognized as a good person by family and society. Many desired to be recognized under dominant norms of masculinity and femininity; this was true for both those who deviated from the gender assigned to them at birth and those who sought to conform to it by adopting normative behaviors. Meeting parental expectations was of particular importance for study participants and they experienced considerable pressure to

conform to hegemonic gender norms and fulfill the normative roles associated with them in order to do so. Study participants clear relation to norms as they negotiated their identity was evident in both current self-representations and childhood recollections. Both *tom* and MTF study participants made conscious efforts to express their identity by selectively appropriating or retaining key qualities associated with femininity and masculinity. For some showing out was an opportunity to gain recognition or validation of their identity. For other study participants recognition was less desirable. Butler (2004) emphasizes the advantages of remaining less intelligible particularly when recognition under dominant social norms would be unfavorable (see chapter 2.) This is relevant for study participants who sought to avoid recognition of their non-normativity as was the case for those who chose not to identify with a known category and those who chose to conceal their identity and conform to hegemonic norms.

In addition to negotiating with norms of femininity and masculinity, study participants also had to contend with social perceptions of gender and sexual minorities. Blackwood & Johnson (2012) found that queer Asian subjects “find themselves situated in, informed by and in some cases struggling to exceed popular and shifting national views of supposedly “traditional” and thereby relatively acceptable forms of gender and sexual transgression” (Blackwood & Johnson p. 443). In this chapter, knowledge of ‘traditional’ forms of gender and sexual transgression was seen to both to inform and constrain gender and sexual minorities. While traditional knowledge may have allowed for local awareness of gender and sexual diversity, social perceptions of gender and sexual minorities were largely linked to stereotypical understandings. For those who identified with the more visible and well-known gender and sexual minority groups (*kathoey* and *toms*), this knowledge may have eased their confusion as they recognized their transgression from normative roles. However the limited local knowledge of gender and sexual identities may have constrained some study participants as they struggled to establish themselves against hegemonic norms and stereotypical representations.

The majority of participants expressed a strong desire to dispel stereotypes and to be recognized as a person rather than as a stigmatized identity. When considered in terms of

Pakulski's (1997) conceptualization of cultural rights as deepening claims citizenship, it is evident that gender and sexual minorities lack the rights to dignifying representations, symbolic presence, and to propagate their identities. Mills (2012) explains that minority groups can often be considered to have differentiated citizenships in conditions where hegemonic norms set the precedent for belonging. Thus cultural practices that label and locate gender and sexual minorities within a fixed category, can be seen to differentiate gender and sexual minorities and threaten their claims to citizenship. For gender and sexual minorities, relating to hegemonic gender norms was integral in constructing personhood and informing recognizability. Butler (2004) suggests that "we must be undone in order to do ourselves, we must be part of the larger fabric of social existence to create who we are." (Butler, 2004 p. 100). Although gender and sexual minorities may have been differentiated, constructing themselves in relation to norms and cultural ideals is a means to gain recognition and claim cultural rights. In the following chapters I will consider how gender and sexual minorities experience recognition at school and consider further what negotiations they engage in efforts to achieve the recognition they desire.

CHAPTER 7: SCHOOLING, EXPECTATIONS, AND ASPIRATIONS

7.0. INTRODUCTION

The ARROW report on sexuality and rights in Asia, *Redefining Identity*, identifies schools as sites for disciplining and forming students in regard to sex and gender, finding that “any expression of sex and gender falling outside of the hetero-normative male-female binary is discouraged” (ARROW, 2009 p. 79). Morris (1997) asserts that since the 1860s, national education in Thailand has been instrumental in constructing Thai subjects and imparting moral values associated with ideal Thai-ness. As seen in the preceding chapters, an ideal Thai citizen is both a normative gender and sexuality, thus schooling can be seen as a means through which heterosexual citizenship is promoted. For participants in this study, schooling was an important site of social recognition that involved experiences of both support and stigmatization. In this chapter, I will incorporate the understanding of teacher and student focus group participants as well as the perspectives of adult gender and sexual minorities to explore how gender and sexual minorities experience recognition in school. I will investigate the influence of supporting or stigmatizing attitudes and consider how interactions with peers and teachers may affect expressions of sexual orientation or gender identity and conclude with a presentation of study participants’ perceived possibilities and constraints in their envisioned futures.

7.1. THE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

As study participants were quite varied in age, socioeconomic background and their expressions of gender or sexual identity, their school experiences varied considerably.¹⁶ Several study participants related that they did not consciously express or were unsure of their gender or sexual identity while in school; this included all gay study participants with the exception of Arun and some *yink rak ying* study participants. Despite these individual variances, study participants generally viewed their overall school experience as positive, expressing that they found teachers friendly and believed they were treated as

¹⁶ One informant attended informal schooling and another only attended primary school, both cited poverty as impediments.

equals. Bodey described “I feel like I was the same and not different from the others. My teachers were interested and good”. Although required to wear a boy’s uniform at school, Bodey adapted feminine mannerism and used feminine pronouns. It is possible that some study participants lack of differentiation from normative students may have helped ease their relations with peers and teachers particularly for those who endeavored to consciously conceal their identity like Bom. He explained, “In school I had a good experience with friends and teachers. I was a good student and well behaved and loved by friends and teachers and I didn’t really show that I was different from the other boys” (Bom, gay). While assessments of school were positive overall, when I questioned study participants on more specific aspects of school they related both negative and positive experiences. In the following sections, I will compare the experiences of gender and sexual minorities with views of teacher and student focus group participants to generate a fuller picture of how gender and sexual minorities experienced recognition in the school setting.

7.1.1. TEACHER RELATIONS

Focus group discussions with both primary school and secondary school teachers were used to gain insight on teachers’ perceptions of non-normative students and to investigate how these shaped their interactions with students. In general the teachers conveyed accepting attitudes explaining that they do not differentiate amongst students or treat non-normative students differently. “In school we don’t separate them and we wouldn’t call a student a *kathoe* if we met them. It’s the same for all students we just call them boys or girls” (Female primary school teacher). Another teacher explained, “teachers can understand why a boy might become a *kathoe* because they learn psychology before becoming a teacher and don’t want to change them. We want to support them and help them in their abilities like flower arranging” (Female primary school teacher). Secondary school teachers expressed support for these students as long as they followed the rules. “I am not against them, but if they break the school rules then I am against that. For example, not wearing the correct uniform. Those who’ve changed their gender ignore these rules. We don’t feel happy with this because this group makes our work more difficult” (Female secondary school teacher). Of significance here is that the abilities the

teacher recognized coincide with the stereotypical perceptions related in chapter five. It is also important to note that the disapproval teachers expressed regarding rule breaking may also convey disapproval of transgression from hegemonic gender norms.

