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The loudest whisper in society:

Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice in regards to
sexual health of Transgender male to female in
Kathmandu, Nepal

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Abstract

Title: The loudest whisper in society: Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice in regards to sexual health of Transgender male to female in Kathmandu, Nepal

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Key words: Attitudes, Knowledge, Practice, Sexual health, Transgender

The main purpose of this study is to explore some of the knowledge, attitudes, practice and experience of the transgender in this study in regards to their sexuality and sexual practice. This also includes their experience with sex work since it is apparent that all the respondents have been involved or still are with sex work. It aims to understand the details that contributed to the participant's decision and the knowledge on safer sex practice taught by the Blue Diamond Society and their reasoning regarding safer sexual practice.

This study was conducted in the capital of Nepal, Kathmandu during the months of February, March and April of 2011. The qualitative method was used in this study. This research is supported by primary data, which I have gathered from interviews with fourteen male to female transgendered between 21 to 48 years old, where twelve of these interviews were used in this study. The secondary data includes the literature and previous research reviewed related to the study of Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) community and the fundamental human rights along with an overview of the laws regarding the LGBT community in Nepal.

All respondent were in the way of employment, beneficiaries or member associated with Blue Diamond Society (BDS), an organization working towards equal rights for the LGBT community and promoting and educating healthy sexual practices. Through BDS the respondents had gained great knowledge on HIV and other sexual transmitted infections (STI's) and had access to services and prevention tools.

The respondents in this research express their difficulty to come in terms with the changes in their body, in the early teenage years, and the challenges from family and community. They also express their own interpretation of their own sexuality and sexual identity, which coincide, with the queer theory of sexual interpretation. Social interaction and administrative errands where the identity card (ID) card is a requirement because their appearance do not "match" the sex on their ID cards.

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I. Introduction

It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple: one must be a woman manly, or a man womanly.

- **Virginia Woolf**

I felt very embarrassed as a child to want the pink toys and wear dresses all the time because of how I looked up to my incredible athletic and tough sister who is 18 months older than I. We got compared a lot both at home and in school; yet we were so different. I liked fairies, unicorns and nail polish and she liked to play sport, science and to have short hair. She was competitive and never scared of confronting others either while I have never been in a fight. She was better in sports than our brother and our father was always admiring her ability to do so well and compared us to her. I wanted to be more like her but I was not comfortable in any sports or the hand me down sport clothes I got from her and my brother. I do not know how it is to not feel right in your body and in the role society is telling you is fit for your gender. I do not know how it is not to be able to love who you want to love just because others find it unnatural. Not being able to express my “girliness” as a child is not a close recognition of these feelings. However I can resemble on the confusion of desire for what I wanted and what was given to me to accept. I wanted to be the typical girl in toy commercials who played with Barbie and had glitter on everything but I was being lead to be more neutral in gender role. I appreciate it now but as a child I did not enjoy the short hair or the soccer camp. Through the media I have been exposed to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community and I had learned of ladyboys, as transgender in some regions have been known to be called, and other views than mine on prostitution from friends who had travelled to places where there was a big and public sex work activity. I have people around me who are heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual and it never has been a matter that affected our relationship.

Reasons for this research took shape are that I first wanted to write about young people’s knowledge and practice in regards to sexual reproductive health in Nepal; but then I came across Blue Diamond Society (BDS) (a profile of BDS is given in chapter five). When I was writing my research proposal I did not know what to do if I got a respondent who was transgender because I wanted to seek five females and five males for my thesis. I presented this issue to my supervisor and he told me that I could add another category to my gender list, however the more I studied the subject I found that there was much research on the subject of young people and sexual reproductive health in Nepal and not as much on the transgender population. Once I arrived and visited BDS I decided to change my subject and aim to interview only transgender respondents.

This research has been nothing but interesting as it changed shape and aim so many times. I learned much on different sort of struggles relating to a persons being in a culture foreign to me. It is the fact that there are people who challenge my view of how I thought things should be, how people should dress and act.

1.1 Background to the research

This is an exploratory research exploring the knowledge, attitudes and experiences of the transgender in regards to their sexual practice. It is conducted in order to provide an insight to how the transgender male to female have expressed themselves to the interview questions, which have been the primary data collection in this research. It also provides the comprehension of how BDS work towards promoting equal rights for the LGBT community and prevention work in regards to sexual health.

The transgender male to female tell of their understanding of gender identity and also their sexuality; how they identify themselves regarding gender defines in turn their sexuality. Sexuality is the sexual desire of a person's attraction; here the categories are homosexuality, which is when a person is attracted to a person of the same sex. Bisexuality is when a person is attracted to either sex and heterosexuality is when one is attracted to the opposite sex. Through the interviews it appeared that many of the transgender are involved in sex work, economic reasons were the main purpose for the involvement in sex work; the other purpose was that they could enjoy their sexuality through this work, three of the respondents did not rely on sex work as an income but rather an opportunity for them to meet men to have sex with.

In the patriarchal culture of Nepal one's gender decides how they should learn to act and react in their social interaction. The respondents expressed that they feel as if they are empowering the females of Nepal because they can act out both gender roles in a cultural context, which in turn might limit the structural gap between the genders in the country. Nonetheless, the bridging of these two genders in the city of Kathmandu is more visible than the more rural areas of Nepal, where, in regards to gender equality and understanding of the LGBT community might be considered more conservative.

The title for the research came to my mind after listening to a speech by the founder of BDS, Sunil Babu Pant. He was stating that the LGBT community is visible but no one is willing to talk widely about the mistreatment they are facing by the community and also on political levels even though they have been given recognition.

1.2 Introducing Nepal

Nepal is a country located in southern Asia neighbouring India, Tibet and China. The country is divided into five major areas; those are the far west, the mid west, the west, the central and the east. The capital Kathmandu is located in the central area with a population close to one million. These five areas in turn are divided into 14 administrative zones that are further divided into 75 districts. Similar to other countries in its surrounding there are many ethnicities, cultures, languages and religious practices in Nepal. Nepal has eight of the world's top ten highest mountains, these mountains attract a lot of tourism to the country, which is the largest income source for Nepal. On the other hand the UN website states that Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world and that about half of Nepal's 29 million people live below the two-dollar a day standards. Nepal is one among other countries where social insecurity

can be ranked among the big country challenges. Poverty, previous internal conflicts and the caste system serve to contribute to the situation (Badal:2005).

Nepal has gone through major changes in their power structure for the past three centuries. The districts in Nepal were once considered smaller kingdoms; however in 1768 one King united these districts. More recently, as in the beginning of the 1990's the Office of Prime Minister and Councils of Ministers states that there was a pressure from the people for a change in the country's decision makers. The king at that time was King Birendra, who agreed to creating a parliamentary monarch with the king as the head of state and the prime minister as the head of government (The Fiscal year report for:2006/2007).

This new structure lasted just over a decade; in 2001 many members of the royal family were murdered and the brother of King Birendra took the throne, the new king was King Gyanendra. The pressure of a desire for a different political system was still present in the country and the monarchy was abolished in May 2008. Since then Nepal has been ruled by four different prime ministers, the current Prime Minister is Baburam Bhattarai, a member of the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), who was appointed in august of 2011 after Jhala Nath Khanal who recently resigned after six month in post (The Office of Prime Minister and Councils of Ministers:2011).

With these many changes in the country structure the welfare system has also been affected. Nepal is a country that depends on funds from humanitarian organizations. Social insecurity is another major challenge Nepal is faced with. Therefore many who are not able to attend school or uphold a decent employment are forced into livelihoods such as sex work, begging, fieldwork and physically demanding work. However, with growing capitalism, entrenched individualistic tendencies, unemployment and poverty, there is then little sense to think in terms of these as safety nets. Social insecurity is a global challenge that preoccupies many governments in the world although in different magnitudes and guided by different ideologies.

Nepal has a high number of poverty, the World Bank puts Nepal as number fifteen from the bottom of the poorest nations in the world. The economic constrain hinders the purchase of contraceptives, condoms, access to transportation and also clinical visits. That 55 percent of the people are literate leads to the challenge that information does not reach everyone (ICP). The illiteracy along with economic situation contributes to the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STI), UNAIDS states. People do not have access to the information on prevention or are able to read it on their own.

The population of Nepal, stated by World Health Organisation (WHO), is roughly 29 million. Out of this number an estimated 1.2 percent are infected with HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus), which put Nepal as the second country in Asia with the highest rate of HIV prevalence. Even though people have gained access to the knowledge of HIV and the ways of spreading infections, rates are rising in Nepal according to the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). The first case of HIV was reported in 1988 in Kathmandu, Nepal. It is unclear of what group of people who is, in terms of sexual orientation, the dominant group in the given number of people infected with HIV in Nepal. However the UNAIDS has coined it as an concentrated epidemic, meaning that it is more

detectable among certain groups of people such as sex workers. This due to the growing number of infections among people involved in risky behaviour such multiple and occasional sexual partners and sex work. Nepal is a multi cultural, linguistic and religious country where the cultural values and attitude towards sexuality and sexual health will differ among the different groups. There are many groups of ethnicities in Nepal, just like in neighbouring India Nepal has had a society build on the caste system, although caste identification is not a barrier of access to certain aspects of society anymore people are still categorized as belonging to a group informally. Social and religious norms, taboos, patriarchy and caste system has during different times disempower women, Dalit's¹ and also the LGTB community (UNAIDS, BDS).

Nepal is a mountainous country; although the scenery of this is beautiful it can pose as a barrier to the transfer of sexual health information to the villages and towns far within these regions (UNESCAP). Related to this is the lack of electricity on a full time bases for all of Nepal, different regions have access to electricity at different times in the more developed cities and towns. However the more distant places in the mountainous areas provide a landscape, which makes it almost impossible to draw electricity to people. They then relay on the heat from the sun in order to warm up water and appliances that can function on solar energy.

1.3 Definition of transgender

*“Society has placed on my shoulders the responsibility of a male” Manisha
(BDS Annual Report 2008:42)*

Transgender indicates the gender one identifies with if they feel that they are not suited for the gender that has been biologically given to them. Many transgender people aim to “look the part” of the gender they feel that they should be, they might dress in the social and culturally appointed dress codes for that gender or even go on hormone treatment and also have gender reconstructed surgery (RFSL, Belonging:2004). Many also aim to change their legal gender identity. One usually identifies with the gender they feel that they are and then comes the definition of their sexual orientation, which refers to heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual. A male to female transgender is now considered a woman, she considers herself as heterosexual who has a relationship with a man. Regardless of her birth gender she is now a woman who is with a man, this is then termed a heterosexual relationship. As we can see there are many ways for one to identify their sex. In Nepal there are legally recognized three sexes male, female and transgender. How much they are locally recognized and applicable can only be heard thought the locals and the people affected. It is being processed in to legal document to remove the gender specific language and to replace the wording of male/female with person (BDS).

¹ The Dalit's are at the bottom of the cast system and usually referred to as the untouchables because of their status they should not be touched by the other casts. With the abolishment of the cast system their status and situation has been improving over the last few years however as in the case of transgender it is about the deep rooted cultural norms and attitudes that still provide an obstacle for full equality (Bista:2004)

There are transgender who want to have the full gender reassignment surgery while there are those who chose their own amount of changes, some rather not be male or female but only transgender and not change anything with the aid of hormone treatment or reassignment surgery. According to UNAIDS, who are present in Nepal, the estimated number of men who have sex with men (MSM) and male to female transgendered people in Nepal is 128 500. As to many things in research there is a hidden number, usually larger than the visible number. BDS estimates the number to be three times as presented by UNAIDS.

Drag Queens and Kings can sometimes be confused with the concept of transgender. A Drag Queen or King dress up for the purpose of entertainment and mostly pushes the notion of gender. This is not saying that people who attend to the entertaining art of Drag Queen and King cannot be transgender during their “off stage” time (RFSL Belonging:2004,).

Even though transgender people are striving to find good suiting jobs despite the challenges many of them experienced, many unfortunately also work as sex workers; which adds to the stigmatisation. This obviously puts them at a high risk for STI’s among other things (BDS, *Assessment of Youth Reproductive Health/HIV Programs in Nepal:2004*).

1.4 Human rights and sexual reproductive rights

As a country that has ratified UN documents for equal rights, it has been a struggle for recognition for the LGTB community in Nepal. Nonetheless Article 13 sections one, two and three states that there should be no discrimination towards a person on the bases of their sex, among other characteristics. This is BDS’s strong supporting confirmation towards demanding equal rights for all and gain legal status in the legislation. Also as the Nepali constitution is written in a way to address a sex either it being male or female, the transgender community feel that they are not being addressed. As go for legal matters, the case cannot be concluded when the officials involved cannot agree on the sex of a transgendered person. For instance Nepal’s law regarding rape, in the law it states the consequences when a woman is raped and it does not address a male being raped (BDS). Therefore this law creates issues when it comes to the rape cases of the transgendered people. Today Sunil Babu Pant is a member of a board that is in charge of rewriting the constitution. BDS aims to replace the wording in the Nepali constitution on where it states “male” and “female” to only state “sex”, which will also include people who are transgender, all would be natural people (BDS).

Not being able to be categorized as either male or female provides great difficulty with their identity cards (ID). It limits their opportunity for jobs, education and also traveling. The issue is that when asked to show their ID card officials see that the person does not resemble the stated gender. The ID card can then be taken away from them or they could be reported to the police on the grounds that they have stolen the ID card of someone else. As of today only two people in Nepal have been given the ID of third gender; the reasons are unclear as to why more applications have not gone through and why the process is taking such a long time (BDS).

In 2007 recognition by the supreme court of third genders and homosexuality led to people of the LGTB community to be approached differently. Homosexuality had been decriminalized,

meaning that legally same-sex marriages could take place however culturally this was still not accepted everywhere.

International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) recognizes that sexual rights are intertwined with the fundamental human rights. This also includes one's sexuality and the freedom to all rights bestowed to all other members of society. Within the rights of one's sexuality is also the right to choose who to marry or even if they would want to marry. Human Rights also incorporate one's sexual reproductive health, for someone to be able to manage their own sexual development, expression and in order to be able to negotiate to safe sex (Sexual Rights: an IPPF declaration:1995).

This is also applied to anyone of any sexual orientation and identification, however in many places cultural norms and values can downplay the fundamental human rights of people.

