

Presentation Title: What is “Gayness?”

Subtitle if necessary: From narratives in England and Japan

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1. Aim

This paper examines the socially problematic existence of being a gay man, or “gayness”, in a comparative study of England and Japan. In the flux of overfamiliarised factors that contribute to intimate citizenship, this research project aimed to uncover what possible cross-cultural universalities gay men share in the personal decision to commit to gayness despite its problematic existence by answering the question “what is gayness?”

2. Data & Methods

For this purpose, this research used bibliographic research methods as well as qualitative methods focusing on reflexive semi-structured interviews based on symbolic interaction with six individuals living by snowball sampling in Japan and England as mentioned in Ken Plummer’s *Telling Sexual Stories*. The interviews mainly focused on the participant’s coming out story aiming to understand the social meaning of being gay.

3. Results

I found that the production and consumption of spatio-temporal gayness of men in England and Japan do have some universalities. These are categorised as follows: 1) Contingent gayness demonstrates the subjected paradigms as a result of an individual’s contingent condition. For example, its concealment and the transferal of this perceived intolerable secret into the public space is universal in both contexts. 2) Conscious gayness validates that the grouped notion of gay community is conducive to acquiring a gay identity in facilitating gay culture which has been given visibility through the proliferation of coming out. The conscious decision to come out to oneself/publicly collides with intimate citizenship, gender identity and shame. In Japan, the decision to commit to invisibility conflicted with factors of work-life and lineage. 3) Political gayness examines the rationalisation of gayness—personal power and legal/social recognition in terms of the demand for citizenship, and the desire for a “normal life” in line with the changing ideology of family. The choice to remain invisible for some men living in Japan transpires in exchange for access to the political, economic and social privileges attached to heterosexual life.

4. Conclusion

From these findings, gayness can be a semi-structured universalised narrative of modernity colliding with convoluted possibilities in variously structured frames of its conditioning. In other words, this semi-structured framework acts as contingent gayness where the basis of a gay identity is graspable followed by the conscious choice to embrace it, or cast it aside thrusting one into the rationalisation of what it constitutes under the political/economic flow.

References

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