Student-teacher relationships were explored in both individual interviews and the student focus group discussion. Gender and sexual minority study participants generally described relationships with teachers as friendly and some viewed teachers as sources of support or encouragement. “All of the teachers were satisfied and didn’t blame me (for being non-normative). When I dressed like a woman, they said I was beautiful and called me daughter. I was very close with the teachers and my advisor invited me to join clubs and flower arranging.” (Piow, MTF). Here Piow received encouragement from teachers. This is significant as it indicates that Piow experienced recognition as a woman, which may have helped validate his/her feminine identity. When asked about his relationship with teachers, Arun response revealed a wider variety of teacher attitudes. He recalled, “on one side there are teachers who can accept gay people, the other side they [pause] really cannot accept because they think there are only men and women in this world” (Arun, gay). Discussions in the student focus group revealed several instances of unfavorable recognition. When asked how teachers treat non-normative students, one student explained:

We have one teacher who doesn’t like pet ti sam¹⁷ at all. During role call he prohibits us from saying kha¹⁸ instead of krap¹⁹. And the teacher taunts us and makes sexist remarks like, ‘boys stand up and kathoeyes too’. They should treat us the same as other students and not ridicule us or say hurtful things. We want them to understand us and not treat us differently from others. (MTF student)

Not only did the teacher use hurtful language and differentiate these students but also prohibited them from expressing their identity.

¹⁷ The third sex.

¹⁸ Polite ending for females when speaking.

¹⁹ Polite ending for males when speaking.

The responses above reflect both the diversity of study participants' individual experiences and variance in teachers' attitudes. It can be seen that teachers may be either a source of adversity or support for students of non-normative genders. This could be related to both personal opinion and policy. The latter is seen in the secondary school teacher's emphasis on the need to enforce school rules, which also can be viewed as a need to police the boundaries of normativity. As Richardson (1998) suggests the boundaries of tolerance for gender and sexual minorities are maintained by a heterosexist public/private divide. Thus those who express non-normative identities publicly at school contest this boundary. While teachers may be personally accepting of gender and sexual minorities, teachers see it as their duty to enforce the school rules and make sure these students are in line with the prescribed standards of appearance for normative boys and girls. The teacher who taunted the students may also feel that he, as an educator, is helping to form these students by teaching them "correct" gender appropriate behavior. Yet for students, breaking the rules is one of the few means available to express their identity. As some participants in the student focus group related, gender and sexual minorities may not be free to do so at home. As a result, some gender and sexuality minority students test the boundaries of normativity at school and behave normatively at home. This suggests that these students may be more concerned with parental expectations than teachers' efforts to enforce normativity.

7.1.2. "CORRECTING" NON-NORMATIVITY

As was seen in the previous chapter, efforts to change gendered behavior were made by parents and sometimes by gender and sexual minorities themselves. Although no study participants shared an experience of a teacher trying to change their behavior, findings from both the primary school and secondary school teacher focus groups indicate that teachers sometimes attempted to "correct" non-normative students. This is in contrast to the focus group participants' initial expressions of acceptance and support for non-normative students. When the group was asked if they had ever seen or heard of teachers trying to change a student's gendered behavior one teacher replied:

I have seen and heard this. Some teachers call some students to meet with them and speak with them and try to change their heart to be men. And some teachers when they see tom and dees ask, 'why don't you love your own gender. Why do you have to behave like the opposite sex?' The teacher usually does this one on one, in private. But some teachers speak to students in a big group and make the students embarrassed. And then they have the same behavior and don't change.
(Female primary school teacher/former secondary school teacher)

One secondary school teacher recalled her own attempts to change students' gendered behavior:

When I saw girls that were tom I would call them to come talk with me but I didn't feel comfortable to talk with kathoeyes. I tried very hard to change their minds to be a girl. Most of the toms cut their hair short like a boy and said krap all the time and I tried to change their way of speaking and their haircut. (Female discipline officer)

Here teachers took it upon themselves to “correct” non-normative behaviors even when they realized that this had little effect and may cause embarrassment to the student. Again this may be attributed to the teachers' role of educating students in proper social behavior and “correct” normative gender and sexuality. Also of interest, is the fact that the teacher felt compelled “correct” *toms* and not *kathoeyes*, which may relate to the idea that girls should be *riap roi*.

Findings from the secondary school focus groups revealed an interesting convergence between the realms of school and home. Teachers related that they were sometimes asked by parents to intervene and help to “correct” their child's gender non-conformity. Teachers are traditionally respected in Thai culture and may spend more time with the children than parents who are busy at the farm or with other work. A school discipline officer recalled, “Sometimes their parents would ask for my help ... many families cannot accept these students. For parents, the thing that is frightening is that people might hate them and that people will not accept them.” She describes a specific instance below:

There is a boy in grade 7 who I thought was kathoey but he didn't show off so I wasn't sure. When I went to visit his house his parents asked me to help with him (about his gender). They said, "We have only one son please help us look after him." So I encouraged them and said that he doesn't really show off that much but I knew I could not change him. (Female discipline officer)

Even though the teacher knew she had limited influence in this area she agreed to help in an effort to maintain social harmony and placate the parents. She later described another occasion when a non-normative student sought her help.

There was another girl whose whole family is tom, so her parents had the expectation that she should be a girl. The girl asked me to help her because she wanted to meet her parents' expectations. But since school started, she was unable to adjust herself in school. She couldn't get along with other girls and she felt like everyone hated her. So her parents came to school for a meeting because she wanted to move to another school. The teachers talked to her classmates and now she is ok and she feels happier. They accept her and she can stay with her friends. (Female discipline officer)

This intervention is interesting because not only does it reflect the student's efforts to meet her parents expectations but it is unique in that encouraged the peers rather than the non-normative student to make adjustments and may have helped facilitate a more hospitable environment. Yet it cannot be determined if student's classmates actually adjusted their perceptions or just adopted an appearance of acceptance.

7.1.3. PEER RELATIONS

Students' perceptions of non-normative students were gathered in focus group discussions and during informal conversations. The group generally conveyed accepting and supportive attitudes toward non-normative students explaining, "They are people like us; we can accept them and treat them like friends whether or not they do good things or bad things. We don't think about their gender but we think about their heart." However, it

must be qualified that some participants in the focus group may not have felt free to express their opinions on non-normative genders due to the participation of three male to female transgender students in the focus group. Some students expressed negative opinions of *toms*, who were not represented in the focus group, and an informal discussion in a classroom of only normative students revealed mixed attitudes indicating that gender and sexual minorities were not fully accepted (see chapter five).

