

Problematizing the Western Paradigm of Homophobic Bullying: A Socio-Cultural Study of Non-Normative Gender Teasing in Thailand

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Abstract

This paper argues against Western theories and paradigms that are used to describe the problem of bullying. The behavioral science and psychological knowledge that dominate studies in other societies leads to emphasize that bullying in all societies is a result of aggression and those who are bullied are vulnerable victims. I need to indicate that when Thai scholars describe the problem of homophobic bullying they tend to overlook the social and cultural dimensions that have changed in the past 80 years, which often brings western thoughts to explain the non-normative gender. This leads to insults and discrimination that make parents feel ashamed of having gay, kathoey (male transgender) and tom (female transgender) children. In the Thai context, I argue that people who claim a non-normative gender identity are not passive victims but they can express their sexual/gender identity within amusing bullying and teasing situations. This is an ever-evolving form of complex social relationship.

Keywords

Homophobic Bullying, Western Paradigm, Non-Normative Gender, Socio-cultural Context, Thailand

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Introduction

Bullying is often described as a universal problem that arises in similar ways in all societies around the world. This is a mainstream understanding that has dominated many disciplines to study this problem as a common human problem. This kind of mainstream study neglects to understand different social and cultural contexts in which, as a result, bullying has a specific and different meaning (Rigby, 2002; Smith & Monks, 2008; Yoneyama, 2015). Postigo et al. (2013) as well as Maunder and Crsfter (2018) suggested that bullying among youth was not just personal behavior but also in relation to the broader social and cultural context. Bullying is not a natural drive that determines who is inherently aggressive but it resides in a person's social interaction and is expressed in language, gestures and symbols that are social and culturally constructed (Morcom, 2015). The emotions and feelings of the bullies and the bullied also exist under cultural conditions. (de Abreu & Elbers, 2005) In this study I ask questions and examine the main paradigms of past studies. How do we criticize those paradigms to uncover a new understanding of bullying that exists in complex conditions? This does not necessarily mean that bullying is a social conflict or a personal behavior problem. But it may be viewed in other ways in which bullying takes place and coexists with the image and power relations that human's practice in everyday life.

Questioning why the idea of bullying in Western society is the same as other forms of bullying found in other societies is the starting point for me to revisit the knowledge and theories used to analyze the bullying. From my experience of study non-normative gender bullying in Thai society, makes me wonder that Western theories and concepts cannot be directly used to explain what happens to people in other cultures. For this reason, I review how new studies are available on this issue. It was found that from the 1970s to the 1990s, Western society emphasized the problem of bullying in schools. Until the 2000s, the limitations of the theory have been raised and problematised (Espelage et al., 2016). This lead me to find other theoretical concepts from many disciplines to analyze bullying in Thailand.

When Thai scholars study bullying as a social problem, the Western concept will be used as an analytical approach that is more interested in individual behavior and personal character than the social context. Particularly, it is influenced by clinical psychology, cognitive development and behavioral science theory. This creates a universal recognition of bullying that can be seen in every society. For example, the persecuted are the weak and less powerful, bullying is violent and is a violation of human rights, the persecuted will be ashamed, stressful and depressive (Amaraphibal, 2016; Daopradab & Worakullattanee, 2018; Ketsuphan, Thongkhambanjong & Supvirapakorn, 2020; Kwamkanung & Kaewchinda, 2016; Papattha & Phuphet, 2019; Sirisomrutai, 2018; Sittichai & Tudkuea, 2017; Surat, 2018; Wilai & Nilkham, 2018). At the same time, Thai scholars tend to be interested in

the prevention and solutions used in the West and use this literature as a guideline. For example, giving parents and teachers support and counseling (Charoenwanit, 2017; Inthanon & Sermsinsiri, 2018). In homophobic and transphobic bullying cases, this often leads to conclusions about the frequency and patterns of bullying that are physically and mentally damaging (Janamnuaysook, Balzer & LaGata, 2015). This explanation ignores the different and specific conditions of each society. Therefore, the study of gay, kathoey (male transgender) and tom's (female transgender) bullying in Thai society are incomprehensible from the Western experience. In this article I begin by explaining Western concepts and theories that influence the study of bullying. I then point out what arguments and criticisms are being made that Western theories cannot explain. Next, I will explain the context of Thai society that has changed the concept of gender and how the modern Thai state has adopted the Western concept of gender. In the last section, I will give information from the interview I conducted to point out the experiences of students who claim a non-normative gender identity and have been bullied. I believe that Thai society has a unique form of homophobic and transphobic bullying. In this article, I argue that the bullying and mockery among gay, kathoey and tom people is not just sexual discrimination, does not make them victims of violence, nor does it prevent them from expressing their sexual identity. Rather, it is a relationship style that has both humor and anger, and creates a different hierarchical order of people under a culture of high valued social image.