1.5 Problem statement

These are not attitudes we adopt, on our own, nature made us this way. Do you really believe if we had a choice we would opt for something that brings us so much discrimination, pain, and hardship – Manisha (BDS Annual Report, 2008:42)

The factors mentioned, the strongest argument being used is the economic reasons why someone would get involved in sex work whether it is voluntary or not. A few of the respondents were at the date of the interview still involved in sex work. As there are many pleasant side to be able to have the desired sexual activity one wishes to have there are risks that follow those who involve themselves with multiple partners. With multiple sexual partners bring the risk of infections it also can be a matter of one's safety when working with customers. As it will be narrated in this study sex workers have been reported to meet customers that have been a danger to their lives. With these risks, the transgender in Nepal have faced much harassment from the community and their own family in many forms as well.

Where as several studies have been conducted on the subject of transgender and equal human rights, similarly seen in the abolishment of the cast system in Nepal and the upbringing of the status of women in Nepal, limited attention has been given to the transgender community with regards to the sexual practice and sex work. This is a phenomenon I believe not only specific to Nepal. Studies have for instance focused on coping with the consequences of multiple sexual partners, sex workers and also the Nepali culture and attitudes towards premarital sexual activities. Such studies have not explored and documented the transgender sex workers and their actual knowledge on preventative measures while dealing with multiple sexual partners. This creates a demand for such a studies in order to form services that can target the groups by other organizations and services as well.

The problem is not only focused on the limited access and rights transgender people experience in Nepal but also the sex work industry and the reasons why the transgender people rely on it as a income. The reasons given are because of economics and the poverty

pushes many to engage in sex work, transgender or others. As a transgender who is not accepted by their family is in risk to also not be accepted in other aspects such as having to end their education or having a difficult time finding a job. These factors can be reasons for the involvement in sex work. A reason that is not as negative as economic issues for getting into sex work is the need to practice their sexual desires. Sex work is a reason for some to be able to have sex with males and if they get money for the act it was just a benefit. There are transgender, as two mentioned in this research, that they go out to meet men at these areas for the pleasures of sex.

1.6 Aim of the study and Research Questions

The aim of this research is that it will provide an insight on how a group of transgender people in Kathmandu feel and think about their sexuality and their role in the community, which in further studies may be compared to other groups from a different national, social-cultural and ethnic background for transnational results. From the result the providers which offer education on sexual reproductive health and all it entails, for the population could consider the results of this studies in order to sculpture their services.

The following research questions aimed to explore, investigate, understand and gain insight into the experience the transgendered male to female participants have had in the Kathmandu community. With this information and data collected the aim is that it will assist in shaping the services provided for the transgendered community in Kathmandu.

1. What experience and understanding do male to female transgendered in Kathmandu, Nepal have in regards to gender, sexuality and their sexual practice?
2. How does BDS work with prevention and education to increase acceptance and sexual health among transgender people in Nepal?

This exploratory research is looking at what information and education that are provided for transgender in Kathmandu as well as the struggles with equal rights and the practice of their own sexuality. In regards to research question number one, one has to understand sexuality by looking at gender because they are intertwined.

1.7 Significance of the study

This study may help create an awareness of the challenges faced by transgender people mainly in Kathmandu but also a study that could be used to as a guide for other communities where there are transgender people struggling for equal opportunities and rights. The voices of the transgender are the central piece in this exploratory study and also the work towards an equal and acceptable environment in the community. Furthermore, it is hoped that findings of this study may also help the social workers, and all who work with organizations providing services for transgender communities and also family members and friends who might be struggling with accepting the gender changes the transgender is presenting, to improve the service delivery. This in turn could lead to policy makers and those who can affect the law to work towards a national state that accepts all citizens and provides equal rights and

opportunities. Since this study is limited to the frames of Kathmandu in Nepal it can lead into further study towards a national study in Nepal and also towards international studies.

II. Literature review

2.1 Introduction to the exploratory study

The literature on subjects relating to transgender people is increasing and different variables are being discussed. This chapter on literature review will discuss and touch on the subjects applicable to the different research findings relevant to the knowledge, attitudes, practice and behaviour of transgender male to female.

This review of the literature will also be possible to relate to the finding in the result chapter in regards to decision to enter sex work, experienced harassments and the decision of coming out about ones sexual identity.

First, I strive to review how sexual health is promoted and experienced in Nepal. The focus will then be on transgender people and sexual health in previous studies regarding access to available services, knowledge, behaviour and attitudes. Intertwined with the review I also aim to clarify the relationship between economic reasons and the decision to engage in sex work with the restrictions of opportunities for education and belonging in the community for transgender people.

2.2 Nepal and Sexual Reproductive Health

Numerous research articles in the field of sexual reproductive health and young people in Nepal have been conducted by Regmi, Simkhada and Teijlingen. In an article from 2008 the three authors aimed to explore the opportunities and barriers for the sexual health education and the services youth feel they have access to when needing services. They found in their study that young people aged 15-24, gain knowledge primarily from their friends and also the media.

The knowledge on sex and sexual activities was found to be higher among the males than it was among their female sample; however a large amount of their sample thought that condoms could be used more than once. In secondary school the student learn the biological structure of the body and the reproductive sexual process; however the attendance is lower in secondary school than it is in primary school. Factors can be that there is a tuition to be played for secondary school or that the child has to help the family to generate income and is not able to attend school, or the impossibility for families to send all their children to get education. It was also found that the use of planed family services by unmarried young people is not culturally accepted in Nepal; sexual activity is only encourage to happen within the frames of marriage and the youth did not feel that they were being met by confidentiality and a non-judgmental staff at the medical centres.

In an article with similar field of study by Stone, Ingman and Simkhada (2003) state that as an outcome of people waiting to get married until later in life it leads to young people having multiple sexual partners, which is followed by the risk of STIs and HIV. It is presented that

the media portrays an acceptable view on sexual relationships between unmarried people.

In cultures with conservative attitudes towards sexual practice and young's expected sexual active life the suggestion is that schools and other educational channels in order to increase the awareness on family planning and prevention. Stone et al (2003) tell that the Ministry of Health in Nepal once promoted abstinence for unmarried people, this is argued to be the delay of research, campaigns and services that provide for the young people in regards to sexual health. This is a strong argument for the reason that there is limited research on sexuality Nepal.

Barbro Forsberg (2008) states that the tool for prevention work is to consider “the social factors that shape ideas about gender, sexuality and relationships” (2008:33). Forsberg argue that the aspects of the culture and the social norms affect how people behave in the sexual contexts they find themselves in. The information and education should be present where the target group actively visits; in the case of young people one of the place to target are the schools.

2.3 Transgender and Sexual Reproductive Health

All people have individual sexual desires and needs that need to be met. Transgender people's needs from sexual reproductive health services can range and include check ups, testing, prevention, treatment, counselling and also hormone treatment, which need supervision and advice. Some transgender people also want to have a sexual reassignment surgery in order to change their biological sex; this in turn demand a different field of medical attention.

There is statements made by BDS in their yearly reposts that low knowledge on family planning and sexual reproductive health was found among transgender people. The reason can be that transgender people who do not have supportive families are asked to leave the home and this could also leads to force the person to have to support themselves and this results in leave school. Since it is during the teenage years when people get to learn about their sexual attractions and also seek to explore and verify that ones sexuality can be known many transgender who are not accepted by the family are in school age (BDS yearly report:2010).

Forsberg (2008:26) report similar facts as BDS does regarding prevention work; the findings are that prevention work will have a larger impact if there are condoms and other sexual reproductive care provided at the same time. Other services can be testing for HIV or STIs or counselling and recommending services that fit the needs presented. There are materials available to be handed out; the challenge is to get people to use it. In a study put forward by the European and Asian collaboration under the name EurAisa Net (2009) found that when talking about prevention and risks with target groups the informants have to keep in mind that it is valued to consider the lust and wellbeing of sexual activities. Prevention workers are not present in order to discourage sexual activity; that is an individual choice, however they are there to inform on the risks to ones health if one who has many sexual partners.

Transgender male to female can act both as the penetrator or the recipient during a sexual act therefore information on how to protect oneself and still be able to enjoy their sexual desires as they would like to.

The families who are not able to enrol their children in school, either it being because of economic reasons or that the school is situated far from their house risk their children to grow up illiterate; which will result in loss of access to much information. Transgender people are also in a position to be engaging in sex work; the reasons being economics or other factors can vary. With the involvement of sex work there are great risk of STIs and HIV and violence and also substance abuse. If one who is involved in sex work is not able to read or have access to the information might fall as a victim for these risks. Therefore education is the standard answer to all things that need more awareness and implementation.

2.3.1 Coming out process

To have to be worried about being accepted for ones sexuality is not something heterosexual people need to be concerned about. There is a understanding that as an LGBT one goes thought a process referred to coming out. This is an acknowledgment to oneself and also to the outside, if one wishes to disclose, about their sexuality and sexual attraction. Don Kulick (1998) write on the matter of the expectation of transgender people to gain approval and acceptance as a male or female form the community. It is almost presented as if it is not possible for a LGBT person to enjoy their sexuality openly if they do not come out as a LGBT person. Kulick further argues that this is a not the case for the heterosexual, sexuality and the convincing of ones gender comes naturally (1998:10).

As social workers we have learned that there are positive and negative effects to a process that involves disclosure and the fear of rejection and acceptance. Coming out is a choice and if one choses to come out, there are many discrimination factors to face but there are also much that follows people who have to keep oppressing their desires and live in constant denial and fear.

2.3.2 The concept of Karma:

Karma is defined by the Oxford Reference Online as:

karma (Sanskrit, deed) In Hindu and Buddhist philosophy, the universal law of cause and effect, as applied to the deeds of people. A (deliberate) good or bad deed leads a person's destiny in the appropriate direction. The ripening of the deed may take more than one lifetime, tying the agent to the cycle of rebirth, or samsara; only deeds free from desire and delusion have no consequences for *karma*.²

² The definition is from the source "karma" The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy. Simon Blackburn. Oxford University Press, 2008. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. Goteborg University Library. 22 May 2012 <<http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy.ub.gu.se/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t98.e1745>>

Karma has a central role in Nepal and is much due to that the big faiths Hinduism and Buddhist are present in the culture and lifestyle of the people. The Karma of ones actions can be visible in several lives' ahead; therefore the belief of contracting an infection is not an exception. Karma entails that one creates the occurrences in their own life; all that happens is a result or outcome. Therefore it is assumed that being a member of the LGBT community as a form of consequence of their previous action. If being transgender and contracting STIs is coined as something unnatural and undesirable and explained with the concept of Karma it could be used to justify negative treatment of the members of LGBT community.

It is made clear that being a LGBT person is neither a punishment nor a reward for actions in previous life. BDS want to highlight that it is a persons present being and desire that determines the belonging. And contacting an infection is mealy based on the fact that one committed a poor choice in not using protection during sexual intercourse.

2.3.3 Harassments and discriminations

When one is different from what is considered normal in a society or challenges the norms and order of a structure there is oppression to be met and risk of discrimination, this being in regards to sexuality. The transgender people are not unaccustomed to harassments and discriminations.

LGBT was seen as a behaviour that was stated as a criminal and unnatural act in Nepal. Sherry Joseph (2005) state that because of its criminalized status in the law the discrimination against LGBT people was to a point justifiable and being a LGBT person was considered to be something bad.

A strong argument that is being discussed and presented in research is that people are either born heterosexual or LGBT and this is a claim to be used against the discrimination LGBT people are facing (Jagose, 1996:9). Blame also falls on societies with hierarchy levels, which leave room for discrimination; and LGBT fall under the heterosexuality in this system therefore at a position of discrimination. Susan Stryker (2008) refers to transgender people to be more likely to be visible; due to clothing and physical figure, the voice or even other characteristics that brings attention to them. And because of the visible appearance they are targeted to discrimination and harassment. When faced with discrimination and harassment, Myers and Milner (2007:42) argue people then hold to the behaviour that is expected from them to avoid discrimination.

Stryker also found that among transgender in America in the late 1950's there was much harassment from the police because the transgender people did not resemble their ID cards when they presented them. Searching for housing and employment was also filled with discriminations and options were imitated; Stryker argues that this treatment can still be found in many parts of America today (2008:60).

2.3.4 Sex Work/Prostitution

A central and repetitive subject that has been present throughout the thesis has been the engagement in sex work. The risk that follow multiple sex partners have also been presented

and as well as the other risks to a persons safety; not only the risks on the health if someone contracts a STI or HIV but also the risks of violence and substance abuse. Other risks are the stigmatisation that follows those who are involved in sex work, which may result in being closed out from family, friends or other groups.

There is extensive research on the risks and what prevention work and services are needed for people who are engaged in sex work; Ditmore, Levy and William (2010) state that it more safe to assume that people are not engaged in sex work because of the sex. The three authors continue with presenting that one reason that there is a constant and increasing spread of HIV and STIs is due to the practice of sex work and that the people selling and people who buy are constantly moving around which contribute to the spread.

There is also research that point to a different aspect of the involvement in sex work by those who sell sexual favours. The wide range research express sex work from the workers perspective, situation, demands and causes and also from the community, culture and religious perspectives and the buyers demands. We could profile who the sellers are and who the buys are in a certain setting.

In a Swedish study conducted by Niklas Eriksson and Hans Knutagård at RFSL Skåne (2005) in order to explore the sex work industry among men who sell sex. The researchers explored the reasons why their respondents got involved in sex work and found that many of them expressed that they do it because they enjoy the sexual intercourse and would like to have frequent sex (2005:39). This supports the answer from some of the respondents in their research who also answered that they enjoy being able to have sex with men and if they are able to make money from it they do accept it. The sex work industry can also be viewed to some extend as a field of expressing sexuality and sexual desires and when the sex worker is able to decide themselves who they would like to have sex with the industry does not appear in its traditional oppressed and negative nature. The results might not be significant to a research and can be generalize because of the common trends found among respondents of the reasoning and decision to join the sex industry.

2.4 Summary

There is not a broad research field in regards to sexuality or sexual reproductive health conducted in Nepal. Much research, as presented in this study are conducted from a small sample in Kathmandu of the youth's sexual experience and knowledge. This research can be of great importance to the shaping and aim of services and care but also to spread awareness and acceptance. It could help to shape a more accepting attitude towards sexual activity outside of the frames of marriage because as evident shows it does occur. On issues relating to LGBT community there is research conducted by organizations such as FHC and UNAIDS with the assistance of BDS, because BDS is the leading and only organization working for sexual minorities both in service providing and politically. BDS has also published case works on the harassment and discrimination that LGBT people have reported they have experienced. They also provide statics on their work which gives an overview on where their assistance is reached out and how many people they do serve. The chapter also include the

concept of Karma, which is a central belief in the culture of Nepal and also a belief system that BDS also approach to explain in relation to being a LGBT person.