Some study participants like Bodey reported being teased or mocked by peers. “There were some people and some groups (at school) that couldn’t accept me, they hated me and called me *tut* and *daow*²⁰. But I have met people who understand me and accept me, that like me the way I am” (Bodey, MTF). One MTF student focus group participant commented, “many people misunderstand us. They ask, ‘Why are you born *kathoey*?’ They say we waste our life because we are not real girls or real boys”. When questioned about relationships with peers some study participants were more reluctant to go into detail as is seen in Som-O’s response. “It’s good, I can hang out with every friend but if some of them don’t like me I just ignore them because if I responded to them I would create a problem with them” (Som-O, *ying rak ying*). Although she said the relationship was “good”, her further explanation implies that she has met less accepting attitudes. By ignoring unfavorable recognition, Som-O exhibits a desire to keep social harmony even if this means possibly being subject to teasing, unfair treatment, or exclusion. In contrast to Som-O, Piow’s method of dealing with potentially unaccepting attitudes was more proactive, “if friends aren’t close then I bring them close to me and then they are very happy to know me. Friends from other schools too, everyone is happy to have me as a friend because they’ve never have friends like this” (Piow, MTF). Piow’s response illustrates the belief that gender and sexual minorities can change social perceptions to gain more favorable recognition.

A few study participants found sources of support and experienced positive recognition from peers reporting that others intervened on their behalf in instances of bullying or exclusion. Note described such an occasion when asked to talk about a good experience

²⁰ Both are slang for male to transgender or effeminate gay, roughly equivalent to fag.

in her past. “When I was in primary school, I went to English camp with my friends. It was really fun and I met a boy who came and talked to me. He came and talked to me when the other people just mimicked me and made fun of me but he was nice to me and he encouraged me to join the group and tried to take care of me” (Note, MTF). Pranom found a similar friend in his secondary school. “I had a good friend that protected me and looked after me. If someone was bullying me in class or other boys teased me, he would try to stop them” (Pranom, gay). The responses above are indicative of the diverse attitudes of students toward gender and sexual minorities and the responses of non-normative students reflect instances of both positive and negative recognition. Similar to relationships within the family, gender and sexual minorities were faced with mixed messages at school.

7.1.4. SCHOOL INTEGRATION

In general study participants reported being well integrated in school and able to participate in many school activities. However some study participants related instances in which they were excluded from school related events or activities on the basis of their gender or sexual identity. Aff explained, “When I was in school I couldn’t show at some exhibitions. For example, there was an important exhibition in the province and *sao prophet song* couldn’t show. We didn’t have the same right to do this as men and women did” (Aff, MTF). Note described a similar scenario:

One occasion where I felt really sad and disappointed was on sports day. I wanted to be a cheerleader and the teacher chose me join the group with the girls. I practiced and practiced and finally when it was the last day, just one day before the match, they kicked me out. And I couldn’t do anything, I practiced just like my friends. And I told my teacher I practiced really hard. An older student came to talk to me and said ‘maybe the judges just wants real boys and real girls in the competition. They might say this person is not a real girl’. Then the head of the cheerleaders came to talk to me and asked me to leave the group, ‘can you dress like a boy?’ She said, ‘if you dress like a boy you don’t have to leave.’ I said it doesn’t matter. If you don’t like me the way I am then I will leave. You can just

take me out. If you don't accept me the way I am, I don't want to stay. I felt very disappointed.

While Note was first included in this group of gender normative students, she was expelled just before the group was scheduled to perform in public. This can be seen to reflect private tolerance and represent an effort to maintain normative appearances in public displays. Her inability to change the situation points to the difficulty of countering these dominant ideologies. Yet, Note's unwilling to compromise her identity shows her courage and commitment to gaining recognition for her identity.

Other study participants reported instances of exclusion related to sharing accommodation with the peers of the same sex. Som-o explained, "once when I was at a camp and stayed in the same room with women; they asked me if I was a man or a woman". Similarly being of a non-normative gender presented a challenge for Note when she struggled to find a friend to share an accommodation with her.

Most friends could accept me but some people couldn't. One time during a sports competition we had to stay overnight at a hotel but one night is very expensive so I needed to find someone to share the room with. But the boys didn't want me and the girls felt unsure. They were afraid I would abuse them. I told them I am a woman. I wouldn't do that. And my mom said I should get a friend to stay with me and asked "Don't they trust you?" But they didn't trust me. (Note, MTF)

Here non-normative students' difference was highlighted and used as a means to exclude these students from activities or events. These events are significant because despite the students best attempts to fit in they are unable to be recognized as a man or a woman, and instead were differentiated from peers.

7.2. ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND ASPIRATIONS

Consistent with the ideas expressed by teachers in chapter five, most MTF and *yink rak ying* study participants rated themselves as not very good at school and more interested in

activities. This is seen in Nat's self-description. "I was average at school and used to study in the second class. I felt satisfied. But if you ask me if I was good at studying, no, I liked activities" (Nat, *ying rak ying*). Career aspirations also reflected the limited options that teachers described. Gam recalled, "I wanted to be soldier and carry a gun... I used to study sewing but I wasn't good at it. I couldn't learn, I couldn't learn anything" (Gam, *tom*). Bodey's aspirations also echo the teachers' stereotypical expectations:

I really want to be an airhostess or Miss. Tiffany. That is my dream. If I could be Miss Tiffany my family would be very proud of me and everyone in the province would know me. I would feel really successful to reach this goal. This is the highest dream of many sao praphet song. I would be very successful and everyone would look see me as an important person and not worthless. (Bodey, MTF)

Here Bodey's aspiration is linked to self worth and a desire for positive social recognition from both his/her family and society. Miss Tiffany is a famous transgender beauty pageant, which Bodey refers to as the "highest dream" of MTF. The prevalence of this shared dream may indicate that the possibilities MTF perceive for their future could be restricted by the social perceptions of their abilities and notions of appropriate careers for MTF. However, Miss Tiffany is important to many MTF study participants because it enables them to freely express their identity. They also perceive the competition as a means to gain positive recognition and validation for MTF identities.