Methodological Approach

This article uses two methods for studying and collecting information. The first is to study documents, articles and books related to bullying. I will review the documents, investigate the situation, behavior, patterns, methods and expressions of bullying. I will also analyze the concepts and theories used to study bullying among gay, lesbian and transgender people found in the West and Thai society. Then I will compare how the studies and the findings in the West and Thai society are similar and different. I will question how the influence of Western theories affects the understanding of queer people in Thai Society. Is homophobic bullying in the West similar to Thai society? The second method is to interview a group of Thai gay, lesbian and transgender students studying in high school. I will contact the teachers at the school to request permission to host a group interview. The interview will give me important information about the thoughts, feelings and experiences of students who have been bullied. Finally, I will analyze and understand the Thai social and cultural context that makes bullying of non-normative people a unique form.

Timeline of the Western Concept of Bullying and Its Critiques

In the past, studies of bullying took place in Western societies, and most studied groups were youth. The description of prevalent bullying in academic circles falls under

the individual pathology paradigm (Coleyshaw, 2010). This is a reason why scholars are so interested in behavioral and emotional expression. Western society's awareness of bullying came from Thomas Hughes (1857), *Tom Brown's School Days*, referring to a boy student being bullied by a friend from a rugby team. Later, in 1897, Frederic L. Burk studied the teasing and bullying among students. The early researches on school bullying comes from the work of Scandinavian scholars. An important study is Anatol Pikas's *Treatment of mobbing in school* (1975), which suggests that many students ally together to persecute, bully and harm a single victim. Dan Olweus's studies, *Aggression in Schools: Bullies and Whipping Boys* (1978) and *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do* (1993), describe forms of bullying that are far more than collective and physical but also the continuous face expressions of displeasure and disgusting which reinforces the problem of student's aggression.

As a result, the understanding of bullying in Western society is focused on the aggressive behavior of youth, which is likened to a ferocious herd that attacks a weakened prey (Horton, 2019) and the physical and mental impact of those who have been bullied (Koo, 2007). In terms of bullying, Olweus' (1978) study has roots in Swedish society, where the term mobbing refers to a group of people who assault and attack physically and verbally against one person, which represents the form of bullying between the "group of people" and "one people." In the 1970s, the influence of Scandinavian scholars dominated the discussion of bullying. The key concepts used to analyze were "misbehavior" that the student expresses physically. Later in the 1980s, the focus of research expanded to the verbal bullying, gossip and the separation of the lonely and unfriended bullied people (Hemphill et al., 2014).

Until the 1990s, research on bullying primarily focused on the inequality between individuals. It pointed to pattern of persecution of the less powerful and repeated over a long period of time (Farrington, 1993). In 1999, Olweus and scholars from various European countries wrote *The Nature of School Bullying: A Cross-National Perspective*, expanding upon the description of bullying to include power inequality. Their research described a situation in which a person is threatened, experienced an act of contempt, and was oppressed by one or more people repeatedly for a long period of time. In other words, these individuals seek to harm and bully the less powerful by taking advantage of the existing inequality of social power.

The study of bullying in the 2000s became increasingly interested in the power relationship, including studying the experiences of victims of bullying. This opened issues about the impacts on individuals and measures of prevention, protection and intervention (Espelage & Swearer, 2004). Methods of study used during this period included: allowing the victim to share and write their own biographies and experiences to convey the thoughts

and feelings of the trauma of being victimized and being bullied over a long time. In addition, the research described the "communication" as the key to building and destroying interpersonal relationships. Verbal bullying and bullying gesture are form of communication that has a negative impact on humans. (Berry, 2016; 2018) It was found that personal identity was involved and associated in bullying, such as people of different races, cultures, class, religion, gender and sexuality (Rivers & Duncan, 2013).