When there is information available on the sexual reproductive health and safe practice of sex it will encourage awareness among people and it could have an impact on their choices; however people will always be responsible for how they implement the information they are aware of in their own actions. Therefore there are services that are needed for treatment, testing and advice on sexual reproductive health.

As evident in this literature review much of the presented work relating to Nepal and sexual reproductive health, that was not presented by BDS, was dated with an older date. Therefore there is a need for more current research to be conducted in their field. BDS present work that they do conduct together with different statistics and legal documents, however there is a need for research that is not bound to the objectives of one organization. Literatures on sexuality in relation to cultural and social context are available in extended amount; also with literature that argue against the sexual minorities and sexual practice liberties. Much of the available studies can be argued to be applicable to the subject and the respondents in this thesis for compatible and to provide a better understanding of the explorative study executed; however the thesis is within the frames of Kathmandu, Nepal and the amount of literature is the limiting factors for the extensive quantity that could be included.

III. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter features how this study has been conducted. The methodological chapter will include the process of which the different chapters and sections of this research paper has been conducted. I will explain how I approached the data collection and how I came in contact with the respondents and the all that entailed in the research process and the procedure of the ethical matters together with the validity, reliability and generalization issues of the research.

3.2 Methodological Approach

The research is an exploratory research conducted with qualitative method. This study includes two methodological approaches: phenomenological interview and document analysis of other publications. Phenomenological interview method is use as an in depth interview method to bring out the experiences of the respondents in their situation according to their own understanding. The research was conducted with face-to-face interviews on voluntary bases with twelve participants; with the help of the interview questions the participants could express their experiences and share their stories.

The interviews are semi structures the questions are structured to answer the participants' experiences relating to their sexuality and sexual reproductive health. There are 34 planned question and based on the responses the participant gives the follow up questions will be asked as related to the subject and response. Malcolm Carey (2010:133) suggest to organize the interview questions into themes under a heading contacting relating questions in order to organize the questions and the coding. I arranged the 34 questions into four themes, which are background, knowledge, attitudes/beliefs and experience/practice. The goal is to investigate how the participants have come to identify themselves today and the knowledge they have on sexual reproductive health and their own experience and practice.

There is considerable amount of literature and diverse attitude towards the studies of transgender, gender, sex, sexuality, sex work and prevention work. In this research the method of document analysis to relevant literature and also an overview of gender specific law in Nepal, specifically the rape law that states the gender of the victim as female and the rapist as a male, this use of gender specific language excludes the possibility of male rape victim and even the possibility of female sexual offenders. It is assumed that only females get raped and males are the offenders (BDS, *Assessment of Youth Reproductive Health/HIV Programs in Nepal:2004*).

3.3 The Research Questions

The sample size of twelve respondents is a not a large sample but the questions are aimed to bring out an exploratory research. First research question is aimed to explore the knowledge, attitudes and practice of the respondents. The similarities between the respondent's answers

were in that they individually had their own definition of their own sexuality, sex and gender role. It was an interesting fact to learn of because they would also explain why they defined themselves as a transgender or why their sexual identity was heterosexual, bisexual or heterosexual. The sex and sexual orientation of who their partner played a role in how they defined themselves; those who were not in a relationship would state that they were attracted to what sex and what sexual identity of the person as well.

When it came to their sexual practice there were mixed responses on protection use and knowledge on STI and HIV. However the investment in testing oneself on regular bases was found to be quite high among the respondents. The respondents have great access to knowledge because of the access to BDS in town and a large network with testing facilities and other services. Below is a figure to illustrate the similarities and differences between the respondents relating to different experiences, practise and behaviour.

BDS has been presented through out this thesis, their role in the progression of highlighting the issues LGBT community are faced with the Nepali culture have been put forwards. There is also the presentation of the different programs BDS arrange for the LGBT community and moreover the awareness work that they put forward to the community and the government that LGBT people exist and need to be recognized and given the same amount of rights as all other people in Nepal. BDS services provide much prevention work in the field and directly with their target groups but also through campaigns and assisting health services to gain more knowledge. Despite the many work for prevention work by BDS and attempts to make all services available and to spread awareness through different channels there is still much work and demand for prevention work for BDS. The reason is not that the work of BDS can be criticised as if it is efficient or not, reasons can be that more and more people dare to claim their sexuality and the target groups grow. However the main reason will always be the people own willingness to take action when presented with all information they need.

The research questions aimed to be answered in this research are:

1. What experience and understanding do male to female transgendered in Kathmandu, Nepal have in regards to gender, sexuality and their sexual practice?
2. How does BDS work with prevention and education to increase acceptance and sexual health among transgender people in Nepal?

3.4 The Interview Process

The interviews were conducted between February 2011 and April 2011 on site in Kathmandu, Nepal. The collecting and writing process and also analysis of this thesis has been on-going from February 2011 until present.

The primary material for this study consist of the twelve male to female transgender respondents who are aged 21 years old to 48. All the interviews have been between one hour and two hours long they were all recorded on a device and I took notes during the interview. This does not include the time of explaining the purpose of the research to respondents,

providing them with a letter of introduction and information and the consent form. They either referred to themselves as transgender or thirdgender. Thirdgender is a definition used in Nepal with the same meaning as transgender and it is not to imply that there is numerical order to gender in Nepal; just a different wording.

My method of recruitment was through BDS and through the respondents I already had; this was an evident of the snowball effect as explained by Berg (2009:51). I asked the respondents, other transgender and employees at BDS if they could tell me where I could ask people to participate in the research. I was in a good position because BDS staff assisted me with finding respondents. They told me where the cruising areas were and the transgender staff also took me along and introduced me to their friends. I allowed the respondent to decide on what time and place they wanted in order to participate in the interview. Once an interview time and place was decided on I presented the confidentiality guarantee paper and a copy of the purpose of the research paper (both of these documents are presented in the appendix of this thesis). Because of the sensitive subject and that some of the respondent's families were not aware of them being transgender it was important to provide a pleasant and confidential setting in order for the respondent to feel that they could share the stories and information related to the questions during the interview. I could use BDS facility to conduct my interviews; this was a relief because all the people I approached for interviews were aware of BDS and its location. I conducted five interviews at BDS. The other interviews were at different facilities, and one was conducted in a park; she agreed to be interviewed right at that time when I asked her.

I did not have any requirements other than that the person was a male to female transgender. The age did matter neither did their occupation. I could have interviewed twelve transgender BDS staff members however I wanted a variety and people who might not have direct association with BDS on an administration level. I contacted one respondent at a time for an interview and once they agreed I aimed to get it done as soon as possible. I talked with a total of 21 transgender male to females, sixteen of them agreed to be interviewed. The two first interviews were test interviews; one other respondent did not show for our scheduled time and we could not reschedule when I contacted her on the phone. And one other respondent did not appear to our meeting site and could not be reached on the phone and I did not see her again at the cruising site either.

After I did my first test interview I realized that 66 questions were over bearing and many answers were given in yes and no form because of the extend time it took. There were questions that were not even relevant. I rewrote the questions to 30 questions, which I used in the second pilot interview. The questions were then written out to 34 questions and divided to fit under the four categories background, knowledge, attitudes/beliefs and experience/practice. The questions were open ended questions and provided the respondents the ability to expand on their stories and to further explain. The questions also allowed me to give follow up questions and encourage the respondents to continue if I felt that the answers were a bit vague.

One of the questions during the interview was about the respondents own view on marriage, either if it is arranged as it is commonly done in the Nepali culture or if is a love marriage, the aim was to find out what their view on sex before marriage was. The follow up question to this question was if they themselves waited to have sex until after they were or would be married. As it will be presented in the results eleven of the respondents had not waited until marriage to be sexually active. One of the twelve respondents was in an arranged marriage at a young age and did not know her sexuality until after she had been married to a woman for a few years. My aim with the question was to understand what their view was on sexual activity and also their own practice. Another respondent answered that because of rape at a young age they chose to continue with being sexually active.

The respondents were very informative and did not mind telling and expressing themselves; I try not to stop them when they went on to tell their stories but rather to keep asking follow up questions that would lead to answer other questions on the questioner. During all the interviews the respondents would answer questions that I had not asked yet however I encouraged them to continue rather than continuing systematically with the questions in order. As Kvale and Brinkman (2009:155) state that the interview questions are used as a guide to keep the topic of the interview within the frames of the research. It was not difficult for me to keep myself engaged during the interviews and interact not only with question but also with nodding, expressing engagement and indicating understanding and interest; the respondents told of such interesting events in their lives that it was easily captivating. As the number of respondents increased I begun to see a connection between the answers which also increased my curiosity to see how different and how similar the respondents experiences and understanding were.

In two of the cases I had to look up the respondents to clarify on an answer to one of the background questions, these questions were more factual and I feel that they did not affect the attitudes of the respondents, as it would have done if I needed clarification on questions concerning their attitudes. The reason being that a person might have been reflecting on the interview process and their answers from the interview; if I would ask for clarification I was worried that the time that had passed would affect their new formulated answer. At the initial stage of the interview before presenting the respondent with the information letter and the letter on confidentiality which was signed by us both, I would ask them if the presences of the interpreter was needed by them and if they were comfortable to express themselves in front of the interpreter. Soon after four interviews including the two pilot interviews I realized that the respondents are very open and describe even sexual acts in detail just to make sure that I understand how they get around their customers when selling them sexual favours dressed in the female dressing. I appreciated their willingness to be honest about such intimate details.

3.5 Information Collection Process

Before leaving for Nepal I went to the university library and learned how to search on the school database for articles and journals. I also scanned a few chapters from books I barrowed so that I did not have to carry much literature with me because of the weight. Once I arrived at BDS I got copies of their yearly report from three year and access to their documents of

recorded harassments and discrimination against the LGBT community through out the years that BDS had been active and these issues had come forth to BDS. I also got to review the law on rape from the legal worker at BDS; who also helped me understand the role and power of the law in Nepal. At BDS I also came in contact with an employer at the office who agreed to be my gatekeeper for the respondents that did not feel comfortable to express themselves in English. The assistance from BDS was tremendous and crucial to the completion and process of this research. I relied much on the referrals from BDS staff and respondents for other possible respondents.

Before I went to Nepal I informed BDS of my study and that I would like to come in contact with transgender male to female; once on site I realized that BDS was the centre for all the connections I needed to make and the collections of material. The organizations is well established despite all challenges they had faced over the decade they had been present in Kathmandu.

My daily visibility at BDS and the occasional visits to the cruising sites allowed me to be recognized which made it easier for me to approached possible respondents. I also got to meet representatives from UNAIDS Nepal at a conference to discuss the issues that transgender people experienced. Through this connection I was able to go to the UNAIDS office and collect information on the HIV and AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) situation in Nepal. I also found a few helpful literatures on social work in Nepal and also on sex work where transgender people were mentioned. The literature related to BDS and their work for the LGBT community, prevention work and recordings of the services they provide was all presented in the yearly reports.

Besides the legal advisor at BDS that provided much of the legal information regarding the law in Nepal I also talked with the person responsible for media contacts. He would present press releases to different medias and also those medias who wanted to cover a story or an event BDS was involved with would go through him. The founder Sunil Babu Pant was not available to meet with me for an interview until end of April. During the interview I could ask him about the organization and also about his initiation to establish BDS.

When I arrived back to Gothenburg University I was able to find more literature relating to the topic. My supervisor also contributed to the literature by letting me borrow book and recommending literature to me.

3.6 Analysis of the Material

The data for this qualitative research collection spanned over 18 months. Material on how to conduct research and facts on sexuality and sexual reproductive health as well as on Nepal were among the first material I considered when starting the research. Once on site I did the interviews in a semi structured matter; the transcribing I did on the days I did not have any interviews to do. The transcribing was very time consuming and took even longer because of lack of access to electricity when I needed to recharge my recording device. Because of lack of electricity there was also less access to internet and I did not much research for materials, however I had plenty of articles and had scanned chapters from books so that I could read that while I was there. At BDS I got plenty of information to read, however there were other

material that was only available in Nepali language; such as community information hand outs, material that the peer educators used when working with prevention and other forms. Once I was back in Sweden and in Mars 2012 I started writing my thesis and putting together all the material I had collected. There is so material, theories and literature that is relevant to this research that it was overwhelming to only chose a few because of the limited space.

Figure 1: Summary of the results from the interviews.

Does your family know about you being transgender?	Yes 9	No 3		
Have you been raped?	Yes 6	No 4	Attempt 2	
Have you been arrested by the police?	Yes 4	No 8		
Have you attempted suicide?	Yes 6	No 6		
Do you use protection with a new partner? (Condom)	Always 10	Most of the times 2	Less often 0	Never 0
Are you currently involved in sex work for money?	Yes 9	No 3		
How do you define your sexuality?	Homosexual 0	Bisexual 3	Heterosexual 9	
Have you had any physical changes to the body?	Hormone pills 7	Breast implantations 1	Currently no changes 4	
Do you want to have sex reassignment surgery?	Yes 10	No 2		
Do you test yourself for STI's and HIV?	Yes (every three months) 7	Not regularly 3	Never 2	
Have you ever had an STI?	Genital warts 1	HIV 1	None 10	

This figures show the results from the interviews where the answers could be put into data for comparsion purposes. As shown the basic answers were put in to this charge in order to see a trend and even a difference between the subjects. Questions such as how they define thier sexuality and if thier family is aware of thier sexuality are great examples to put the profiling of the subject in prespective. Although these answers are not to be generlized it is significant to this exploratory study as to point out the simillaritty in expereince and expretion of the 12 respondants.

3.7 Ethical Considerations, Generalization and Validation

At any stage of a research or study ethical issues can arise. When working in a different culture and with a subject that is sensitive and powerful in the sense that it can arise many views and emotions among people. The purpose of the study was not to exploit any of the participants therefore the place of where the interview was conducted is not revealed neither is the information on which interviews where an interpreter was used. The names have been changed of the participants to Nepali female names. It is important to ensure the participants with privacy, confidentiality and anonymity (Carey 2009:11).