Piow's reflections on his/her future were interesting because s/he initially characterized him/herself as a good student with high career aspirations. S/he recalled, "when I was in primary school I studied very hard. I hurried to go to school with my friends because the girls focused on their studies but the boys just played football. I didn't pay attention to that and I got first place in my studies since first grade" (Piow, MTF). Yet when questioned about his/her hopes for the future, Piow expressed uncertainty about realizing his/her aspiration to become a doctor and no longer considered him/herself a capable student.

I wanted to be a doctor. I used to go to the health center often and I would observe how the doctor looked after the patients and tried to remember what the doctor did. I wanted to help sick people and I loved to help others. I knew it would be serious and I was not good at studying. I was just an average student but I loved activities, I really loved activities such as sports competitions and making flower arrangements. When I got to 11th grade I felt that I couldn't be a doctor and I needed to choose something easier in the same faculty as a doctor. I would finish and work in the factory. If people in the factory had an accident I could help them with first aid. (Piow, MTF)

While Piow first describes him/herself as high achieving student, by secondary school s/he expressed a preference for activities similar to the characterizations of MTF students related by teachers (see 7.1.). Piow justifies his/her decisions to work in a factory by explaining that s/he could still be helpful by being something like a doctor. Although it cannot be substantiated, it is interesting to consider whether or not overall social perceptions affected Piow's and other study participants' perceptions of their abilities and potential careers. While there is consistency between teachers' expectations of non-normative students and many study participants' self-representations, the extent to which these are related cannot be determined. These outcomes may also be related to the theory of stereotype threat described by Steele (1997) (See page 62). Steele explains stereotype threat is mostly likely to occur in a situation that "has relevance to one's self-definition" (Steele, 1997 p. 616). Because Piow was initially very engaged and successful in the domain of school it is possibly that this sudden change of heart was could be attributed to stereotype threat and related to the stereotype that gender and sexual minorities are better at activities than school. Steele suggests that one way to mitigate this threat is to discredit the stereotypes, possibly by having teachers express "optimism about their potential" or giving students challenging work (Steele, 1997 p. 625). Therefore it could also be inferred that teachers current stereotypical assumptions and encouragement of "special abilities" may be propagating rather than dispelling the occurrence of stereotype threat.

Some study participants identified difficulties in sexual orientation or gender identity as an impediment to their education. Two gay study participants reported discontinuing their studies as a result of confusion over gender non-conformity and sexuality. Pranom, explained that he left school before completing secondary school citing this as the cause and related that the same was true for Bom, who he interviewed for me. June attributed confusion about his sexuality to poor performance at work and in higher education.

In university I couldn't pass, I failed, failed everything because of this reason. I felt alone and cried every day. Sometimes I talked to other people normally but in my mind things were not ok. I would think it would be better to marry with a woman but I couldn't because I don't want live a lie. I feel sorry for people like this who have children; it's unfair for their children. (June, gay)

These instances may relate to the lack of information and social support in the community. Since these study participants are all gay men approximately 30 years old, it could be possible that conditions have changed since their school experience. However their confusion was so great that it acted as an impediment to their education, potentially limiting their life choices.

7.3. FUTURE, HIGHER EDUCATION, AND CAREERS

Concerns about physical appearance were of particular concern to male to female transgender study participants as they considered their career options. Note expressed uncertainty about deciding on a future career because she was unsure if she would be able to express her gender identity. “In the future, I don't know which faculty I should study in. I don't know which work would accept me. I always think very hard about this and don't know how to solve this problem” (Note, MTF). She further explained:

If you are like me, you can dress like a woman or dress like a man. If you have to go contact people in the office you have to get dressed like your sex. So if you are a man dress like a man, if you are a woman dress like a woman so they can

accept you. So most of them dress like boys, but I cannot do that because I don't like it. I would feel unhappy and I want to be happy" (Note, MTF)

Aff also perceived limited opportunities for male to female transgender individuals.

Thai society is closed and blocks everything for kathoys. For example, saopraphet song cannot be a president, politics and government. If they are doctors they couldn't wear women's clothes. This isn't something that can be accepted in society. Thailand is closed for saopraphet song. (Aff, MTF)

Piow dresses as a man as a result of these limitations. He presented this in a matter of fact manner explaining that he has to follow the rules though he later admitted it would be better if he could dress like a woman.

Since I dress like a man people call me gay. Some people say if you are kathoey, why are you dressed like gay? And I don't mind because I have to follow the university's rules. I'm not like others. Others think that if you study in university you have to dress like a woman. If I study in university I shouldn't choose the faculty where I can dress like a woman but rather one where I can find a good job. I should concentrate more about studying and graduating. My father asked that I finished school and find work. If you want to do something you should do it. If you are a university student you need to follow the rules. And I always follow the rules. I can just wear the uniform like anyone else. I don't have a problem. If I am supposed to dress like a man I have to do it. I wouldn't say anything and wouldn't have a problem. Work is work. Activities are activities. Private life is private life. But if I could dress like a woman it would be good. (Piow, MTF)

The preceding accounts illustrate that the pressure to appear a certain way may restrict gender and sexual minorities expression of identities, limit the possibilities they perceive, and affect life decisions. Because Note feels so uncomfortable dressing as a man, she felt uncertain what career to pursue and perceived limited options. In contrast, Piow put his

academic interests over the free expression of his gender identity, deciding to dress as a man rather than settle for a job that would accept him dressing as a woman. Study participants seemed compelled to follow these rules and they appeared to perceive a lack of ability to challenge these norms.

7.4. DISCUSSION

Russell (2002) finds that while sexual minority youth “are learning about civic life and their role in it as adolescents, they are simultaneously identifying and exploring a culturally stigmatized identity” (Russell, 2002 p. 259). This was true for study participants as they experienced pressure to conform to normative ideals of Thai citizenship while at the same time, endeavored to negotiate an identity that was often conflated with stereotypical characterizations. In this chapter, the preeminence of hegemonic ideals was reflected in some peers and teachers efforts to enforce normativity that can be described as what Turner (1997) refers to as exclusionary citizenship concerned with policing the borders. Johnson (2002) suggests that, “openly gay and lesbian identity categories can be more disruptive of privileged constructions of heterosexuality” (Johnson, 2002 p. 331). Accordingly this may explain why the visible categories such as *toms* and *kathoeyes* were more likely to experience stigma and be subject to attempts to change their behavior. Teachers often sought to prevent transgression and promote hegemonic gender norms. Yet consistent with Jackson’s (2004) description of the “Thai regime of images” as operating on two different public and private logics, teachers’ attempts to change gendered behavior were focused on appearances and they acknowledged the limits of their ability to truly change these students. Nevertheless teachers sought to limit the propagation of gender and sexual minority identities and school rules prohibited some students from openly expressing their identity. Like teachers, students who bullied or mocked gender and sexual minorities can also be seen as enforcing normativity. Their use of degrading language served to marginalize gender and sexual minorities and negate their worth and the legitimacy of their identity. Efforts to maintain the appearance of normativity not only inhibit gender and sexual minorities claims to cultural rights but are also seen to affect study participants perceived opportunities in higher education and careers.