Western scholars agree that bullying consists of three components. 1) It must be intentional and deliberate, 2) it must be repetitive, continuous, and 3) there must be a power imbalance between the bully and the victim (Hemphill, Heerde & Gomo, 2014). Bullying has four main characteristics: physical bullying, verbal bullying, social bullying that causes shame and disgrace, and cyberbullying. (Hymel & Swearer, 2015) However, the classification of forms of bullying and violence is ambiguous. The line between these situations is not clear (Rodkin, Espelage, & Hanish, 2015). Factors and causes of bullying are complex and are described from different perspectives such as the bully, the bullied and the bystander (Juvonen, Nishina & Graham, 2001).

Smith & Monks (2008) noted that a person's understanding of what bullying means is inconsistent with the behaviors and events that bullying manifests in everyday life. The gap on this issue is the incomprehensibility of the social and cultural contexts that shape human bullying which each society may have a similar and different pattern. For example, Yoneyama's study (2016) found that Japanese school bullying is related to the power structure within schools which influences the control and prevention of bullying. If the school is distant and separate from the students, school bullying will occur immediately. The Japanese school case demonstrates school as a "social environment" that must facilitate and encourage students to feel a sense of belonging rather than being a place with strict regulations that terrify students. Ecological theories have also been applied to describe the environment that promotes and eliminates bullying. It has been explained that locations of bullying, such as schools, families, and communities, have different environmental factors that result in different patterns and effects of the bullying. Therefore, understanding the context of the location may reveal different causes of bullying (Espelage, 2014; Swearer & Doll, 2008).

Another problem is that bullying is always linked to violence and aggression (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2016). It should be noted that the understanding of bullying tied to danger and victimization. Rigby (2002) sought to understand the patterns of bullying that appear in different locations. He indicated the complexity of bullying under different contexts, conditions, times, and situations, such as culture, beliefs, race, class, age, gender and sexuality. Under complex conditions, the definition of "bullying" is more difficult. It has also been observed that bullying may not arise from an individual personality and/or characteristic.

(Walton, 2011) It should be understood that bullying takes place in an ever-changing form of relations and social interactions (Hemphill, Heerde & Gomo, 2014; Pepler et al, 2006).

However, the words, terms and the language used for bullying are essential in a cross-cultural study. Bullying in the English language may have a different meaning from other languages. The term "bullying" in different cultures has different meanings and cannot be substituted. Even in the same culture, there are many different terms, whose meaning depends on the context (Smith & Monks, 2008). It has been observed that in studying bullying, researchers should focus on what is the point between the individual behavior and the actions of the bullying, or the experiences and feelings of those who have been bullied (Hemphill, Heerde & Gomo, 2014). Do the two-dimensional comparisons reveal different meanings of bullying? In addition, the words used to describe the action of bullying are varied by age and context (Smith & Monks, 2008). The expression of bullying between young and older children is different. Young children openly bully each other. Older children often participate in indirect bullying, using a variety of techniques to annoy and insult the other (Monks, Smith & Swettenham, 2003). Research has also found that when children grow up the pattern of bullying is shifted to using words instead of physical attacks (Busgano et al, 2014).

Rethinking Bullying and the Power Imbalance Paradigm

During the nearly 40-50 years of bullying research, most scholars have explored bullying as the power imbalance between more powerful bullies and their less powerful victims (Horton, 2019; Volk, Dane, & Marini, 2014). This belief repeats conflicts between bully and victim, in which a powerful bully will be blamed and the victims are helpless (Ringrose & Renold, 2010). The question is whether the imbalance of power arises in a "person" or in their "actions". This question leads to an analysis of the power relations in terms of the motivated actor. For this reason, power is not attached to the person. Power as a social relation suggests that bullying, such as abusive, insults, teasing, hate speech or slanderous attacks, are the power practice that creates conflict (Pascoe, 2013).

There is some criticism that research on youth bullying is not linked to the social context. Most researchers are interested in individual problems and behavior (Walton, 2015). What is missing in the study of the relationship between bully and bullied is the "power" beyond the scope of the relationship which is a social power network. As a result, the description of bullying is centered around personal habits (Vaillancourt, Hymel, & McDougall, 2003). Therefore, understanding the social context of power is important because social power is complex and has both visible and invisible aspects. The visual aspect is often accompanied by the number of people and their actions. The invisible and hidden aspects are the values, beliefs, knowledge and worldview that underpin them. In this sense, bullying is neither a visual act nor a mere offensive behavior. It is a "discursive practice" that the bully uses to attack the opponent (Walton, 2015).