The gatekeeper I had assistance from and who interpreted for the respondent who did not feel comfortable to talk English with me was very professional and had experience of acting as an interpreter for other researchers coming to BDS. I conducted only two interviews without the gatekeeper present. All the interviews were conducted in a private setting but two. One was out on the grass field at a park where people did walk by but not close enough to understand our conversation; the other was in an office space and the other person present was their coworker who did not pay any attention to us and who did not speak English. The respondent said that she did not mind that her coworker was present.

While I was quiet about whom I had interviewed to other employers at BDS the transgender people would know whom I had approached and whom I had interviewed. At BDS it was a very open and freely spoken environment people were recommending respondents to me and telling me about transgender people that they thought had interesting life circumstances and that I should meet.

3.8 Limitations

The validity can be questioned because when conducting research in a language that is not one that you are familiar with there is a risk that information will get lost when the questions and answers go through an interpreter. I was aware of this possibility; however the option I have is to trust that the interpreter delivered the correct translation of what the respondent was saying in Nepali. Also the truthfulness of the responses during the interviews could be questioned.

Because this research is limited to Kathmandu and male to female transgender there is limitation to how broadly it can be generalized. There might be similarities in experiences presented and the results of what knowledge and practice these twelve transgender respondents have with transgender people in other places. As it has come forward in the results the respondents identify sex and sexuality according to their own understanding and interpret sexual activity differently. The three respondent who were married to women understood sex with their wives as an obligation even though they felt no attraction to biological females. Nepal is a multi cultural, ethnic and religions, they all have different stands towards the expression of sexuality and sexual identity which limits this study even further in order to be generalized throughout Nepal.

IV. Theoretical concepts

4.1 Introduction

Theory is to present what tools were used to investigate, explore of a social group. The group in this research is the transgender male to female in Kathmandu, Nepal. Nepal has a conservative culture and there is a culturally and socially difference between men and women in many aspects of the society. As transgender male to female there is an advantage but also disadvantage in a cultural and social meaning. The advantages are that they can perform as both genders they wish to do in the society, their actions can narrow the gap that exist in the gender roles in the community. The disadvantages are that they are not recognized as the transgender gender they wish to be. They are not recognized as the male they were born into because of the feminine nature but also not as women even though the transformation is towards womanhood. The respondents stress these difficulties.

Carey (2009:49) argues that the benefit of research is to present a matter in order to offer a broader understanding. The theories provide us to be able to make connections between the similarities and differences that is reported in the study and also provides different aspects of the world.

The concepts used for this thesis are the concept of gender and its relation to sex and sexuality; these three elements are intertwined with each other and in order to understand one element we have to explore the relationship between all three. The concept of queer theory will also be applied because it refers to the notion of expanding the norms and supports concepts that do not fall within existing margins defined by society or the culture.

4.2 The Gender Factor

There has been much research done in order to define, distinguish, explain and understand sex, gender and sexuality. The term gender has traditionally been used to identify a male from a female biologically and anatomically and it is also argued to be a social construction where the wording sex would be more appropriate term to use to define the male and the female. McDowell (2004:13) states that sex is the biological definition and gender is formed socially; sexuality is the practice of attraction of a person towards another. The point that gender and sexuality understandings are socially and culturally influenced leave room to assume that there is no single correct definition.

Hern and Parkin (2001:6) state that there cannot be gender without sexuality and neither can sexuality be described without addressing sex and gender. In order to explain one the other feature must also be explained. The terms that arise from sexuality, which are heterosexuality, homosexuality and bisexuality depend on how one defines their own gender or sex.

Susan Stryker (2008:18) explains the connection between gender and sexuality but also to understand that one's identity is separate from one's sexual attraction. Transgender people do not necessarily want to change sex but rather to stay as transgender and have another

recognized gender that is put beside the male and female. Kimmel and Plate (2004) discuss sexualities, identities, behaviour within a society and social context. What is considered masculine and feminine is specific to a culture and also to an individual. There are individuals who do not wear a specific colour because it is to feminine or to masculine others might differentiate between smells or even occupations. Nepal can be considered a sexually restrictive culture where it limits the public expression of sexuality.

The development of allowing and changing the current definitions of sex, gender and sexual orientation is not only present among the LGBT community but also a struggle of women in many parts of the world in hopes to abolish structure between sexes.

4.3 Queer Theory

The term queer defines variables that do not fall into the existing gender norms or categories. This was historically a negative term until the 1990's when it became a leading a powerful word in the advocacy for equal rights for the LGBT community. It signifies the diversity of all gender or sex identifications and the sexual orientation people chose to identify themselves with. Stevetn Seidman (1996:134) state that queer theory disrupts the categories and order of gender orientation in the community that provide an expanded field of definitions. Annamarie Jagose also supports the later statement made by Seidman. Jagose (1996:97) bring forward that the concept of queer to question what it is one has to be to fit within a category of sexual identity. Queer breaks the margins that of sex, gender and sexual identity.

It also challenges the notion of the sexual orientation being a natural process or socially constructed. The theory wants to prove that we are not depended on the notion that there should labels as to what is pure female and what is pure male in the community and that ones identity is not only determined by owns gender. Susan Stryker (2008:17) brings forward that the concept of transgender challenge the view on gender and the definition of how one defines ones own sex and how that in turn can identify ones sexuality.

This study invites the provided definition of queer theory in order to give a better and clear understanding of how the transgender recognition is now bending the traditional definition of the two existing genders. As the equal rights for all people grow more similar the gap between genders will be less visible socially. Queer theory fits well with the individual definitions of sex, gender and sexual orientation that the transgender respondents of this thesis gave. They define how they felt sexually and how they acted out in the sociocultural gender roles and also who they were attracted to and how that person defined themselves.

4.4 Analysis

The gender and sex definition is argued to be related to the culture and society where what is natural and acceptable to be the definition of a male and female. The factors of what characteristics one has in relation to what is acceptable as gender role behaviour both in childhood and in the adult life. As one can see that understanding the definitions for ones gender, sex and sexual preferences can be complex and multidimensional. One factor defines

the other so that, much like many things, we have an overview of the person when we try to generalize and categorize human characteristics. The gender theory provides an order to assist the reader defining the sexuality, sexual preferences and the defined sex of the respondent. The gender factor also assists the shaping and development of the services and meeting of people who would not want to be categorised in the heterosexual male or female roles, where many aspects of society is adapted to. From experience of listening to how queer theory has been explained in settings is that queer theory has been notable for being able to include matters that create more confusion rather than clarity when defined. However the other side of the argument is that the queer theory can be applied to such a broad spectrum that it does create confusion. The respondents vary in their own definition of self and the relation to sexuality and attraction that the queer theory becomes a sturdy theory to be applied in the attempts to define and find common factors between all the responds that also can be applied to others in the work of the organizations.

V.I. Voices of the Respondents

5.1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the empirical findings and results that were obtained through the interviews conducted. The respondents were the primary source of information for this study. A total of twelve transgender male to female were interviewed. The names of the respondents have been changed in order to keep the identity anonymous and confidential of the respondents. The age of the twelve participants ranged between 21-48. They either referred to themselves as transgender or thirdgender. Transgender and thirdgender as a recognized gender is one of the aims BDS want to get approved in Nepal. With the gender recognition human rights and other aspects of society can be addressed for the transgendered community.

The people I talked to about their involvement in sex work quietly retold of incidents and reasons why they found themselves there. Their body language proved the point of hurtfulness, disappointment and shame to a point of understanding the stigmatization that follows those involved in sex work. One respondent, the translator and two other people who joined our discussion on the sexual culture in Nepal explained that in the Nepali culture chastity is valued and girls are encouraged to be virgins until marriage. Therefore having a sexual relationship before marriage is restricted and sometimes even punishable by family members. Nepal is a multicultural place and has cultures that are quite conservative; therefore many men turn to the sex workers who are available to them and also that the transgendered sex workers resemble females quite well. It is very common for people to migrate for work seasonal wise in Nepal and also the traveling time it takes between cities and towns because of the landscape leave many on the roads for longer period of time. Sex work in Nepal can be viewed as in many other places perhaps, if there is a need for it the demand will be met.

In the course of interview most of them recounted the confusion of how they felt and the changes in their appearance in the adolescent years, about suicide attempts and being abandon by family. The retelling also includes stories of ability to find belonging in a community and the realization of not being alone with these feelings.

Four of the participants had Kathmandu as their birth city while the other eight participants had moved to Kathmandu either because of work or being forced to leave their home village.

5.1.2 The realization of feeling different in their sexuality

As people grow into puberty their body changes. For someone who does not feel as if they belong in the body they are developing into it can become a great psychological burden in order to come in terms with the changes. The respondents expressed feelings of shame and guilt for developing facial hair and deeper voice, among other things. Their interest lay in the culturally defined female accessories such as bangles; nail polish and the traditional nose piercings girls have in the Nepali culture.

Devi who is 29 years old and moved to Kathmandu at age 10 with some of her friends from the village for work describes that it was when she went into puberty she start feeling that she

felt different from how she was developing and the struggle of accepting the changes and the universal feeling of teenagers to think that you are the only one who feels that way. Devi started working as a dancer at a restaurant at age 14; there she met other boys who acted out as she felt. This helped her become more comfortable and in terms with who she was. Because of the conservative culture of how freely and visible young women can be in Nepal it is popular to have boys and young men dress in female dresses at festivals and at restaurants for entertaining purposes, Devi said. This is not to say that the dancers at the restaurants are transgendered, cross-dressers or drag queens. It can be anyone willing to be employed for that purpose.

At age 13 I realized I was different from other people or boys. First I thought it was only me but then I met 2 other people like me. I was thinking of suicide, I did not tell others I was a thirdgender, I was busy with work and activities so maybe that kept my mind off suicide. When I made friends similar to me as a dancer I understood it is not only me of this nature or sexual orientation. (Devi)

Ela who is 35 years old has been involved with BDS as an office assistant since 2002. She has been aware that she is different from her other male friends as a child. She got involved with males at a young age however never openly; and today she is married to a woman and has a daughter. Her family arranged her marriage. As a young person Ela felt that her family would never accept her as a transgender person and these thought and lack of support was difficult for her.

It was depressing for me. I cried a lot I tried to commit suicide three times. Two times I try to hang myself and one time jump of a bridge. But then I thought what would happen if I die with my parents we were so poor then. (Ela)

Ela continues to tell about her family relations and her role at the home as a child. She is from a family that live with many relatives and to live together with a larger extend of the family is very common among her cast. She describes herself as very feminine, a characteristic that is still very strong in the way she presents herself today.

My family doesn't know I am transgender but they use to call me my female son. I use to do a lot of household jobs. They do not know I have sex with males. I had long hair, I took tablets to increase my chest but then one day my uncle found me with female clothes and he dragged me home and cut of my hair and he kept beating me very badly the family felt very embarrassed about this [about the female clothes]. I rented a room somewhere else and that's were I keep my female stuff so not at home. (Ela)

Fuchhi who is 22 and in appearance has very feminine features still has not come out to her family that she is transgender. Her family stay in Kathmandu and she goes to see them two times a month. She describes her teenage years at school as confusing but that she was drawn to the activities of what the girls at school were doing. She did not know that she was a

transgender or attracted to boys because it had not been expressed in her presence therefore it did not provide as an explanation for her feelings.

There is an age when you get to know about yourself at that time I use to feel a bit ashamed I try to be boy but I could not it did not feel right I was in sports but with the girls I use to go swimming with the girls or basket ball with the girls I had more girlfriends and I use to dance a lot in school I went to a mixed school so I was able to be with lots of girls. (Fuchhi)

Two of the respondents did not surprise their families by coming out to them. They received support and acceptance from their families just as they had prior to coming out. Gesha is 28 years old who describes her self as a bisexual transgender grew up in Kathmandu; she works abroad for nine months of the year for the past four years because of the better income opportunity. She expressed that she embraced the changes with her body during puberty and already understood her attraction to males and other transgender, however not biological females.

I accepted the changes. I had a boyfriend at that time already I told my family when I was 15 they were not surprised because I was very feminine and when we live in Kathmandu I brought transgendered friends that I made home. (Gesha)

As I interviewed the people that expressed suicidal thoughts and great confusion along side of the struggles with family members I expected that all my respondents would provide me with the same story line. As we can read here Gesha have a very supporting and accepting family. Understanding that there are families where they accepted the child no matter the sexual orientation was a refreshing success story to learn of.

5.1.3 How to define oneself and the consequences of expressing it

The transgender in this research do not define themselves as male or female nor do the definition thirdgender indicate that there is a numerical order to gender and that people who do not define themselves as either male or female belong to third category of gender, some also chose to not categorize themselves. Transgender and thirdgender are just as justifiable as self-definition as male and female are to one who decided to define them selves accordingly. It neither excludes or includes the category of male or female, it stands next to these definitions equally, this is the point BDS wants to get across with the definition. Fuchhi explains her sexuality and her identity as she sees it and how she thinks that others might experience her.

By sexuality it is homosexual, because I am biologically male, but if I have to say myself I am heterosexual because I want a guy. I like a guy who is straight that is why I belong to heterosexual. I am not female I am thirdgender or transgender (Fuchhi)

When the demand for recognition of transgender and thirdgender gains approval in Nepal Fuchhi would like to change her gender to thirdgender and change her name to a Nepali female name, which she has been using to present herself for a few years now.

Bina is very aware of her role as transgender and that she can take advantage of being able to break the norm for what girls can do and cannot do in Nepal.

I can wear whatever girls cant wear, the transgender can wear we can be more open (Bina)

Fuchhi who is 22 years old expressed similar attitude as Bina when talking about that the transgender community could bring the gap to a smaller scale of what is culturally and socially accepted behaviour and clothing for females and males in Nepal.

I pretend to be a woman but I am not but I have no limitations like for the kitchen men should not cook or woman should not wear short skirts or go to nightclubs I go and wear what I want I say if a man can do that why not women. Just being a transgender it helps lots of women (Fuchhi)

Both Bina and Fuchhi express that they can encourage women to act out in social settings. They are aware that there are limitations to how and what a girl can express her self if it is either by her clothing or actions or workplace. They both feel that they can do anything a male person can do and say in Nepal as well as anything a female is restricted to do. This is a very positive action taken for the women's right movement in Nepal. Women can rely on the support from the LGBT community who also strive for the effort of equal rights for all people in Nepal. The transgender challenge the cultural norms of the female behaviour and rights when they present themselves as feminine and act accordingly to how they want. Their behaviour in turn encourages the progress for breaking the frames of behaviour appropriate for women in Nepal.