CHAPTER 8: DESIRE FOR RECOGNITION: PURSUIT AND EXPERIENCE OF RECOGNITION

8.0. INTRODUCTION

Certain norms, ideas and ideals hold sway over embodied life (that) provide coercive criteria for normal "men" and "women."... we see that norms are what govern "intelligible" life, "real" men and "real" women. And that when we defy these norms, it is unclear whether we are still living, or ought to be, whether our lives are valuable, or can be made to be, whether our genders are real, or ever can be regarded as such. (Butler, 2004 p. 206)

Throughout this thesis I have explored how gender and sexual minorities have related to norms of recognition as they interacted with family, peers, and teachers in a rural community. In this concluding chapter, I will relate study participants' reflections on recognition, what they identified as means to achieve more favorable recognition, and reflect on how they experienced recognition overall. Using the concepts of cultural and sexual citizenship, I will consider how social perceptions construct the social and cultural space available to gender and sexual minorities and what this implies about how gender and sexual minorities are valued. Such consideration is pertinent, as the way study participants perceive and experience recognition may influence their identity expressions and social positioning, as well as their goals and aspirations.

8.1. REFLECTIONS ON RECOGNITION

When reflecting on social integration, study participants often referred to society as accepting or unaccepting of gender and sexual minorities. However as study participants use of acceptance was often ambiguous, I have chosen to describe their relation to the community in terms of recognition to more fully capture their experience and to acknowledge that acceptance cannot always be equated with the recognition study participants desired. Study participants' experiences and desires varied case by case and I have grouped these thematically to highlight their diverse views. In this first section, I will relate how study participants felt they were viewed by society and what they

perceived as acceptance in comparison with the social perceptions of gender and sexual minorities conveyed by parents, teachers, and students.

When considering social perceptions, the majority of study participants viewed society as accepting or partially accepting with a third group expressing indifference to social perceptions. Many study participants cited the increased presence of gender and sexual minorities in the media as a sign of acceptance. However as was mentioned in chapter five, the representation of gender and sexual minorities in the media is mixed; sometimes associating them with violence and crimes and other times offering more balanced portrayals. Although the media did help some people to develop increased understanding of gender and sexual minorities, the frequent association of gender and sexual minorities with stereotypes continues to impede the propagation of dignifying representations, which Pakulski (1997) asserts is a key component of cultural rights. Transgender beauty pageants were referred to as another example of increased social acceptance. “Before in beauty contests it was only women...but now there are many that include us, Miss Tiffany, Miss International queen. Society can accept us more²¹”. Several study participants shared this view and looked at these pageants with optimism, but separate pageants may possibly serve to isolate transgender women further. Although the objectives of Miss International Queen Pageant assert that the pageant provides an opportunity to increase acceptance for transgender/transsexual people and create human rights awareness, closer reading of the objectives seems to indicate that the pageant’s main interest is in promoting tourism. In fact, one rule explicitly prohibits contestants from making political statements about gay and transgender people in the talent competition and another rule serves to regulate the image of the competition (<http://www.missinternationalqueen.com/#obj>):

Contestants shall be a person whose background is not likely to bring disrepute to the Miss International Queen™ Contest or Title or the Licensee or the Promoter or any person associated with them. In case the Promoter has appeared to award

²¹ Both are beauty pageants exclusively for transgender/transsexual people.

the prize to an ineligible person, it may require the return of the prize or payment of its value to the Promoter.

These strict rules mimic the public fixation with positive imagery and reflect the cultural pressure to maintain appearances. Similar beauty pageants are held in villages and one community member commented, “when they show many people enjoy watching *sao praphet song* for a joke and think it’s entertaining but couldn’t accept them in a formal situation” (Shop owner). This indicates that observers may be drawn more by the spectacle of the participants than out of expressions of support and rather than offering MTF the recognition they desire, these pageants present them as sources of amusement. Thus it is questionable whether these pageants promote recognition of MTF identities or serve to further differentiate them and inhibit broader social inclusion by locating within a specifically designated space.

Study participants often viewed the increased visibility of gender and sexual minorities as a sign of social acceptance as Nat explains below.

Now Thai people are open because during the time I was in secondary school, there were few people like me. There were just four people like me in the whole grade but nowadays there are many of them and it seems like society is more open. But they have to follow the rules. Some young people don’t go to school or they live together as a couple and not work and it looks bad. I have my own job and career and I have the freedom to be with someone, with anyone. I’m not a burden to my parents or society. (Nat, yink rak ying)

Although Nat expressed optimism about the increasing numbers of gender and sexual minorities, she still viewed positive recognition as something that must be earned rather than something that is automatically afforded. This parallels the sentiments often expressed by parents of non-normative children who qualified that “you can be like this as long as you are a good person” and exemplifies how the experience of recognition is contingent on behavior. Nat’s reference to “following the rules” reflects her cognizance

of this understood agreement and by doing so she feels entitled to the freedom to express her identity. Yet as she alludes, gender and sexual minorities who do not do so may be recognized unfavorably. Krit also viewed acceptance as conditional. He explained:

It depends on how people carry themselves and what role they play in society. I am like this, a fun person, and I don't do anything to upset other people. Some people are not brave enough to be open because they are afraid their family may not accept them, they are afraid their friends may not accept them. Some people think like this. But I am my own person and other people don't have bad feelings toward me. I don't have anyone that hates me... but I don't know about others.
(Krit, gay)

Of significance here is Krit's self-representation as "fun", which is consistent with the gay stereotypes related in chapter five. Though he refers to others' role, it seems that Krit too is playing a role. In ascribing to recognition as a "fun person" Krit may be confining himself to what he views as a socially acceptable behavior. Presenting himself as non-threatening to social norms may serve to mitigate the anxiety others might experience upon recognizing his non-normativity. His reference to family and friends also exemplifies how consideration of recognition may affect the way that gender and sexual minorities present themselves.

When asked if he felt treated as equal, the weight Bom afforded to social perceptions was clear.