Discursive knowledge and practice is expressed through speech, words and language, along with a person's facial expressions causing the behavior of bullying (Scott, 1990). For example, a speech to mock or condemn transgender behavior rests on heteronormative and patriarchal knowledge. When a person makes a mocking and hate speech, it is a discursive practice that reinforces bullying. This practice creates interactions between the speaker and the defamed. This is a "power imbalance" resulting from a social context that values masculinity over non-normative gender conditions (Pascoe, 2013). This conflict and feud rests on gender difference. The point is that the causes of bullying lie on the characteristics of differences. A person with personality, appearance, skin color, age, behavior, gender, sexual orientation, beliefs and culture that differ from most people are often the target of attacks. The important thing is that the difference becomes a problem that makes people less accepting of others. This is also missing from current studies of bullying (Walton, 2015).

Understanding the power relations between the persecutor and the abused should expand the scope to describe the social context that created the system of differentiations. In order to find discursive practice that reproduce the existing inequality of the differences and exam how something is held to be better and superior to others. Therefore, an analysis and criticism of human bullying should point out how human interactions that appear in bullying are inherited, reiterating the inequality of human differences. How is this problem caused by societal discourse / knowledge? (Bansel, Davies, Laws, & Linnell, 2009). Studying bullying under the impermissibility of differences and turning differences into a problem is a key challenge in understanding it. A personal behavior expressed in bullying is a reflection of the social system (Ringrose & Renold, 2010). This is similar to an education system that focuses on competitive exams and judging the intelligence of students by scores and grading. Only students who have achieved excellent grades will be recognized. On the other hand, students who get low grades are viewed as ineffective and foolish. The students with the lowest grade in the classroom become marginalized and mocked by their peers. This example indicates that the educational system is an important part of reproducing the differentiating systems that lead to inequality and the cause of student bullying. (Jacobson, 2010)

Walton (2011) explains that bullying is an expression of power created on a system of human differentiation. That system has taken over human existence with inequality of differences. "Power" here is not something inherent in a person, it appears and flows in a system that makes a difference. This refers to a system that creates, controls and manipulates human behavior (Foucault, 1983; Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983). Understanding the "power" in this approach may help us see "bullying" as an expression of a person who wants to deal with "other" people who are not like themselves. People who are bullied and abused

will be rejected and unaccepted under a system of inequality of differences. Sondergaard (2012) explains that this intolerant system results in human discrimination as "we" and "misfit." This conflict has made some people afraid of being rejected and excluded from the group, known as "social exclusion anxiety."

Western Paradigms of Gender-Based and Homophobic Bullying

Most studies in Western society are quantitative research and focus primarily on the student bullying behavior and patterns. The majority of these findings indicate that men are more likely to bully others and behave offensively. Women will become victims of bullying. This is the explanation that rests on the conflict between the strong and the weak (Erika, Pertiwi & Seniwati, 2017; Hussein, 2010; Silva et al, 2013). Previous research has also found that the frequency of bullying is more common among male adolescents than female adolescents (Craig, 2009; Gruber & Fineran, 2007; Scheithauer, Hayer, Petermann, & Jugert, 2006). Bullying among boys is often violent. Girls tend to bully each other with words (Pepler et al, 2006). Most studies explain that the leading cause of aggressive behavior is due to social values that teach men to use force and to exercise power while women are taught to be modest (Pupo, 2007; Silva et al, 2013). This explanation rests on the paradigm of behavioral science that views males as having an innate intuition of violence. The bullying of gay, lesbian and transgender people is different from men and women. The main cause comes from the social context of homophobia and transphobia (Blackburn, 2012).

Under the gender structure that separates women and men, persons who engage in sexual behavior that does not meet the gender norms established by society, such as men acting as women or a woman acting as a man, will be bullied, rejected and not recognized by their peers (Dijkstra, Lindenberg Veenstra, 2007). Studies have shown that boys who are soft and do not show masculine strength are more likely to be mocked and bullied by stronger male peers. This explanation believes that the reason for the bullying stems from the boys' need for power, which represents a superior status (Farrell & Volt, 2016). The bullying of gay men in Western societies is therefore characterized by assaulting, attacking and blocking people from revealing their gender identity.