The very intense topic has been to recognize the citizenship of third gender or transgender and allow people to complete the change on their identity cards. Ela feel that even if it becomes legal to state ones gender as transgender the problems still relies with people's acceptance.

I want the citizenship of transgender but I fear to take it maybe if society accept and my family does not it might create problems for my daughter, she might get discriminated against. (Ela)

28 year old Gesha, who has a stable relationship with her family and is accepted for who she is explains why she define her self as a bisexual.

I am bisexual thirdgender. I am bisexual because I have sex with other transgender (Gesha)

Isha, 33 years old, is the only one of the respondents who defines herself as transgender however would not like to do any changes to her identity card, name or her body. She did in her teenage years take hormone pills to gain breasts but stopped with it after two years. Isha's

family accepts her as she is and she has great support she says but do not feel that she is in need to any changes, she is happy with how she lives with even if the government allows all form of changes to the identity card for the LGBT community.

Kali, the eldest respondent expressed that she can not undertake any changes even if it is legal because of the fear that it would become a problem for her eight year old daughter that is in the village with her mother. She also expresses that she feels that those belong to the older group and who are transgender are not cared for in the same sense as the younger are. Kali expresses that the older transgender sex workers cannot look as attractive as the younger transgender in Kathmandu, which leaves them with less money, and as a result other problems arise.

There is to much competition they have their breast done no one try to account for the older transgender everyone they to show their figures and stuff (Kali)

Kali who is 48 years old claim that she feels that her age is a barrier for her to be able to express herself as the female she wishes to be and that there is competition among the transgendered for the clients at the cruising sites³. Kali has some regulars she can meet with otherwise she thinks it is very difficult for someone her age and her appearance to meet actual new clients.

Maya who was forced by her family to get married to a woman with her family's acknowledgement about her sexuality but still forcing her into marriage claim that she and some of the transgender people in the community who are working for the equal rights and the ability for them to change their gender on their identity cards.

The transgender tell me I can not take citizenship of transgender they say married male should not have transgender citizenship (Maya)

This discussion is very active in the community because there are transgender people who have been forced into arranged marriages and cannot be open with their status while there are others who can. A male to female transgender who is married to a woman is seen to be in a lesbian marriage by the transgender community.

Three of the respondents' families do not know about their sexual preferences or identity to this day. There is a fear of rejection and that they do not want to bring shame to the family. The process of coming out is a personal choice and demands much courage and has to be done when one feels ready to disclose their sexual preferences to others. Maya who is 29 years old has come out to her family but was still forced into an arranged marriage to another woman at age 20 by her family. She decided to leave her arranged marriage and live together with her male partner whom she refers to as husband. However Maya and her wife did not file for a divorce because of family conflict with the wife's father who refused to let divorce be an

³ Cruising site refers to hot spots. These are the places where people can go to either sell sex or buy sex. These are also the places BDS go to in order to do prevention work and hand out protection for safer sex.

option. After the death of her bride's father, Maya's father forced Maya to move in with her wife. This was seven years after that Maya had left to live with her husband, who left Maya shortly after she went to stay with him.

I talk about my sexuality with my wife but she said it is not a problem I have husband that time but he does not help me I want to commit suicide the community does not understand (Maya)

Maya felt that the support from her husband who she had left the arranged marriage for was not as strong as she had initially thought it was. As that relationship failed and the pressure to act as a husband for the bride Maya was in state of desperation and considering committing suicide.

Devi, who worked as a dancer at a restaurant from the age of 14, was also forced to disclose her status to her family and all of Nepal. The situation was that her status was disclosed by the media following an arrest in 2001 as a male who deceived the community by dressing in women's clothing and that it was an unnatural act.

When I was 18 I worked as a dancer, one night after closing me and my friends walked outside and the police arrested us because we had women's clothes on, they kept us in the cells for 13 days and we got out on bail. They called us very many bad names. The next day the police called on the reporters and gave them our names, that is how everyone got to know I was a transgender. We were four people in the jail. We were severely beaten in custody and jail. They claimed we try to cheat the people by disguising ourselves as women and for that we should be punished and when we were freed by that time the family knew I was transgender. The police never thought these kind of activities, men dressing as women, happened in Nepal. (Devi)

Devi became aware of her identity through the media coverage and did not respond supportive to her

The family said you have ruined our status in our community so you should stay away from us I got frustrated and said if my family turns their back on me now I can disclose my orientation so I put on the dress and went to one of the TV programs and I gave interview I was telecast through Nepal TV. (Devi)

After the publication of her identity she felt that now she could go and come out as a transgender to the media even though the news would reach more relatives she did not feel she had anything to hide any more. Devi was not welcomed home to her village for years following this incident. It was not until the death of her grandfather four years ago that she went back to her village.

Ela who is married to a woman and has a daughter and live with many of her family members has rented an extra room downtown so that she can keep her female clothing and the different

female accessories that she cannot have in her home. Ela claim that she has a steady sex life with her wife even though she is not attracted to females. Ela goes to the city park Ratna Park to meet men that she can have sex with and make some money to pay the rent on the room downtown and to save some extra money for her daughter's future.

My family forced me to get married; our marriage was arranged we have a daughter now. I had intentions on having a child. She got pregnant the first night. She does not know that I do sex work or sex with men. I try to have sex with her regularly because it is my obligation because she also has a desire to have sex so I do it forceful to satisfy her needs. It is my obligation. (Ela)

Jala is from a small village outside of Kathmandu; she did not understand why she was not attracted to girls like her males peers and was engaged with a relative male in sexual activities that she felt was more natural and desired for her. When her family wanted her to get married to a girl they found suiting for her she refused to go along with it. This hurt their relationship and Jala could not stay in the house any more.

Family wanted to force me into marriage and I said no and I was forced to leave the village 10 years ago. (Jala)

When Jala arrived to Kathmandu she did not know anyone and spend her first night sleeping on a bench in a park, the next day she spend roaming around in the park and noticed transgendered people. The founder of BDS Mr Pant talked with her and understood her situation and assisted her with finding housing and employment. However her family relations where still none existing even more so when news reached her village that she was a transgender person. One year ago she appeared on TV that had the aim to educated people on who the transgender were and how people can have better understanding and also that the Nepali government need to give them recognition so that the law incorporates them as well. One of many documentaries initiated by BDS.

I featured in a documentary one year ago that was shown on TV and my family have seen it, now they understand we had no contact and now they want me to visit but I do not want to at a time of need they forced me to leave now I do not need that love, affection and care (Jala)

The coming out⁴ process is not only a difficult process for the person coming out as a transgender person. Fuchhi was with her boyfriend for four years they even preformed a private Hindu marriage ritual by themselves. Fuchhi has not come out to her family of her identity as a transgender and her relationship with her boyfriend was a secret both to her family and his family. A month before I met Fuchhi she and her boyfriend had to break up because his family arranged a marriage for him with a girl from his neighbourhood. Fuchhi's family are also talking to her about arranging a marriage for her with a girl, she is trying to

⁴ Coming out refers to the process of letting a person or people know of ones sexual identity and sexuality. It is also about the self acceptance of what sexual identity one has as discussed in the chapter on literature review (RFSL, Belonging:2004)

convince them that she wants to go back and finish her schooling first and settle down before thinking about marriage. Fuchhi has very soft features and resembles a female in Nepal, with her long hair and female fitting clothes.

Lots of people say I look like a girl so when I go to public places I do not speak much I just speak very quietly because I am scared if they know my sexuality they will have some problems with me so I never, I do not speak they do not see me and they do not notice I am a transgender. I stay alone I see them [family] once or twice a month I just change my get up as a boy. (Fuchhi)

Bina who is the youngest respondent is 21 years old. Her family is aware of her status as a transgender and has stable relationship with her mother who lives in a village far from Kathmandu. Bina is taking hormone tablets, like many other transgender, she claims it helps her to increase her breasts, get wider hips, softer skin and to acquire female bodily features more. Bina would like to dress in female clothing however sees a problem with that which she states as

I want to wear lady dress and go to dating with boy. I wear lady dress at night or at events but I have no bank balance so if the police take me I cannot pay bail so because of that I do not wear women's clothing or bangles or make up during my job. (Bina)

Devi's family did not accept her sexuality and she does not have a stable relationship with her family today. The transgender people do not only experience difficulty being accepted by family, friends, school, and multiple other social sectors or by a partner's family but also by the housing of their faith. Devi attended church in her early twenties and felt very welcomed however she decided not to join the church after learning about the stand the church had on the LGBT community. This is how she expresses she decision to not join the church.

I use to go to church often, protestant on Saturdays. I liked Christianity and kept going for six months. But then I got to know that the transgender people in Christianity they are not accepted so because of that they were against people like me and homosexuals I fear it later on if I changed religion things might go wrong. I was ready to be baptised. Because of that I stopped going I was about to baptize you know but then I came to know about the religion and problem with transgender (Devi)

5.1.4 Experiencing assault, harassment and discrimination

As children head into puberty the curiosity about discovering their sexuality grows as well as the desire to act out. As a young person in a conservative culture as Nepal the confusion on how to be accordingly and how they feel had impact on my respondents. Six of the respondents admitted to have attempted suicide, a few of them multiple times. For the respondents the suicide attempts took place from early teenage years to later in adult life.

Reasons were the difficulty of coming in terms with their sexuality and feeling of acceptance and rejection by family members.

Seven of the respondents had been raped before the age of eighteen. For one of the respondents the rape incident was their first sexual intercourse. Two more respondents had experienced attempt rape in their youth. Five of the respondents had been raped in their adult life as well. Two of which by taxi drivers and two by officials and one by a customers. However though all who engaged in sex work claimed that they experience forceful customers on regular bases.

While seven of the twelve respondents had had relationships with much older men, as they were young teenagers; they viewed it as a sexual relationship rather than being taken advantage of because they felt they were equally participant in the relationship with their older partner. We spend great amount of time talking about the subject of assault and rape. The subject brought back much discomfort for them in the sense of talking about the memories and events. Their body language and posture would change as they retold these memories.

All of the respondents said they had been forced to preform sexual acts with clients, which they might have not preferred doing while they were involved with sex work. The money was the big driving force and five of the respondents used excessive amount of alcohol to deal with the demands of sex work. Assault and rape was a risk with the involvement of sex work not only from their customers but some had also experienced it with police and army forces who would threaten with arrest if they did not preform sexual favours for them.

28 year old Gesha was raped by an officer while she was in arrest and was put in a cell for four days for wearing female clothes seven years ago. She was able to take her case to court with legal help from BDS and the officer had to leave his post as a result.

A police beat me up very badly once, me and two other cross dressers were taken to prison and I was raped there and then we were released we reported to BDS they complained the action the media covered it and the police officer was forced to leave the job no I don't fear going to the police but I would turn to BDS for suggestions and then go to the police. (Gesha)

An army officer assaulted Leela 24 years old, who is a full time sex worker, because she did not want to offer him oral sex. He managed to leave her with a very bad head injury, which she had to hospitalize for. Leela was also able to take her case to court two years ago and the army officer had to leave his position within the army.

Bina who is 21 years old and works as a sex worker along side her day job retells of one of her most scared moments as she had just started with sex work. Bina has broad shoulders and a strong physical appearance, she gives the impression that there is not much she is scared of and that she can stand a physical fight.

I started selling sex one year ago I was very nervous. My friend told me to go with to Thamel [shopping area in Kathmandu] and there a guy asked me

how much I cost and we agreed on 700 and we went to his room. One time I was nearly shot, the guy put a gun on my fore head. First we had sex then he wanted me to pay him 10 000 Rupees I kept on discussing and managed to push him out and closed my door. My dormitory friends heard us and came to help me. I have not seen him since. I am not scared I have been forced to do sexual acts but I can fight back. (Bina)

In the field of sex work it is not only dangerous and a risk to be abused, robbed, raped, struggles with negotiating the use of protection or even murdered but also the risks of STIs and HIV that come along with the consequence of having multiple sexual partners.

Champa who is 29 years old had lost both of her parents at age 10 and grew up with her stepmother who was her father's second wife in the polygamist household. Champa did not feel as if she was treated as her other siblings and turned to drinking alcohol as a young teenager and engaging in a sexual relationship with a much older male teacher at the school. Soon there after she got involved in sex work for the fast cash. A known health care organization use to be present in the area she worked which she got involved with and learned about condom use, STIs, HIV and other sex work related matters. When she was 17 years old she tested her self for STIs and HIV and found that she was HIV positive. She contemplated suicide after learning of this and more so when the news of her status and whereabouts reached her stepmother who as a result asked her to leave the house. Champa rented a room in a building where 13 other sex workers lived and received all her clients in that room. During the work at this house she met the man who is now her husband. In their 11 years of relationship he has managed to stay HIV negative.

I nearly committed suicide from the harassment it was intolerable it was in 1999, when I find out that I was HIV positive I had then been working for 1,5 years. When I left home I went back to sex work I had no where to go. I use to drink a lot and smoke to handle the work. In 2006 I stopped completely with sex work. I use to do anything depending on the money (Champa)

5.1.5 Understanding of sex, relationships in relation to male and female roles

Nepal has multiple cultural norms and practices, some intertwined with religion and some developing with the media popular culture which is dominated by the Bollywood scene from India. The western music, movies and fashion are peaking in Nepal among the youth as well, much because of the more access to the Internet and to more TV channels from these countries. Nepal is also a big tourist attraction and host an estimated half a million people, these people bring something with them as well some might leave a trace of their culture in Nepal. The values one grows up in their surrounding effect their attitudes towards a subject, so does the information and education on the topic one has. As one gains experience the attitudes take shape as well. The respondents talked about the understanding and attitudes they have towards sex and relationships and if it is different for the males, females and themselves. Nepal is a culture that practices arrange marriages, which many feel is more sustainable than love marriage, which is based on feelings. The twelve respondents had different views on how people should approach sex and marriage. Three of the respondents

did not have views that went with how they themselves do and had practiced sex and relationships. I sensed an attitude that three transgender respondents shared the more conservative view of sex and relationships for females and a more liberal outlook for males. We discussed love, relationships, sex, marriage and abortions.

Champa who herself was engaged in sexual activities with a partner at age 14 felt that sex should be an act that takes place after one marries. When I asked her if she waited until she had her ritual marriage with her husband she said no. The reason was that she was forced once to have sex when she was young and she just then continued with having sex and also soon after that she got involved in sex work.