Equal, as long as I didn't show that I am gay and I've never told people that I am gay except one person. I am afraid of people's reaction, they might treat me differently knowing that I'm gay and might look down on me... And if I could I would change myself to not be gay. But I know it's not possible so I try to accept myself. (Bom, gay)

Bom's concern with social perceptions was so great that he even wished he wasn't gay and in order to avoid unfavorable recognition, he adopted normative behavior. His belief

that people might look down on him alludes to the stigma attached to identifying as a gender and sexual minority. Similar concerns were also noted by a teacher in chapter seven who remarked that parents' fear that people might hate or not accept their non-normative children motivated their attempts to change their gendered behavior.

Chok and Eh were among those who expressed indifference to social perceptions. "I never listen to people. If people look down on me I don't pay attention to them. I don't want to feel unhappy about their words. I don't care about it" (Chok, *gay*). Similarly Eh explained, "I don't care. Whatever they say, I don't care. I depend on myself and what others feel is not important to me...I am who I am. I don't rely on other people so I don't care" (Eh, *tom*). The defensive manner in which they both responded and their emphasis that they don't care about what others say or think suggests that these study participants may not have always been recognized positively and may have been associated with negative stereotypes. Som-O was the only study participant who felt that gender and sexual minorities were fully accepted. She explained, "society accepts [non-normativity] and it's something normal and society is more open. I don't think anything about it and I feel comfortable. It doesn't matter what people think because I don't do anything to upset other people" (Som-O, *ying rak ying*). Despite Som-O's claim that society accepts gender and sexual minorities, the last sentence draws this assertion into question as it alludes to less favorable social attitudes and indicates a lack of full recognition for non-normative identities.

As was seen in this section, social perceptions shape acceptable roles and behaviors that circumscribe the spaces available for gender and sexual minorities. Some study participants concern of social perceptions and desire for recognition led them to follow certain rules and adjust themselves to specific socially accepted roles. This reflects Butler's (2004) claim that social existence is enabled by the experience of receiving recognition. While maintaining a positive image is an essential requirement of Thai citizenship, gender and sexual minorities appear to experience more pressure to do so in order to dispel stereotypes often associated with their identities. Several study participants explained that they "don't do anything to upset other people". This phrase

was widely used by study participants from all categories and by attesting that they are inculpable, they argue that society cannot justifiably confer unfavorable recognition upon them. However the view that study participants most emphasized is that recognition is not automatically afforded to gender and sexual minorities but is something that must be achieved. In the following section, I will describe more specifically how gender and sexual minorities sought to gain recognition.

8.2. SEEKING RECOGNITION

Ong (1996) contends that, “cultural citizenship is a dual process of self-making and being-made within webs of power” (as cited in Mills, 2012 p. 88). Throughout this thesis I have shown how the discourses of hegemonic masculinity and femininity have coalesced with the ideology of Thai citizenship to construct understandings of proper citizenship. In this section, I will relate how gender and sexual minorities sought to construct themselves in respect to these ideologies to counter stereotypes and gain recognition. Presenting oneself as a “good person” or “better” was central to many study participants self-representations. Aff explained:

My family told me that something was wrong because society looks down on pet ti sam²². However I can change and be different and do good things. I want to present myself as better, every day, every day, every day, ...develop myself as good, better. (Aff, MTF)

Like several other study participants, Aff believed that society “looks down on gender and sexual minorities”. This may be related to the Thai Buddhist view of homosexuality and transgenderism as karmic retribution for having committed adultery in a past life. Since not all gave heed to this belief, with only one study participant mentioning Buddhism, this may also reflect negative stereotypes that associated gender and sexual minorities with “bad” behavior. Like Aff, many study participants expressed a need to prove that they were a good person and felt that they could influence social perceptions

²² The third sex.

and achieve more favorable recognition. Most commonly this was related to notions of “good” behavior. Note considered the implications of “good” and “bad” behavior below:

If you do good things many people will think you are a good person and if you do bad things everyone will blame you and the society will not accept you. If you are a lady boy you have to do good things so society will accept you... If I did many good things and someone did a bad thing, everyone will think badly about kathoeyes. One bad news can erase all of the good things. (Note, MTF)

Similarly Bodey explained:

I don't do anything over the top and I try not to make any mistakes but do appropriate things. If you are like this you have to be a good person. You can't fight the others and you have try and have a cool heart²³. If we are like this we have to make the other people accept us. We can't think in a bad way and we must not do anything bad in the community so they can accept us. (Bodey, MTF)

Study participants' clear awareness of how behaviors affect the experience of recognition can be seen in their efforts to distance themselves from stereotypes and portray themselves in ways they thought would help them achieve favorable recognition. As was mentioned in chapter six, these MTF study participants may have also been conscious of conforming to *riap roi* behavior which was associated with ideal femininity. By adapting this behavior, MTF may potentially strengthen their claim to femininity. Others felt that by being the best or better, they could influences social perceptions. Arun explained:

When you think you are different you have to try to do hard work to show that you can do challenging things. Like when the teacher asks the question in the classroom you have to prove to yourself that you can answer question and in doing so I think other students will accept you... You have to try to prove to that

²³ The phrase *jai yen* literally translates to cool heart and is desirable quality as it shows one is able to control one's emotions and not disrupt social harmony.

you can be a citizen in this country, you try to prove or make people realize the existence of being gay in this country. (Arun, gay)

While Krit qualified, “It depends on me if I want society to accept me and get equal opportunities. I have to fight to be equal...I am a human in this society. It doesn’t matter if people don’t like gays, I will behave my best and someday they will accept us” (Krit, gay). Both Arun and Krit refer to the marginalized position of gender and sexual minorities and view themselves as outside the boundaries of citizenship. For them, being recognized as a good person is important as it is both a means to mitigate the stigma attached to gender and sexual minorities and possibly a way to gain inclusion in citizenship and validity for their identity.

Notably, several *yink rak ying* study participants appeared less empowered to influence social perceptions.

Change for what? Change society and other people to like tom? I can’t change individual’s feeling or behavior. If I say you must accept the third sex, this is impossible. For example, someone likes me but you don’t like me. I cannot force someone to like me. (Eh, tom)

Though Nat did not self identify as a *tom* she was often characterized as one by others. She explained, “I don’t have the power to make people think like me or support me. But I want society to accept me more than this” (Nat, *ying rak ying*). These study participants perceived lack of ability to effect change may be related to the community’s view of *toms* as least the accepted gender and sexual minority group. This view was held by focus both focus group participants and community members who rated *toms* as less skilled and less intelligent and some directly expressed their dislike of *toms*. In addition, *ying rak yings’* relationship with stereotypes was more complex since for some, engagement with stereotypes was a means to gain recognition of their masculinity. Yet this may also have caused them to be equated with “bad” behavior and contributed to unfavorable social perceptions of this group.