A study of bullying of gay, lesbian and transgender students from the 1980s to 1990s aimed at explaining the causes, behavior and mental health effects of individuals. This study provided a representation of gay, lesbian and transgender group as the victims of bullying. It was believed that this group of people had become lonely and had problems such as escaping from school, committing crimes, using drugs, running away from home, becoming prostitutes and committing suicide (Hammond, 1986; Remafedi, 1987; Rotheram-Borus et al, 1995; Savin-Williams, 1994). This approach rests on the assumption that gay, lesbian and transgender people are "sexually deviant" and perverted. There is a belief that these people are alienated and have mental and emotional disorders (Williams et al, 2005). The study also

explains that the problem of homophobic and transphobic bullying comes from a family value system and heterosexual values that influence acceptance and rejection (Hodges & Perry, 1999; Olweus, 1993). Mental health and psychological paradigms influence the study of aggressive behavior and those who are bullied, which emphasizes the emotionality and personality of a person. Including the physical factors and the developmental state of the age are important to affect behavioral practices. For example, explaining that gay and lesbian teens are paranoid and distrustful of their peers, which causes them to separate themselves and live alone for fear of being bullied by others (Beckerman, 2017; Carlisle & Rofes, 2007).

Studies from the 2000s onward have pointed to problems arising from the masculine culture and heteronormativity, that caused the rejection, discrimination, stigmatization, abusing and expelling of gays and lesbians. Bullying also makes people to feel embarrassed and afraid to express themselves in society. This behavior is defined as "homophobic bullying" (Adam, 2011; Morris & Nakayama, 2013; Pascoe, 2007; UNESCO, 2012). Words that are used to insult gay, lesbians and transgender people are very negative (Guasp, 2009). In addition, it was found that teachers do not want to teach homosexuality in schools because they think it is taboo and inappropriate (Buston & Hart, 2001). Research has also pointed out that mental health problems among gay, lesbian and transgender students due to them being bullied, teased and rejected by their heterosexual peers (Beckerman, 2017) .

The studies of bullying among gay, lesbian and transgender people in Western society often reinforce gender deviation. It is thought that these people are at risk of being bullied and humiliated, which overlooks the understanding of social and cultural norms that shape sexual discrimination (Formby, 2015). Teaching in schools often underscore the differences between women and men as "normal" and classify gay, lesbian and transgender people as "others" (Macintosh, 2007). Most studies do not understand the complex social and cultural context. Homosexual and transgender people are classified in the category of perversity (Payne & Smith, 2013). This Western explanation must be examined so as not to reproduce that gay, lesbian and transgender bullying in all societies has the same form and pattern.

The Transforming Socio-Cultural Context of Thai Non-Normative Gender Mockery

Research on bullying, mockery and taunting of gay, kathoey) and tom individuals in Thai society still has a lot of gaps. The study of Mahidol University. UNESCO (Bangkok) and Plan International (2014) and a study by Janamnuaysook, Balzer and LaGata (2015) that describes the bullying of homosexual and transgender people with the theory of victimization. Neither of these studies analyzes the social and cultural contexts that lead to bullying. From my anthropological research, it was found that kathoeyes in Thai families are teased throughout their life. Because Thai society thinks that androgenous characteristics that are neither men nor women is something in the middle, ambiguous and have special conditions.

At the same time, it is inconsistent with the gender regulation that the modern Thai state created in the 1930s (Jackson & Cook, 1999; Durangwises, 2017). This condition made gay, kathoey and tom people in Thai society both fascinating and astonishing at the same time.

Androgenous characteristics and behaviors in ancient Siam play an important role in providing entertainment, amusement and beauty in an artistic way. In traditional drama troupes such as Lakhorn Nok, Lakhorn Nai, Lakhorn Chatree, Khon and Yi-Kae (musical folk drama) men and women play the role of the opposite sex, which is a unique talent of transgender people (Duangwises & Jackson, 2013; Duangwises, 2017). A folk entertainment and performing art is therefore an open space that ensures the existence of non-normative gender people. Society will recognize their role as the creator of smiles and laughter. For this reason, teasing them is a humorous way of building social relations. On this domain I would like to point out that at the local level of Lanna culture (Northern region of Thailand), Northeastern Isaan culture and farmer culture, transgender people are known as "Phu-mia", "Phu-Sao" and "Khon Kathoey". Local people recognize the role of this non-normative gender people as someone who is in the middle between a man and a woman, which is a special condition necessary for communication with supernatural powers, gods, ancestor spirits and sacred things, as can be seen from acting of a spirit mediumship in the sacred rituals (Intamool, 2013).