Sex is wrong before marriage. It is a social problem now the young people to have sex before marriage; films have lured people to have sex before marriage as well. It is not correct, it is negative it is far from our culture that is why it is unacceptable. The porn movies are different from our reality as well. (Champa)

Jala felt that love marriage, which means that people have the freedom to meet each other and decide if they want to get married rather than arranged marriages which is when the family finds a suitable partner for their child. Jala thought that arranged marriage is bad and that it creates more problems when people think with their feelings, she wishes to have an arranged marriage herself. She lives with her boyfriend and has been in a relationship with him for a few years but hopes that they can marry soon.

I like arranged marriages, I want that for myself as well it should be by the family like all my siblings have (Jala)

When we were discussing divorce the respondents showed disgust and resentment to the idea of divorce. Hena took a moment during to respond to the question on divorce

I do not think it is good option, it is because we have arranged marriages (Hena)

Hena claims that the reason there are divorce is because of the arranged marriages in the culture. Who the family feels to be fit might not necessary be a good fit at all which would lead to divorce.

Bina had a very liberal view on sex and relationships, she wants all forms of relationships to be allowed and so should sex with who ever as long as the people involved are willing.

Sex is a natural gift and everyone needs to practice it. It would be like a fish without water. But we should have safer sex. Safe sex is good before marriage (Bina)

Bina was not the only one with this stand, however she is the one who strongly discussed the open attitude towards sex and relationships. Leela who is the other young person in this study felt very much like Bina. She wished to have a love marriage herself. Her argument for

pregnancies and that they should only take place after marriage was that the Nepali culture still finds children born outside of wedlock as shameful. Jala shared this view of conservative cultural view on pregnancies and that she herself also thinks that pregnancies should take place after marriage. She, like many females feel that it is a great desire and a need for women to become pregnant therefore abortion should not be allowed in her opinion.

Only after marriage society will look in different way it's a great desire of women to be pregnant a need of a woman to conceive a child so no abortion (Jala)

A woman's ability to bear children is a desired and expectable ability. As transgender male to females cannot carry out that biologically they do wish to be able to adopt children and that it will become legal for them to do so in Nepal. Champa who has been in a long relationship with her husband expressed that it is one of her and her husbands' wishes, to be able to adopt a child in Nepal.

5.1.6 Involvement in sex work and how to meet customers

Two respondents expressed that they do not attain to sex work for the money at present. Being at the cruising sites and meeting men who want to have sex with them is a way for them to express their sexual desire. Kali who is 48 years old and married to a woman even though separated for seven years felt she was attracted to men as a teenager however it did not occur to her that it was possible for men to have sexual relationships with other men until her move to Kathmandu seven years prior. There was a shock and anger when she first saw two men negotiating sexual favours in Ratna Park which led to Kali visiting the park the next day and talked to a transgendered sex worker who explained who she was and what transgender was. Soon after this acquaints Kali begun meeting customers. As I asked her about her thoughts why she begun with sex worker she said

One is based on the desire and one for economic problems and one because of force I work for desire with heterosexual men (Kali)

Kali and Gesha were the two respondents who expressed that they visit cruising areas where they know sex work is prevalent in order just to meet sexual partners rather than depending on sex work for economic reasons. The meeting places provide as a chance for them to meet men whom they would enjoy their sexuality with. Even though Gesha had a partner she said that if sex was offered to her, by someone she was attracted too she would accept it.

Hena is worried about becoming bald and the side effects of hormone pills. Many who take the hormone pills are unsupervised and the recommendations on what to take are a word of mouth from a person to person. The hormone pills the respondents that I talked with, were from China and Thailand. BDS do inform transgender that there are side effects to taking these hormone pills that is not given to them by a doctor and the process and progression is not under their supervision. One of the respondents had tried a kind of hormone pills and had experienced pain in her chest after a few months and stopped taking it. The hormone replacement therapy is taken to introduce the female hormones to the male genetic person in

this case, in order to develop a more female like features. As all medications and self-medication there are risks depending on the authenticity of the brand or the dose people take. The respondents had many stories of others who they had known of who had experienced side effects concerning their health relating to the hormone replacement therapy.

I only cross dress, I want to only grow more hair on my head that is all. I am scared about the side effects of hormone pills and I do not want to do any surgeries (Hena)

The common attitude in this study is that prostitution is a way to generate income. It occurs in many places around the world and people of any gender can be found involved with it. The transgender people in this research have all been or still are involved with sex work, all at some point because of the money. Many transgender people do use hormone pills, which can become costly and the need for money grows. Some also save for a desired sex reassignment surgery or at least to be able to increase their chest with silicone.

In Nepal sex work is not a hidden activity however it is not very visibly operated. There is a law in Nepal that prohibits women to be involved in sex work and that could lead to a sentence if arrested, however the law is gender based towards women which leaves the transgender people who involve themselves with sex work under the law of unnatural act. This means that transgender male to female who have sex with male can be arrested on the bases that having sex with other males is an unnatural act. This law obviously limit the homosexual relationships among the homosexual people in Nepal. However today the law is under criticism and there is much pressure from BDS and the other human rights organizations that want to see changes in the Nepali law concerning the LGBT community.

All twelve respondents had been involved with sex work. Nine of the respondents were still involved in sex work and received money from their customers. Two went to the cruising sites to meet with men and satisfy their own need to have sexual relations with men. One of the respondents no longer engaged in sex work and it had been six years she had the last time.

Devi is fulltime employed as an office assistant, she is trying to save money for a breast enhancement that she will do in Thailand. She retells of how she got into the sex work business.

At age 16 I was at Ratna Park there was a man from the Netherlands he worked with some organization he took me to his flat he gave me 300 Rupees and he tried to do it from behind but I was young then and blood spilled out from my anal. We met for a year he taught me how to use condom and lubricant (Devi)

Everyday after work she goes to Ratna Park for sex work and try to be with two or three customers. She herself is in sex work for the money that she needs for her livelihood and for the planed breast enlargement operation.

It is forceful because of the economic situation. The lack of employment opportunities and education, because transgender are sometimes forced to

leave school or their families ask them to leave when they find out about their sexual preferences so for lively hood people have to work as sex workers (Devi)

Ratna Park is a big central park in Kathmandu, it has big fields for sport activities and long strips of market and stales for cafeterias. The transgender have their own area in the park where they meet up and where the customers know they can be found. The park is also the host of many homeless people in the city. Devi claim that she can trick the customers to think she is a female and therefore can get more customers. She takes her customers to a hotel near the park.

I squeeze my butt cheeks together and cover my genitals while laying on my back I do not take my shirt of and they insert their penis between my butt cheeks thinking it is my vagina. Sometimes they are very drunk (Devi)

Devi is able to protect herself form sexual transmitted diseases this way and she also claims that the awareness and education she has received from BDS has helped her realize that she always should use protection. Even when she is with a drunken person and they insert their penis in between her squeezed butt cheeks. Devi knows other sex workers that carry a sexually transmitted disease and that their customers could come to her at some point later which puts her at risk of contraction one as well.

I feel scared doing this kind of work, some of my friends got infected by clients and their customers might later come to me. I use condom every time. I try to explain to them that someday you might get married or have children and they have can get transferred of the disease. I have experienced from being a peer educator. (Devi)

Devi does get herself tested on a regular bases and uses condom with all her customers for all sexual acts, so far she has remained negative. When the customer refuses to use a condom she try to educate them that it could affect their fertility. Ela, who is married to a woman, spends some of her time as a sex worker to be able to save money for her daughter's future. Ela begun with sex work while she worked as a housekeeper at a major building in Kathmandu, she would then meet men who she would go into the bathrooms with. When she was forced to marry and started to work as a office assistant she had not been involved with sex work for a few years and it happen again when she got an offer of a lot of money compared to her daily income as an office assistant.

I went to a dance show I was dressed up in a sari and a guy asked me for sex for 1000 rupees I only mad 160 rupees a day working at a office so I went with him. The money made me start. If a customer does not want to use condom I refer them to a friend of mine. Now during oral sex I do not always use condom it depends on if the guy is clean. I am worried of contrasting something and give it to my wife.

I sell sex two days a week I give five days to my family I am saving the money for the room and my daughter. I just go to satisfy my needs. (Ela)

Despite attending the same educational programme set up by BDS that both Devi and Ela have attended did Ela have a different view on how she could be a bit irresponsible with using protection for all sexual acts. Ela relies on the visual to decide if the person might or might not carry a sexually transmitted disease.

Bina meet some of her customers though the Internet. As I was going to meet with her for our first interview she was entering a chat room online and to chat with people and give her number to people whom she agrees to have sex with. The men she chats with do know she is a transgender because of her username and she additionally uses a web camera with those who want to chat via web camera. Bina likes to cruise the crowded tourist area Thamel to meet foreigners.

I cruise in the Thamel area, when I give them good service they give me money. I chat with people on the computer and I give my number and we meet. I am a part time sex worker (Bina)

Bina is willing to engage in any sexual act depending on the money the customers can pay her. She did not get into sex work until two years ago when a friend of her brought her along to Thamel and she got an offer from a guy. She said she was very nervous the first time but eventually became more comfortable with it and that she wanted the money so that she could save for a breast implant in the future.

5.1.7 Understanding STIs and HIV and use of protection

STIs and HIV is at higher risk for those who have multiple sexual partners. When talking about the infections that can transfer through sexual act in texts HIV and other sexual transmitted diseases are mentioned separately, the reasons are many such as that diseases can be cured and viruses only maintained. However there are some sexually transmitted infections that act in virus form but still fall under this category. The definition of what belongs where and for what reason is unclear because even some of the sexually transmitted diseases can be transfer through blood and other contacts other than a sexual act. Some, just as HIV can be transferred from a mother to a child and at vaginal childbirth. HIV infection is becoming more present within the concentrated group of sex workers, the concern is also where the people who buy sex from sex workers have as partners and what health risk they are putting other partners through, this is yet a sign that awareness and more education is needed to prevent the growth and also access to medical care for early discovery of the infections.

With the unclear definition of what defines HIV from other sexually transmitted infections the respondents had very mixed understanding and ways of defining the similarities and differences of contracting and treatments methods.

BDS offers education for all their members and also send out peer educators and outreach workers to inform others all over Nepal on issues concerning the LGBT community. They also teach condom use and also hand out condoms and lubricants. The respondents had all

been to these educational sessions provided by BDS, three had continued as peer educators and two as outreach workers. Yet the knowledge on HIV and STIs varied among the respondents.

Yes HIV and sexually transmitted infections is the same (Devi)

Gesha believes that HIV and sexually transmitted infections are of same nature and that any infection can be cured. A view also shared by Leela.

HIV yeah the same it can be cured if you have the right medicine (Gesha)

Isha had a similar thought as Gesha, she however thought that HIV was a progressive infection, which took form as a sexually transmitted infection and if not cared for would develop into HIV. She also felt that since she uses protection she did not have to get tested.

Sexually transmitted infection is an initial stage that can be cured while HIV is a last stage. I have never have tested myself I use safety, protection I do not think I need to be tested (Isha)

Jala distinguished between HIV and a sexually transmitted infection by saying

HIV is in the blood not visible, sexually transmitted infection is on the outside and visible (Jala)

A similar observation is made by Kali who herself has worked as a peer educator at Ratna Park.

Sexually transmitted infection is transmitted through unsafe sex. HIV is transmitted through blood (Kali)

As the respondents gave their answers I did try to encourage them to explain further what they meant by their respond. They knew HIV and STIs affected the health of a person. However there were disagreements between the response of how they were contracted and how the treatment could be provided. As the interviewer I did not want to impose and follow up questions that would affect or bring out what I wanted to hear I rather let them answer without having me give any impression of confusion. Needless to say that some of these response surprised me because of the awareness and information BDS demonstrate to their member and during their education classes.

5.1.8 Hope for the future

The respondents had stories of pain and disappointment to share. They had experienced violence, harassments, discrimination, rape and abandonment. Among this pain there were successful and concerning stories of events in their lives. Among their hopes for the future is the longing of having a family; many of them mentioned they dream to have a child someday. However today there is no law that supports the adaptation of a child for transgender people or couples where one of the partners is a transgender.

Hena had a wish that she wanted to be able to dress that way she wanted to without having to be worried about relatives seeing her. She wanted to be accepted for how she wanted to be, that was her wish for the future.

I feel like dressing like a female but I can not look completely like a girl and I am worried that some relatives might see me so I am a bit scared (Hena)

The respondents gave feet to their stories by sharing. The retelling of their stories and experiences can assist into shaping more awareness and provide services with wider aims and also in hope that it can provide for others.

5.1.9 Summary of the results

The results reveal that there are similarities between the respondent's reasoning on what gender they feel they can relate too, both biologically and socially and also their sexual identity and whom they are attracted to. This indicates that each individual has their own definition and understanding of their own sexual identity and whom they fell attracted to. There were other similarities in the sense of how they felt they were received by the community and by their families after learning of their sexuality. Many told of sad moments when coming out either if it was voluntary or not; these experiences had great impact and affected their schooling which in turn also limited their employment opportunities and lead to involvement in sex work. However there are many reasons and motives for deciding to be involved in sex work; as three of the respondents expressed it, sex work was an opportunity for them to meet men and have sexual intercourse that they enjoyed. All the respondents while involved in sex work had customers that they had a sexual relationship for a long period of time and had also started a love relationship with men they had met through sex work. One of the respondents was married (not legally) to a man she met during the beginning of her involvement in sex work.

The attitudes towards sexual activity before marriage also differed among the respondents. The respondents that were not in a serious sexual relationship with only one person were more accepting towards sexual activity among unmarried people and thought that as long as the people involved are willing. An unexpected result that appeared through the interviews was the variety of knowledge on HIV and STIs among the respondents. They had all at some point either attended the one day peer education training or the lengthier outreach education program where they would gain knowledge on HIV, STIs and sexual reproductive health and also issues concerning the LGBT community. Even though they had this information the knowledge varied such among the respondents as one believe that HIV was an advanced state of an untreated STI.

There is much progress in the work towards acceptance and inclusion in Kathmandu however it is a struggle to implement the law in a place where conservative attitudes are strong. BDS has many obstacles to tackle; it is nevertheless evident that they are moving forwards looking at the last decade of work.

V.II. Organizational work in Kathmandu

5.2.1 Profiling Blue Diamond Society

In 2001 Sunil Babu Pant established BDS in Kathmandu Nepal, a non-governmental organization (NGO) working for the rights of sexual minorities. Among many other set backs and challenges the NGO first could not register under such category in 2001 and had to first register under sexual health program. The reason was that the Nepali constitution did not recognize sexual minorities. Nepal has a conservative, cast oriented and patriarchal culture where the male dominate most spectres of society and the culture direct heterosexuality.