For many study participants, the ability to effect change may be more idealistic than realistic. Aff recalled a specific incident of discrimination when she was required to report the army.

In Thailand men have to report to the army at 21. They must chose red or black cards and if they choose a red card they have to become soldiers. But because I am kathoey, when I went to get the card they told me not to go because I had breasts and long hair. They called me and another kathoey jitwipuri [harsh word for deviant, abnormal] jitwipuri. They said jitwiburi. If you have had the surgery they are called jitwipuri and then those who haven't had the operation are still jitwiburi. In society this word is very low. (Aff, MTF)

For Aff there is little hope of escaping this dehumanizing recognition as it applies even to post-operative transgender individuals. She became emotional and excused herself after she related this event and despite her previous emphasis on her ability to change social perceptions, this confrontation with social realities questions how much she is able to influence social perceptions. This also illustrates that gender and sexual minorities may not always be given the opportunity to prove themselves and shows that sometimes negative recognition is conferred just on the condition of their being. Aff was the only study participant who expressed a strong desire to have sexual reassignment surgery and was already far along in the process when I spoke with her. While she proclaimed that she desired to be 100% woman, she also expressed great pride in being two in one, which draws into question whether her true motivation for having the surgery may be a desire for more favorable recognition. Like several study participants, Aff made reference to the social perception that gender and sexual minorities “cannot have real love” explaining:

The love of sao prophet song is hopeless. I'm not a real woman so I have a broken heart and it hurts a lot. I loved him very much and I did everything for him. I gave everything to him but finally he left. The love of sao praphet song isn't permanent. Sao praphet song cannot have children or be housewives. No one really loves me

except my parents. After this experience I haven't found love and am still single. I have many friends but the men that I meet are only looking for money. The life of sao praphet song is very happy but they cannot achieve their wish for real love.

The view that gender and sexual minorities cannot have real love and can easily be taken advantage of was expressed by study participants of all categories as well as some of their families. Like Aff, Eh also attributed this to not being a “real man”.

Many just want money. I work and give them a lot of money. Sometimes girls go with a man; maybe my girlfriend lives with me but goes and has sex with a man. Stay with me then goes to a man. I cry, but when she comes back we stay together again. I know I'm not a man and cannot make a girlfriend happy like a man could.

Accepting the social classification of gender and sexual minorities as “not real” may contribute to Aff and Eh’s vision of themselves as unworthy of real love. Therefore Aff may perceive sexual reassignment surgery as both a means to be recognized as a woman and a chance to have “real love.”

The accounts above and the information related in the previous chapters indicate that dominant ideologies and social perceptions were largely influential in the way that gender and sexual minorities sought to present themselves and express their identities. In chapter six I discussed how study participants reflected on norms of masculinity and femininity as they sought to conceal or assert their identities. While in chapter seven, some participants aspired to careers that they thought would help them gain recognition for their identity and help them to be seen as valuable. In relating to recognized norms of masculinity and femininity and ideals of moral behavior, study participants perceived a means to gain recognition and assert claims to citizenship. Thus as Butler (2004) suggests their interactions with norms can be seen as relationships of necessary dependence. In the final section I will reflect on how gender and minorities experienced recognition and what this implies for their citizenship status.

8.3. CONCLUDING REMARKS: THE EXPERIENCE OF RECOGNITION, CITIZENSHIP, AND RIGHTS

Overall in the Thai society, LBGT's rights are still curtailed and we remain a minority group in terms of human rights protection. In the Thai constitution, citizenship is actually protected by law but when it comes to actual operationalization, it is counteracted by law enforcement organizations themselves. I think I should have a voice to ask for what I deserve, to have things such as a gay marriage guaranteed by the law and so much more that men and women have. This will change gays' lives in this country and we will have better lives in terms of social equality and sexual equality also. We are the part of this society and responsible to this society as well, we pay tax, we work to push the country forward and some of us are working to make the country better. Why we do we deserve this? We feel this country is our home like men and women feel. Furthermore, I understand some people may be prejudiced against men who love men and women who love women but if our rights were protected by law seriously and strictly, the discrimination against LBGT won't happen at all. (Arun, gay)

As Arun powerfully asserts, gender and sexual minorities are denied certain social and sexual rights. Although the Thai Constitution states that “all people shall enjoy equal rights and protection under the law regardless of their sex” (ARROW, 2009) there are no specific anti-discrimination laws that protect gender and sexual minorities. As was shown in chapter three, many gender and sexual minorities experience discrimination and lack equal rights. Restrictions on same sex marriage and the lack of ability to legally change names on identification cards were of specific concern to participants in this research. Krit also expressed his views on civic inclusion explaining, “If there was something I could change about society or the community, as a gay person I would improve my society. Follow societies’ rules, pay my taxes, and I won’t make society upset. I care about society and take care of society” (Krit, gay). Krit’s classification of himself “as a gay person” and Arun’s assertion that gender and sexual minorities deserve a voice suggest that they experience differentiated citizenship. The ideas conveyed by both Arun

and Krit indicate that gender and sexual minorities lack equal rights, which contributes to their marginalized civil status or what Richardson (1998) describes as partial citizenship.

As Butler (2004) asserts and was reflected throughout this thesis, norms of recognition govern intelligible life and what counts as “real” men and “real” women. Fraser (2007) purports that efforts to achieve gender equality must address both economic differentials and patterns of cultural values. As I reflect on the value afforded to gender and sexual minority identities, I will consider whether study participants experienced maldistribution and misrecognition and what this implies for their citizenship. In the previous chapters, I have discussed the ideologies that constitute ideal Thai citizenship. As Jackson (2004) illuminated in his discussion of “the Thai regime of images”, maintaining appearances is of paramount importance. Jackson (2004) contends that agents of the state including the civilian bureaucracy enforce the public/private divide by evaluating appropriate behaviors and appearances. As has been established in literature and previous chapters, appropriate behavior is characterized as conforming to hegemonic gender norms and standards of morality. Deviation from these norms was discouraged as these subversions would counter the images of masculine and feminine citizens propagated by the state and may be seen as detrimental to the national image. In consequence, gender and sexual minorities were continually positioned outside of the national worth through language, behaviors, and images.