Until the 1930s, the Thai state introduced gender norms under Western scientific knowledge to create new form of gender regulations. Under the Western conception of sex, the knowledge of psychiatry and sexology explained that people who have sexual feelings that conflict with their genitals are sexually deviant or have mental disorders. This knowledge was taught in Thai educational institutions, which made many people disgusted and resulted in their rejection of transgender individuals. As a result, transgender behaviors were labeled as "sexually deviant", "mental disorder" and "psychologically abnormal". This gave the term "kathoey" a negative connotation which implies "weirdness" and symbolizes social shameful and disgrace (Duanqwises, 2013; Jackson, 1997, 2003). This turning point was important because it made the transgender behavior satirized and teased as "strange" and "funny". So homosexual and transgender behavior is not in the new gender regulation created by the modern Thai state. This period therefore considered homosexuality and transgenderism as "the other" and was at the margin of modernity. The Thai state wanted citizens to live as masculine and feminine, according to their physiology and biological sex. Homosexaul and transgender people were rejected and thought of as "disgusting" and "abhorrent".

From the literature review above, I realized that the classification and terminology of gender in modern Thai society is not the same as the category and term for gender in Western society. Western terms for gay and lesbian identities that appear in modern Thai

society simply create a social space for people who are not men and women. In these social spaces, the gender term is used as a tool to form peer groups, unlike Western societies where the term of gender and sexual identity is self-awareness under scientific classification of sexuality. I agree with Jackson (1997, 2003) that queer people in modern Thai society have flexibly adopted the Western term of gender. For example, a man with a feminine character may refer to himself as either gay, bisexual or Kathoey, depending on the situation and group of friends. The term for non-normative gender in modern Thai society is therefore used in accordance with the social relationship that a person is performing. This point is very important to the analysis of bullying of people who have non-normative gender identities in Thai society. I think that people who are not men and women in Thai society are not experiencing discrimination because of mental disorders and sexual perversity. Bullying a queer people has to do with social relationships between friends and their gender image and expression.

Mockery of the non-normative gender behavior of gays, kathoeyes and toms in contemporary Thai society is a blend of existing humor and a newly emerging feeling of shamfulness. Understanding this point, one must see that teasing non-normative gender behaviors in Thai society is a process that takes place in the modernization associated with a local culture of humor. This makes the pattern of bullying different from Western societies where gay, lesbian and transgender people are discriminated against because of detestation and hatred (Pascoe, 2007). In Thai society, several humorous terms have been created to reference this population such as “toot” (an abbreviation of Tootsie, a 1982 American movie title used to refer to a man who acts like a woman), Saai Luaeng (anal sexual intercourse between men which often contains feces), and Tee Ching (a Thai musical instrument, cymbal, made of metal to make a loud sound, similar to using female sexual organs to rub together).

The condemnation and mockery of non-normative gender people in Thai society therefore has a blend of emotions and feelings, whether it is a sense of humor, loathe, detest, hate or fun. This depends on the social relations that arise between the speaker and the person being mentioned. Speaking in a group of close friends, it can be a funny feeling that builds friendship. Spoken by strangers, it can be a feeling of hatred that creates a strong conflict. These different relationships lead to different results. The issue is complex, and it cannot be stereotyped that the bullying of gays, kathoeyes and toms in Thai society is the only consequence of abhorrence.

Teasing Is Not Bulling: A Particular Form of Non-Normative Gender Irritation

In this section, I will give the information on the experiences and feelings of non-normative gender people in Thai society who are exposed to teasing. The following statements may help to understand that teasing involves many different situations. It also

shows that within the non-normative gender group there is also teasing. The teasing is complex and reflects a mix of gender-based ideas that come from a number of sources: local, religious and modern concepts. Teasing is also related to a capitalist social structure that focuses on the image of appearance, reputation, and success in life. Teasing people who are non-normative gender is not disrespectful but makes them feel annoyed or irritated. Teasing has different feelings and emotions, including jokes, frustrations, shame, annoyance, and worry. This is a unique pattern that occurs in Thai society. The following statement is an example indicating that bullying homosexual and transgender people occurs in different contexts.

"When I walked through a group of men, they will shout that E Toot. (A slang term used to refer to male transgender) Most of the time it was fun speaking." (Daeng (pseudonym), personal communication. July 16, 2020).

"P h u -s a o . You're such a beautiful woman. It's a tease." (Noi (pseudonym). personal communication, July 29, 2020).