Sunil Babu Pant came to Kathmandu at age 16 to attend the final two years of high school. However he did not come in contact with the homosexual and transgender community until his six years in Belarus where he studied Computer Science. Before returning to settle down in Kathmandu in 1997, he did some governmental work in Japan for a period of time. From the experience and knowledge he gained while being abroad he knew that people of the sexual minorities gather at public places. While back in Kathmandu he visited Ratna Park, a big multipurpose park in the centre of Kathmandu. There he met members of the LGTB community who expressed their mistreatment and difficult situations, after understanding that there were no governmental support to meet their needs or to promote their wellbeing, Sunil Babu Pant established Blue Diamond Society in 2001. During a conversation with Sunil Pant he explained that the name he put together from different aspects of his life. *Blue*, was a name homosexuals were referred to in Belarus and *Diamond* in Buddhism describes people who are compassionate.

Pant describes his own sexuality as

I just knew, I always knew I just did not know it was a problem when I grew up. Once you talk about it, it becomes a problem here so I did not say anything until 2002 (Sunil Babu Pant)

However he decided to wait until after BDS had been established to tell his family about his own sexual identity.

BDS adopted the notion that strives from both the Hindu and Buddhist mythology about people of third nature, as there are people of male nature and female nature. They coined the term thirdgender as a category for the transgendered people and demanded the government to give this group recognition and all the equal rights and access to services as all other citizens of Nepal.

Today while being active for ten years, BDS and partner organizations such as clinics, Family Health Care and testing facilities operate in 40 cities and towns in Nepal. BDS is considered a well established organization with functions network nationally. The significant is value of social network and how it can increase the productivity, which results in the gain of trust about individuals and the community

Nepal is a culture that encourages sexual behaviour within the frames of marriage, which are most commonly arranged by the family. Relationships that are based on love are not seen as a reasonable pursuit to live with one person for the rest of their life. Nepal is a patriarchal society and conservative, in a sense of holding on to older cultural practices. The culture in Nepal does not encourage premarital sexual activity. This view could contribute to why unmarried people might fear to seek sexual health service. According to a study published in Kathmandu University Medical Journal. The participants of the journal article further explained that young people seek sexual health advice from their friends first. Secondary source for the young people in the study was the media, since 2008 people have gained access to more western TV channels and Internet Cafes are more visible all through the town and rather inexpensive. (Regmi & Van, 2008)

The government, community services or other organizations turn towards BDS for knowledge about all things that have to do with LGTB. The expectations become high for BDS and it creates an expectation that the other services itself do not have to have this knowledge base because whenever they are in need of it they can turn to BDS, who will provide the best knowledge and answers out of their point of work (Dalrymple & Burke, 2006:107).

Hasenfeld describes human service organizations as “moral entrepreneurs” (1992:11), who pressure for change in the public conception of their clients, which evidently they have managed to do very well over the past decade. Hence BDS work on macro and micro level with discrimination against LGBT people and also to help strengthen people in their identity and to create equal rights in the society. BDS want LGBT to be comfortable and accept their own sexuality preference therefore they can stand up and demand their rights (Dalrymple and Burke, 2006:91).

Nepal has a high number of poverty, the World Bank puts Nepal as number 15 from the bottom of the poorest nations in the world. The economic constrain hinders the purchase of contraceptives, condoms, access to transportation and also clinical visits. Nepal is a multi-cultural, linguistic and religious country where the cultural values and attitude towards sexuality and sexual health will differ among the different groups. There are many groups of ethnicities in Nepal; just like in India Nepal has had a society build on the caste system, although caste identification is not a barrier of access to certain aspects of society any more people are still categorized as belonging to a group informally. Social and religious norms, taboos, patriarchy and caste system has during different times disempower women, Dalit's and also the LGTB community (UNAIDS, BDS).

5.2.2 Sexual activity and risks of HIV and STIs and protection

Even though people have gained access to the knowledge of HIV and the ways of spreading infections, rates are rising in Nepal (UNAIDS). There is a generally low access to HIV services, BDS reports, which can be the strong factor that there is recorded low knowledge among the transgender in the studies conducted and reported by BDS and UNAIDS. To increase the awareness of the spread and the use of protection there needs to be more services available and willingness of other health services to provide care and engage in prevention program. BDS has been able to build up a strong network in the healthcare throughout the

country however it is not enough because the public should be all be aware of this and also have the services available to them.

It was after the first case of HIV reported in 1988, in Nepal that the Nepali government launched the first plan in order to sustain the spread. However it took much persistent lobbying by BDS to include men who have sex with men (MSM) to get recognized as a group at risk in the prevention plan (UNAIDS). The inclusion went through in 2009. Together in the category of MSM was also male sex workers (MSW) included in the prevention plan.

That 55 percent of the people are literate leads to the challenge that information does not reach everyone. Many factors can contribute to the spread of HIV and other STIs; the most common factor is the economic situation, forcing people to migrate for work and also get into prostitution, UNAIDS states. Other factors are traditional beliefs on the existence of the disease such as the cures or the different reasons why someone becomes infected. Since the concept of Karma is central in the Nepali culture, which entails that “one gets what one deserves” in a sense that peoples action, good or bad, will reveal it self in the occurrences in their life or in their next life. The Karma of ones actions can be visible in several lives’ ahead; therefore the beliefs of contracting STI’s are not an exception. When BDS talk with people, if it is in during outreach speeches or in form of print, they do address the concept of Karma and that people should not assume LGBT as a form of consequence of their previous action. Contracting a STI is a result of the decision not to use protection rather than ones Karma (Family Health Care Training Manuel:2009).

BDS has three key program areas; these are HIV and AIDS prevention, Care and Support and Human Rights. Studies at BDS have shown that there is low knowledge among those who receive services from BDS. During the outreach work and per education training the people are taught qualities such as condom negotiation skills and other skills that can help them stay STI and HIV free. The training material aims to assist and recognize that there are many who are involved in sex work and other risk filled behaviour and also who will meet people who are in these fields in their work. BDS also increase protection by offering education, skill based training and employment opportunities, these in turn will lead those involved in sex work and who are vulnerable to the contracting and infection to have a different source of income (BDS Annual Report:2010).

BDS has reported that the spread of education and information on infections has less impact if condoms and lubrications are not distrusted with that, when the kits of condoms and lubrications are distributed it attracts more people at the public places. The people who gain from the distribution of condoms and information are not only the sex workers or the transgender it is everyone in the surrounding and also the customers of sex work who become more aware of the presence of infections and the importance of protection for them selves and if they have other partners.

Sex work is a second source of income for many low income workers. Transgender are vulnerable to this because of the lack of employment because of the issue of acceptance of their appearance. The full time staff members at BDS are discouraged strongly not to do sex work because it can interfere with their day job if they are out during the nights. The focus

and attention the job demands might be jeopardised. However the government give a small funding to the peer education and outreach workers training so for them it is a survival question and for those who do not have any job the question becomes who will feed them and we have to be realistic Sunil states.

BDS also found that prevention work has more impact if condoms and lubricants are handed out during the spread of information and education. During the visits to the places where they know sex work occurs they bring boxes of condoms and demonstrate how they are used and the benefits of them. They also found that many believe that the lubricant act as a disinfection and can protect them from contracting any infections.

5.2.3 Working towards awareness in the community

The work BDS did was for the first four years limited to the Kathmandu area. BDS established first when Sunil Babu Pant got support form six other people, they did not have an office space so the meetings were held at the public park, this also lead to more people who came to see what the group of people were doing this also got others involved in BDS. With the small budget they had and material the members and staff of BDS went to hot spots and cruising areas where they knew many members of the LGTB community were and also to areas where transgendered and men worked as sex workers. At these places they handed out condoms and lubricants and provided education and information on the different sexually transmitted infections and recommended testing facilities. Today BDS members and staff still target these areas to spread awareness and prevention information as well as condoms and lubrications. BDS, with material support from Family Health Centre (FHC) runs the program Peer Educator and Out Reach Worker. At these programs the aim is to educate members of the community who will hopefully then continue to work at different sites proving education, information and condoms to the people visiting the site. All the respondents in this study have gone through the one day training at some point when affiliated with BDS.

It is expressed that it is not BDS's responsibility to advertise and promote the use of condoms to educate the public on the benefit of the prevention for HIV and STIs. The conservative culture has not always been welcoming to promoting sexual behaviours openly but the current government is taking part in the spread of the awareness and education of condoms. Everyone benefits from condom use when engaged in sex; condoms are good for everybody. With an increase in the age of marriage among people there is the possibility that more people have more sexual partners through their life, which also increase the risk of contracting an infection. The government in Kathmandu has put up billboards and has had ads in the media with the assistance from Family Health Care and UNAIDS to promote family planning (BDS Annual Report, 2008:01).

In culture in Nepal is more accepting toward the transgender than they are towards the homosexual, the workers at BDS state. Even though there is much discrimination towards the transgender their behaviour is not looked upon in such a vast negativity as it is for the homosexual population. Sunil comment on this as it is a cultural thing; he experienced it being the other way around in the west. In the western world there is more tolerance and acceptance towards homosexuals while towards transgender there is less.

Because of the conservative culture in Nepal and the attitudes towards premarital sex it is common for men to turn to sex workers. The BDS annual report explains that the men who wanted to have sex, these men were not men who necessarily were unmarried or seasonal migrants, men had sex with who was available and transgender male to female resemble females and therefore they are desired sex partners. It is also about what is considered sexual intercourse for an individual and even in a cultural context; this varies from person to person. It is stated that there are men who did not consider themselves as if they were having sex with the transgender because it is not vaginal intercourse.

BDS encourage society to accept and the laws to change where all people can be included the LGBT people are not only discriminated because of their appearance but also who they are attracted to.

Literacy enables a person to receive any information that comes their way rather than relying on others for information or just simply ignoring it because they can not read it. There is a close relationship between the time/years spent in school and the age at first marriage and consequently fertility. Besides, literacy is linked to assertiveness and positive attitude towards and ability to use contraceptives, something that promotes the sexual and reproductive health and rights (UNFPA, 2007:21). Nepal is a mountainous country; although the scenery of this is beautiful it can pose as a barrier to the transfer of sexual health information to the villages and towns far within these regions (UNESCAP). Related to this is the lack of electricity on a full time bases for all of Nepal, different regions have access to electricity at different times in the more developed cities and towns. However the more distant places in the mountainous areas provide a landscape, which makes it almost impossible to draw electricity to people. They then rely on the heat from the sun in order to warm up water and appliances that can function on solar energy.

Much of the awareness work is related to the prevention of the spread of infections but also the aim to include the community in accepting and embracing the changes to gender that is being recognized in Nepal. Another aspect of awareness is aimed at the transgender community itself. Many transgender go on unsupervised hormone treatment, which can harm their health. In the respondents section we can read about how some of them stopped taking the hormones because of side effects. There is not any credited medical centre that can hand out the hormone treatment to the people who wish to take them so what they do is buy it from someone who imports it into the country and the amount to take is based on the word of mouth. This can be dangerous in many ways towards their health and also the validity of the medication could be questioned, in this aspect BDS is also educating the people to be careful with the hormone treatment. On the topic of breast implant operations BDS can assist with recommendations on places the transgender person can travel to and perform such a surgery because as of today these procedures do not take place in Nepal.

5.2.4 Services provided by BDS

BDS estimates that in the ten year of actively visible in Nepal they have served 300,000 people through different means. Sunil Babu Pant indicates that the country, families as well as individual who are not a member of the LGBT community has benefited from these services

through becoming more acceptant and understanding of possible LGBT people in their own life's. One major issue was the culture of arranged marriages in Nepal and that homosexuals and transgendered people were forced by families to marry the partners that had been chosen for them by family. Educating these families and providing information to the community on LGBT issues has had many great benefits.

The worker might hold what is called informal knowledge, which is knowledge based on own experience, the workers can in a sense become a sort of role model for the persons who are struggling with identity or worried about other people's reactions about their LGBT status. This can provide empowerment for clients. Lukes suggest that nature of the shaping and understanding of one's identities in a community will dictate where on a scale one will be in a community (2005:118), suggesting that the sexual identity of a person can dominate in one scenario while it can be oppressed in a different community. There are many ways for people to identify themselves sexually and the sexual preference they have, the three categories are heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual. Sexual identity is about what sexuality the person sees themselves to have, which does not necessarily always comport with the gender they biologically are.

Today BDS is serving the community through 31 prevention intervention centres, 5 regional care and support centres and five regional human rights posts (BDS). One does not need to be a member in order to enjoy the services BDS offers, such as meeting with a counsellor; however the members are more kept up to date with developments and get formal invitations to events BDS might be a part of. There is also no cost to the services that are offered. BDS also offers a supportive environment for those who cannot come out or live accordingly to their sexual desire. BDS report that in their work they have recorded that more than 50 percent of transgender are in an arranged marriage with a partner not of their gender attraction. BDS do not have any legal obligation to report cases to any authority

BDS has an AIDS centre where people who are suffering severely with the infection and need care can stay; it is a housing facility for the AIDS patients. The AIDS care centre was once shut down because of the pressure the neighbourhood had on the landlord due to the prevailing anti gay bias. With the help of funds BDS has been able to build their own facility and continue the work. The other part of the centre offers testing for STIs and HIV with pre and post counselling.

5.2.5 The Legal work of BDS

Since there was no law, to protect the LGBT community, when BDS first established for during its first five years running, the office faced many challenges and harassments. Reports came in from members of BDS of being harassed by local officials, fellow citizens, family members, employers and people at the education departments. In April 2007 BDS took the Nepali government to court in order to provide equal rights to sexual minorities as to all other Nepali citizens and to legally recognize the transgender people. By December the same year the case ruled in favour of BDS. As of today only two transgender female to male have gotten their sex changed on their identification cards. It is costly for the government but it is very conservative with a legal id they will I get all the rights

I was the main petitioner; I took the government to court because transgender do not look like their ID card. The police take them to think they have take the ID card (Sunil Babu Pant).

Sunil Babu Pant lead the campaign of the legal recognition of transgender as people like everybody else and remove all discrimination. The recognition of transgender would give way for being able to go to court with cases where transgender people have been discriminated against. Transgender people are not male or female in terms of sex, or masculine or feminine in terms of gender, they are natural persons just as there are males and females, the BDS staff explained. The recognition also allowed for ID cards to be issued for transgender. The Supreme Court ruled that citizenship should be given according to the gender identity of the person including transgender. A few months later Sunil Babu Pant was elected for a seat in the Nepali parliament representing the Communist Party of Nepal; making him the first member of the 601 parliament members to be openly gay.