By equating normative genders and heterosexuality with the correct performance of citizenship, gender and sexual minority identities were constructed as illegitimate. In the previous chapters, I related that many study participants were encouraged to develop normative behaviors and appearances. Parents and teachers’ efforts to change gendered behaviors reflect the social obligation to maintain normative ideals and the image of the Thai state. The language used by family, teachers, and peers also served to differentiate gender and sexual minorities and threatened the validity of their identity. The word often used to refer to gender and sexual minorities in the community is *pit phet*, which literally translates to mistake gender. Thus in this classification, they are recognized as abnormal or unnatural. Phrases such as not a “real man” or “real women” and “waste of life”

indicate that these identities are not valued and question not only their validity as citizens but even their humanity. These classifications were also used as a basis to exclude study participants in some instances. For example, barring MTF students from public exhibitions denied them representation and inclusion in the national citizenry. Despite their extraordinary efforts to assert their worth and claims to citizenship, study participants were never recognized as “real men” or “real women”. Simultaneously, the representation of gender and sexual minorities in the public imagery often conflates them with stereotypes or immoral behavior. And while there was knowledge of some more traditional identities, others forms of gender and sexual diversity were unacknowledged or unrecognized. Morris (1994) explains that in the traditional Thai logic of visibility and invisibility deviation from hegemonic norms is tolerated as long as this remains private. It can be maintained that the reification of dominant ideology, serves to keep gender and sexual minorities invisible. These examples point to the lack of dignifying representations and inadequate symbolic presence of gender and sexual minorities, which indicate that gender and sexual minorities experience misrecognition.

Chonwilai and Boonmongkon (2012) argue that the dominant ideology of heterosexual sexuality in Thailand is contributing to the challenges faced by gender and sexual minorities such as stigmatization and rights violations (see 3.7). These instances of discrimination constitute threats to the psychological, sexual, and reproductive health of gender and sexual minorities, while examples of exclusion from social spaces and rights highlight their partial citizenship status. The concepts *kala thesa* and *riap roi* relate to appropriate behavior and dress for a situation and are strongly upheld. As was seen in chapter seven, some study participants who expressed non-normative genders perceived limited choices in higher education and careers explaining that university and social rules would prohibit them from expressing their identity in some positions. One study participant’s rationalization that “work is work and private life is private life” again illustrates that tolerance of gender and sexual minorities is dependent on the maintenance of a heterosexist public/private divide. Butler (2004) suggests norms delimit the possibilities we perceive. As such, gendered expectations and stereotypical classifications of abilities and appropriate careers associated with identities may potentially impede

gender and sexual minorities from moving outside these predetermined spaces. Therefore, these restrictions in employment, rights, and citizenship indicate that gender and sexual minorities experience maldistribution.

In this thesis I have made an effort to explore social understandings of gender and sexual minorities and how this in turn affects their self-understandings and social positioning. Although there are documented instances of discrimination, what I have endeavored to illuminate are the more subtle ways in which dominant ideologies and social perceptions operate to differentiate and marginalize gender and sexual minorities. While some gender and sexual minorities have made efforts to gain recognition and rights, their full inclusion in citizenship has yet to be achieved and until the issues of maldistribution and misrecognition related above are addressed, the concerns of gender and sexual minorities will continue to be rendered invisible.

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APPENDIX I: HYPOTHESIZED TRANSITION IN *PHET* CATEGORIES

Pre-1960	Mid-1960's	Early 1970's	Contemporary (since mid-1980's)
Man (phu-chai)	Man	Man	Man Seua Bai (Male-bisexual)
<i>(Biological male identities):</i>	Kathoey phu-chai	Gay king	Gay king
	Kathoey num	Gay queen	Gay queen
	Kathoey praphet sorng		Gay quing
	Krathiam		
Kathoey	Kathoey thiam	Kathoey thiam	Kathoey (transgender)
	Katheoy thae	Kathoey thae	Kathoey plaengphet (transsexual)
			Khon sorng phet (hermaphrodite)
<i>(Biological female identities):</i>	Kathoey sao	Lesbian, Dai	Tom
	Sao Lakkaphet		
Woman (phu-ying)	Woman	Woman	Dee Woman

(Adapted from Jackson, 2000).

APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW GUIDES

ADULT GENDER AND SEXUAL MINORITIES

1. How old are you?
2. What do you do for a living?
3. How long have you lived here?
4. What do you like to do in your free time?
5. How would you describe yourself?
6. What were you like as a child? What was expected of you?
7. What is a man? What does it mean to be a man?
8. What is a woman? What does it mean to be a woman?
9. What is a man/woman expected to be like?
10. What were your hopes for your life as a child? What did you want to be when you grew up?
11. Can you tell me about your experience growing up?
12. When did you realize you were____? Tell me about this experience?
13. How did your family react?
14. How did you learn about being____? Did you go to anyone for advice?
15. What does being_____mean to you?
16. Can you tell me about your school experience?
17. What were your relationships with other students and teachers like?
18. Did you feel free to be yourself? Were family/friends/teachers/ supportive?
19. How much schooling did you complete? Were you satisfied with this?
20. Do you feel you had the same opportunities as other students?
21. How do you think people think of you?
22. Do you feel that you are equal/treated as equal? Do you feel restricted in any way?
23. Is there anything you wish you could change about society or about yourself?

STUDENT FOCUS GROUP THEMES

1. What is gender?
2. What is a man? What does it mean to be a man?
3. What is a woman? What does it mean to be a woman?
4. What is a man/woman expected to be like?
5. What are the responsibilities of being a man/woman?
6. Do you think most people meet these expectations and responsibilities?
7. What do you see as normal?
8. What are the advantages/disadvantages of different genders?
9. Do all genders have the same opportunities in life?
10. Do some genders have more privileges or freedom than others?
11. How do you identify genders?
12. Are there genders other than man or woman?

13. Is it o.k. to be different?
14. How would you treat someone who is different?
15. How do you think students/teachers would treat someone who is different?

TEACHER FOCUS GROUP THEMES

1. What is gender?
2. What should a Thai girl be like? What are they expected to do? What are they responsible for?
3. What should a Thai boy be like? What are they expected to do? What are they responsible for?
4. Do boys and girls perform or behave differently in school?
5. Discuss typical behavior/school performance for boys and girls?
6. Do you think you treat boys and girls differently? Do you have different expectations of boys and girls?
7. Have you noticed students of other genders besides male and female?
8. How are you able to identify them?
9. How would these students typically behave?
10. Do they have the same abilities as male and female students?
11. How do you think other students treat them?
12. Have you ever seen or heard of a teacher trying to change a students' gendered behavior?
13. What kind of careers can a woman have?
14. What kind of careers can a man have?
15. What kind of careers can a *kathoey* or *tom* have?