The above statements indicate that within Thai male society, mockery of kathoey, is an expression of interest and it invites kathoey to turn to look at men. Thai men think that kathoey are more like a woman who is easier to tease and touch their bodies. This is a way of building social relationships where men and kathoey can communicate their sexual needs and desire. It could be said that the pattern of teasing transgender people in Thai society has to do with how men want to get attention from kathoey people. This example is a specific behavior pattern that outsiders may not understand and may think it as homophobic bullying. But in the context of the relationship between men and kathoey, this form of teasing is not bullying but calls for sexual attention.

In the gay and kathoey community, there is insult with each other, especially about their appearance and the portrayal of being masculine and feminine as the following statement illustrates.

"Most of the time, I will be blamed for not being as beautiful as a woman. Many kathoey tend to look down on their appearance, even when they're not pretty either. Some kathoey people are jealous of me because I have whiter skin." (Fah (pseudonym), personal communication. July 16, 2020).

"Gays often curse each other. A gay man who has no masculinity, a bad personality, behaves like a woman, is humiliated." (Ball (pseudonym), personal communication. July 16, 2020).

"A fat, skinny, effeminate and bad-looking gays always be despised. Gay groups look down on each other. On my Facebook, there will be people coming in to curse me about my appearance." (Manus (pseudonym), personal communication. August 21, 2020).

From the above statement, Thai gay and kathoey society has no unity. There is also discrimination within the group. This point must be understood to transcend the illusive myth that bullying and abuse occurred between conflict of straight and queer people. This counterpart is not a representative of all bullying. There are also internal conflicts who share the same negative attitude as those outside the group. I believe that disrespect and discrimination within gay and kathoey groups cannot be analyzed from gender identity disorder nor sexual deviation theory. There must be a dominant regime of power governing the globalized culture of sexual image consumption and the process of sexual objectification of male and female bodies, which leads to a disgrace of sexual appearance that does not adhere to gender norms of the beauty industry (Kehnel, 2003).

In the case of a stranger, some negative speech and behavioral actions can also lead to frustration. As the following statement illustrates.

"A female teacher knows I'm a tom. I'm dating girls. The teacher said why you like girls. Are you sexually deviant (Pid Phet)? I said I was not wrong with my gender. Women are cuter than men. I want to date a girl. I don't want to date a guy. The teacher said you were wrong with your gender." (Pana (pseudonym), personal communication, July 16, 2020).

"A stranger said to me that you don't have to be kathoey. You are a lost birth. (Sia Chart Kird) Better to be a dog" (San (pseudonym), personal communication, July 29, 2020).

The above statement indicates that blasphemy with the words "sexual deviant" (Pid Phet) and "lost birth" occurs only for some people who think that the right gender is only man and woman. This is an idea that was created by the modern Thai state over the past 80 years. I believe that studying this issue should not look at bullying in one dimension of abusive speech. Understanding socio-cultural context and how social relationships are built is important because it will show that amusing teasing speech has a meaning that is not the same as serious hate speech. This is so as not to be assumed that gay, kathoey and tom bullying in Thai society is the same elsewhere. Western paradigms that explain the cause of bullying as a result of aggressive behavior and personal emotional disabilities should not be taken into account. Bullying should not be viewed as merely a conflict between vulnerable victims and aggressive bully, because it leads to a prevention aimed at changing a person's behavior rather than understanding the dynamic network of social relations.

Shameful Image of the Non-Normative Gender in the Thai Family

In a Thai family, mockery is shameful. It embarrasses parents and relatives when they hear negative words used to remark on their homosexual and/or transgender children. Gay, kathoey and tom students have previously told me that parents and relatives expect

them to perform sexual behaviors according to social gender norms because a child's sexual behavior is "social face" of the family. From interviews, I found that parents expect their sons to show "manly" strength. Boys are asked to play and dress like "men." If a boy shows a weak manner and dresses like a woman, he will be teased as "toot" and "kathoeay". When parents hear mocking words, they will feel very embarrassed and lose their social image. They will blame their son as exemplified in the following statement.

"I felt a lot of pressure when my father didn't accept me. The father is a man who adheres to masculinity. He would say that because I am kathoeay, I have become weak." (Kob (pseudonym), personal communication, July 16, 2020).