Other political parties have also addressed sexual minorities community in their political manifestos. The political parties are becoming aware of the fact that if they state that they will support LGBT rights and the acceptance they will be able to gain a large amount of voters, BDS staff states.

The law in Nepal do not explicitly criminalize homosexuality, but an “unnatural sex act” currently carries a prison term of up to a year, when a male to female transgender sex worker or a male sex worker and the customer are arrested on these terms both can face imprisonment (BDS annual report:2010). BDS report that in most cases the customer has been released and the sex worker has been held in custody for a period of time which various from a few hours to days. Sunil Babu Pant states

We have had only a few cases, through BDS, that has gone to court. The cases are small and they do not need to go to court they can be finalized at the detention centre (Sunil Babu Pant)

Legal recognition of statues and the acknowledgement that there is discrimination in the community towards LGBT people provides a safety knowing that the law is behind one as protection if something happens to them. A law, which restrict people to enjoy liberty on their own personal identity, should be regarded as discriminatory. The law may be considered as discriminatory which does not allow the people to enjoy their fundamental rights and freedoms with their own identity (BDS Annual Report:2010).

The conservative culture is very strong in Nepal, while media brings attention to the LGBT community and there are laws to protect them as any other people in Nepal discriminations still occur. One of the lawyers at BDS explained it as the situation of the cast system and the situation for women. There are laws that prohibits the use of cast system any more and also laws that give equal rights to women however a society can not change their attitudes towards what they have learned is wrong behaviour there fore it will take a few generations.

There are many cases of harassment being reported to BDS, harassment by family, community, school, governmental offices, officials and so on. BDS could not take a stand on if officials harass transgender sex workers more than they harass other sex workers because it is common to pocket pick customers and customers can accuse the sex workers of this. There can also be false accusations by customers after they find out that the person they just bought sex from has a penis. This was reported from the respondents of this study as well.

Other changes that BDS has accomplished are that banks, embassies and forms at the airport give the opportunity for someone to state their gender as transgender, other than male or female. There is also the visibility of a transgender toilet in the centre of Kathmandu because many transgender have stated that they feel uncomfortable at public bathrooms when they do not know which toilet they can go into and will not attract much attention.

BDS reports that society is always ready to respect each member in the community and to live in harmony regardless of who people chose to love. What create the abnormality of LGBT are the norms and values that politics and religious grounds have put forward throughout its long history. This is not to say that that it is true to all religions or political parties, but rather the experience of BDS working the systems in Nepal.

With the legal recognition BDS has managed to get textbooks at medical schools to include definitions of LGBT. BDS strongly state in their work that denial is an obstacle to prevention initiations and toward even though there is legal recognition it is the acceptance that needs to more wise spread. BDS's legal team work with giving attention to the situations such as harassments, violence acts and discriminations among other acts. Some cases lack support to continue to court or prosecution, it could be because of whiteness confliction or word against word situations, for these cases BDS's lawyers can write a statement to the media or publish a statement where the cases can gain attention and the awareness of the hardship is spread to the community.

BDS is working with much that has conflicted with The Universal Human Rights. With their work they have much support from international organizations and embassies that are based in Kathmandu provide support to BDS. Given the recognition of the LGBT and aiming to imply it in the community will reduce the violence and discriminations BDS is reporting that the LGBT community is facing.

5.2.6 Publications and ability to reach the community

BDS has a person who is responsible for the media relations. The media in Nepal has played a good role for women, Dalit and indigenous people and now it is also shedding light on the work BDS is doing. The media is interesting in things that are new and when BDS first established it was the media who contacted the organization to cover their work. During the past decade that BDS has been active there's been one negative publicity about BDS and the LGBT community that the staff can recall, in the sense of that LGBT should not be part of the Nepali culture.

However the lack of electricity for all households in Nepal and the constant low shedding provides difficulty to have information reach out therefor BDS choses to give press releases to print media. The printed press release is sent to different medias however printed media is not always a guarantee that it reaches out to all the places or to people but of the high illiteracy in Nepal. The radio is a good channel to reach out to people with, as long as it is spoken in the wide spread Nepali language or a local language. The technical problems of sending out information and awareness campaigns can be a challenge because of these factors however people are active and the information can be spread through the word of mouth or a snowball effect when there is an event going on and they want to invite the public.

Print media is the most useful and it reaches many more communities, the negative side of this is that the illiterate rate in Nepal is so high and there is not always space for an awareness ad. Sending information through television is the problem of availability of electricity and a television access

The media is very proactive here actually when they learned about BDS and the work they do. Today there is a show that is broadcast once a week called *Third sex program* that present transgender people and their lifestyles, the show is reported to be doing well. They highlight the rights a good key reasons how BDS has gained success. Third gender or sex refers to someone who is different in the role from his or her biological gendered role, which has been defined by the society or culture they are a member of, it is also the legal recognized gender title for transgender (BDS Annual Report, 2010:41). Due to this inclusion of another gender Nepal has gained much attention internationally, the focus also falls on the work of BDS and the media coverage of the work BDS preforms is growing with each achievement and recognition.

Other than awareness campaigns or information the media brings attention to incidents that has occurred in the community. Incidents such as harassments and violent acts; however sometimes the stories cannot be published because of the lack of support of reliability of the stories especially if there are officials involved in the claims.

VI. Conclusion

The research reveals that there is further need for more targeted work relevant to the LGBT community in Nepal, with the transgender in focus for the purpose of this research.

The respondents are the primary source for the information provided in this research and BDS is presented as the primary provider of the services on prevention and care in relation to sexual reproductive health. The result from the respondents uncover that there are similarities between the respondent's reasoning on what gender they feel they can relate too, both biologically and socially and also their sexual identity and whom they are attracted to. This indicates that each individual has their own definition and understanding of their own sexual identity and whom they fell attracted to. This concept is further discussed in terms with queer theory; which is the indication of the queer theory on how one feels that the gender, sex or sexuality they identify with does not fall within the existing frames. Knowing that HIV and STI's are prevalent in the concentrated group of sex workers, both male and female and men who have sex with men, some still choose to involve them selves in the risky behaviour of sex work.

Since this was an exploratory study there was no pre-understanding of what the results were going to present when I decided to conduct this research. The interviews of the respondents and the connection between them and also with the community and services provided is what shape this thesis. After the first six interviews I conducted I begun to hear similarities in the answers the respondents answers and understood there were many similar variables in their stories of their childhood, understanding sexuality and sexual practices, and also the different situations with family reactions and how they were received by their community.

There were positive experiences from the respondents who had supporting families who accepted their sexual identity and sexual relationships. However even with a supporting family they still reported during the interview that they also had experienced discrimination, violence, rape or attempted rape, arrest and harassment from others in the community or in officials, such as educational facilities and from security officials.

The recommendation is to conduct more research to voice the experiences of the LGBT community and from that to be able to shape services that can assist the prevention work and information that reaches out. Information also need to also be available be fitted for the people who might not know the language or who are illiterate.

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VIII. Appendix:

Appendix A: Letter of introduction:



GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET

Letter of introduction

The following is a presentation of how we will use the data collected in the interview.

The research project is a part of our education in the Master's programme in social work and human rights at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. In order to insure that our project meets the ethical requirements for good research we promise to adhere to the following principles:

- Interviewees in the project will be given information about the purpose of the project.
- Interviewees have the right to decide whether he or she will participate in the project, even after the interview has been concluded.
- The collected data will be handled confidentially and will be kept in such a way that no unauthorized person can view or access it.

The interview will be recorded as this makes it easier for us to document what is said during the interview and also helps us in the continuing work with the project. In our analyze some data may be changed so that no interviewee will be recognized. After finishing the project the data will be destroyed. The data we collect will only be used in this project.

You have the right to decline answering any questions, or terminate the interview without giving an explanation.

You are welcome to contact my supervisor or me in case you have any questions

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Appendix B: Informed Consent Form



GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET
INSTITUTIONEN FÖR SOCIALT ARBETE

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study, which will take place from February 15th, 2011 to April 15th, 2011. This form details the purpose of this study, a description of the involvement required and your rights as a participant.

The purpose of this study is:

- To gain insight into the Knowledge, Attitudes, Practice and Social role of Transgendered persons in Kathmandu Nepal.

The methods that will be used to meet this purpose include:

- One-on-one interviews
- Observation
- Document analysis

You are encouraged to ask questions or raise concerns at any time about the nature of the study or the methods I am using.

Please contact me at anytime at the e-mail address or telephone number listed above.

Our discussion will be audio taped to help me accurately capture your insights in your own words. The tapes will only be heard by me for the purpose of this study.

You have the right to refrain from answering any of the question during the interview and to withdraw from the study at anytime. In the event you choose to withdraw from the study all information you provide (including tapes) will be destroyed and omitted from the final paper.

Insights gathered by you and other participants will be used in my master's thesis, which will read by my supervisor and presented, as it is a requirement to complete my Master's programme in social work and human rights at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. Though direct quotes from you may be used in the paper, your name and other identifying information will be kept anonymous.

By signing this consent form I certify that I _____ agree to (Print full name here) the terms of this agreement.

(Signature)

(Date)

You are welcome to contact my supervisor or me in case you have any questions

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Appendix C: Interview Guide

Interview questions

Background:

1. How do you define your sex:
2. How would you define your orientation?
 - a. Homosexual
 - b. Heterosexual
 - c. Bisexual
 - d. When did you start defining yourself like this
 - Before you knew this definition how did you then think of yourself
 - How did you get your “girl name”
3. When and where were you born and brought up?
 - a. Who do you live you, if alone how long
4. What ethnicity background are you from?
 - a. Bahuns
 - b. Brahmin
 - c. Chhetri
 - d. Dalit
 - e. Gurung
 - f. Kshatriyas
 - g. Limbo
 - h. Magar
 - i. Marwadi ghale
 - j. Newar
 - k. Parbatiya
 - l. Rai
 - m. Tharu
 - n. Tamang
 - o. Other _____
5. Are you committed to any religion?
 - a. Can you practice your religion freely, engage in ceremonies and other religious rituals and celebrations
6. What type of school did you attend, public or private?
 - a. How much of school have you finished
 - b. What is your occupation
7. How was puberty for you, how did you feel about the changes with your body was it similar to your peers?

8. When did you realize that you were different, did you accept it?
 - a. Who did you tell, how were the reactions
 - b. Has anyone ended their relations with you after finding out about your status
 - c. Is there anyone in your family, relatives or people who use to be close to you who is not aware of your status
 - d. How much of a transformation have you completed, and what is your goal- if any

9. Did you have a person in your life you could go and ask for advice or talk to regarding sexual reproductive health/ relationships?
 - a. Do you now
 - b. What was the sex of your friends when you were younger

10. Have you ever been in love or had a crush on someone, did they feel the same?
 - a. What sex and status was/is that person

11. Are you in a relationship with anyone, what is their status
 - a. Is it your first relationship to the person mentioned
 - b. Have you ever been in a relationship with a female

12. How did it feel the first time you put on women clothing
 - a. Had you met other transgendered people growing up

13. Do you let people know right away when you meet them that you are a transgendered person
 - a. What are some common reactions

14. How did you come in contact with BDS?

Knowledge:

15. How did you learn about how children are made and SRH?
 - a. Did you know what sex could lead to – pregnancies, STD's, or did you just learn about it as just a pleasurable act?
 - b. How was sex described/explained to you- as an acceptable act or explained in the frames of marriage
 - c. Who or what taught you about these things
 - d. Do you feel at any of it was correct now when you are older

16. Do you know any names of STD's?
 - a. How did you learn about them
 - b. Do you know how they can be transmitted
 - c. Can you list a few things someone can do to protect themselves
 - d. Do you know where to go for testing and do you feel comfortable with going there

Attitudes/ Beliefs:

17. What do you feel about relationships that don't lead to marriage
 - a. Should marriage be arranged, will it be for you as well
 - b. Does caste matter in regards to relationships for you
 - c. What are your feelings towards divorce

18. What do you think of sex before marriage and those who wait with sex until they are married

19. How did you think of pregnancies outside of marriage

20. What are some things people do in the Nepali culture to meet others, any hotspots- for relationships and for sexual partner
 - a. Are there any factors involved such as alcohol, nightclubs, drugs ect

21. How have you experienced Transgender people to be depicted in the media that you watch?
 - a. Is it close to your reality
 - b. How has the media contributed to the knowledge you have?

22. How do you feel towards people who work as sex workers ?
 - a. Have you ever received money for sexual favours
 - b. To whom have you sold, how long have you worked
 - c. Do you use protection- why

23. Are you aware of how people who are infected with a STI or HIV are view in the community?

24. What do you think of STI's and people who might contract them
 - a. How would you approach someone with an STI

Experience/ Practice:

25. When was your first sexual experience, how old were you?
 - a. With who and how did it lead to it, how did you meet, how long did the relationship last
 - b. Did any of you use any substance, such as drugs or alcohol
 - c. Was it as you expected it to be
 - d. Did you need to use protections, and who initiated it

26. How many partners have you had so far?
 - a. What kind of relationships did you have to them
 - b. What sex and orientation
 - c. Do you practice safe sex- why
 - d. Are you worried that you will contract any- what about your behaviour would lead to this

27. Do you know how to use a condom?
 - a. How did you learn about its purpose, who taught you
 - b. When was the first time you used a condom
 - c. Do you know where to go to buy a condom
 - d. Are you aware that there are condoms for both females and males

28. Do you feel comfortable enough to say that you want to use a condom, if it is necessary, during sexual intercourse to your partner?

29. How would you react if your partner suggested that you should use a condom?

30. Have you ever tested yourself for STD's?
 - a. How did you know where to go
 - b. How was the experience at the clinic

31. How do you feel and experience the Kathmandu community and the culture to be towards you
 - a. Do you face any issues when visiting authorities
 - b. Have you been harassed because of your status
 - c. What are some other challenges or benefits with your role in this community
 - d. What changes would you like to see

32. Have you ever faced any discrimination/harassment/abuse or any other kind of uncomfortable situation because of who you are
 - a. When and by who
 - b. What did you do after the incident

33. Do you or have you experience any difficulties on the job market or when applying for educations

34. How do you see your future, what do you wish for your self