"My mom didn't want me to be kathoeay. Mom bought me Ultraman. But dad bought me a barbie. I don't really like my mom. I like to play barbie. Now I'm closer to my dad because a father wants a daughter more than a son " (Jo (pseudonym), personal communication, July 16, 2020).

According to the above statement, non-normative gender people have some ways to deal with this frustration and uneasiness by approaching people who accept them. This helps them to live the life they want. When they are mocked and teased, they have a way of dealing with the teasing in different ways, such as being calm or rebuking. They don't think that teasing and bullying is a serious problem. I found that they relied on a group of friends to solve their worries and anxieties. Gay, kathoeay and tom friends understand and comfort each other. For this reason, non-normative gender people in Thai society do not become victimized and are not people with inferiority. On the other hand, they enjoy life and are able to express their sexual identity in everyday life.

The important thing is that parents begin to accept the gender identity of their children if their children have responsibilities in studying and behave as a good person. Parents often tell their children that "you can be of any gender when you behave in a good way." Therefore, in Thai society, being a good person is considered a person who does not humiliate the family, which is a means of compensating for having non-normative gender children. Thai families are tolerant of the sexual identity of their children as long as they perform their responsibilities. For Thai gays, kathoeays, and toms, good conduct is social and cultural tactics that make parents understand and accept as the following statement.

"Mom asked if I would have a boyfriend or girlfriend. I was told that I have a girlfriend. Mom said it could be anything but be a good people and I have to study hard." (Pla (pseudonym), personal communication, July 16, 2020).

"My uncle is the leader of the family. He doesn't want me to be kathoeay. He forced me to be a man. I couldn't stand it. So I went and told my parents and they allowed me to be kathoeay but I must not make my family in trouble. After I started working

in my family, the uncle opened to accept me more.” (Keng (pseudonym), personal communication, July 16, 2020).

In Thai society, the relationship between gay, kathoey, tom children and their parent rests on uneven expectations. The role of Thai parents in the modern capitalist economy aims to make their children successful in both education and vocation which encourages the family to be respected by society. If children are unruly, absent from school, unemployed and fail in life, children will be the ones who destroy the reputation of the family. So, the child is like the image of the family. When the child has a gender that does not meet the norms of society and is despised by others, parents will be embarrassed and not want their children to engage in non-normative gender behaviors that make others look down on them and gossip. These expectations will change as children perform certain duties that their parents are proud of such as being successful at school and with their career. Parents learn to embrace their children's social behavior, which may eventually lead to understanding of their child's gender and sexuality. In this process of building family relationships, both parents and children have responded to each other. This is an important issue that should be taken into account and questioned. To tackle bullying of non-normative gender behaviors in Thai society it is necessary to understand the impacts and problems arising from a culture that values "social image" and where parents control and manage the gender of their children.

Conclusion

In this article, I try to point out that Western theories of psychology and behavioral science cannot be used to analyze homophobic bullying in Thai society. I discovered that homophobic bullying in Thai society does not stem from the desire to eliminate gay and transgender people as it does in Western society. On the contrary, it was due to the family shame and the sense of weirdness and humor towards gay men and transgender people. This has led me to rethink that the power imbalance between straight and queer people does not occur in individuals but due to the change in knowledge of modernized gender. The result is that homosexual and transgender behavior is viewed as strange and unnatural, which is a bad image for Thai families. For this reason, the study of homophobic bullying in Thai society must be based on the imbalance of the gender and sexual knowledge regime.

I believe that Thai society has long been tolerant of non-normative gender behavior but that restraint was broken by a modern binary gender regime established by the Thai state in the 1930s. This problem has made Western sexual and gender knowledge highly influential. It has dominated and overshadowed the existing acceptance of non-normative gender behaviors which played an important role in sacred rituals and dazzling folk performances. Therefore, in promoting acceptance and understanding of non-normative gender and finding new solutions to end bullying, teasing and abuse, we need to bring back

socio-cultural knowledge and experience. I think this is a way to stop bullying of non-normative gender people in Thailand. I propose that educational institutions must promote knowledge of the history of sexual diversity in Thai society. Schools should encourage parents and families to accept the talent of queer children. This would help eliminate the aggressive behavior of individuals believed to be the cause of common homophobic bullying in all societies. We must learn that if the family, school, work place, community and public open up a social and cultural space for queer people, it can facilitate and encourage gays, kathoeyes and toms to be able to express their sexual identity and talent. We should take those lessons as a guide for encouragement, social activities, and compassionate living.

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