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Contact Reduces Transprejudice: A Study on Attitudes towards Transgenderism and Transgender Civil Rights in Hong Kong

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ABSTRACT. This paper examines the relationship between Hong Kong Chinese people's contact with transgender/transsexual (TG/TS) people and attitudes toward transgenderism and transgender civil rights, based on Allport's Contact Hypothesis. The term transprejudice is introduced to refer to the negative valuing, stereotyping and discriminatory treatment of TG/TS people. Data are presented from a population-based survey with a random sample of 856 Hong Kong Chinese persons aged between 15 and 64, using the Chinese Attitudes towards Transgenderism and Transgender Civil Rights Scale (CATTCCRS). Attitudes, assessed on both personal and institutional dimensions, are examined in relation to participants' gender, age, educational level, religiosity, and previous contact with transpeople. Results suggest that previous contact with transpeople was significantly associated with attitudes reflected in the scale; decreased social distance, decreased social discrimination, and decreased transprejudice, increased awareness of discrimination against transpeople, increased support for equal opportunities, increased support for post-operative transsexual civil rights, and increased support for anti-discrimination legislation. Our findings support the contact hypothesis, that contact has a positive effect on attitudes towards TG/TS persons. We discuss the implications of these findings for public education interventions and public policy, as well as for research.

KEYWORDS. Transgender, transprejudice, contact hypothesis, attitudes, Hong Kong

INTRODUCTION

In societies throughout the world, it is likely that heteronormative people stigmatize and hold prejudicial attitudes towards individuals who challenge traditional gender boundaries and corresponding sexual norms, especially transgender (TG) people who are generally perceived to exist

outside of the culturally defined possibilities of "female" and "male." The term "transgender" refers to individuals who strongly identify with the gender other than the one they were assigned at birth. Some TG people seek to live as a member of their chosen gender by undergoing hormone therapy and/or surgery to obtain a physical appearance that is congruent

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with their sense of self (transsexuals). The term also applies to those who transgress gender categories in ways that are less permanent, and thus includes those who are at different stages of gender transformation, including the physical, psychological, social and legal. Some TG people use terms that provide the directionality of their identities, such as *transwomen* (Male-to-Female or MtF) or *transmen* (Female-to-Male or FtM), while others simply identify as “female” or “male.” In this paper, we will use the term “transpeople” to describe both transgender and transsexual individuals.

Although significant advances have been made in the struggle for judicial and legislative equality for transpeople across a growing number of jurisdictions in recent years, in Hong Kong, transpeople are still subjected to social stigmatization (Ma, 1999) and discrimination (Ma, 1997; Ng & Ma, 2001). Recent research, however, indicates that Hong Kong Chinese people do not hold very negative attitudes towards transpeople and are generally supportive of transgender civil rights (King, Webster, & Winter, under review, see also Winter, Webster, & Cheung, 2008). Nevertheless, there is currently limited political momentum towards the legal recognition of or protective legislation for transpeople in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR).

The Context of this Study

In Hong Kong, matters such as gay age of consent (Chan, 2004), the recognition of same-sex marriage for homosexuals (Chan, 2007), and the politics of recognition for transpeople have been the topics of discussions between Human Rights NGOs and sexual orientation/gender identity minority groups fighting for their rights on the one hand, and the HKSAR government and family values/religious groups opposing such moves on the other. The Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Unit (GISOU) was established by the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) to provide a formal channel of communication between the various groups. The unit attempts to promote equal opportunities through various ways such as publicity and educational programs

and conducting research on issues regarding sexual orientation and gender identity.

In 2005, the HAB commissioned a survey on public attitudes towards homosexuals, which aimed at gauging Hong Kong people’s awareness of homosexuality, attitudes, levels of acceptance, discrimination, and beliefs about ways to address the problem of discrimination, as well as the social impact of anti-discrimination legislation. The HAB reported its findings in March 2006, and made the recommendation to the Legislative Council (the legislative branch of the Hong Kong Government) that no action be taken regarding anti-discrimination legislation for sexual orientation minorities in Hong Kong. Scholars argue that the conclusions reached by the government in the 1996 *Equal Opportunities: A Study on Discrimination on the Ground of Sexual Orientation: A Consultative Paper* (Hong Kong Government, 2006), which resulted in the rejection of sexual orientation anti-discrimination legislation in favor of public education, were as erroneous then as they are today. Thus, the path long used by the Hong Kong Government needs to be questioned. We contemplated whether the government’s previous rejection of antidiscrimination legislation in Hong Kong was based on popular prejudice and the “unprincipled exclusion” (Currah & Minter, 2005) of sexual and gender identity minority people. Was the practice of the Hong Kong government, according to Chan (2005, p. 87), “tantamount to conferring a licence upon the public to discriminate against fellow citizens who are entitled to equality rights; and to perpetuating the severity of discrimination already in place?”

This study investigative public attitudes towards what is often observed to be one of the most marginalized groups in Hong Kong—transpeople. Hong Kong is a predominantly Chinese city, with 95% of the population ethnically Chinese, one where Confucianism holds sway and sexual attitudes remain quite conservative and, according to Ho (1995), Chinese society prescribes strict standards of normality and abnormality in people’s social and private lives, particularly in terms of gender roles, courtship and marriage, and sexual behavior. In Hong Kong, gender nonconforming

males are constructed and represented as “deviant individuals” whose gender identities and/or behaviors exist outside the boundaries of socially accepted norms. Transpeople are referred to as *yen yiu*, which translates literally as “human monsters.” According to the social order of traditional Chinese society, a son is expected to ensure the continuity of the family line and not to bring disgrace to his family and ancestors (Fung, 1949). According to Ma (1999), any individual deviation from the societal norms would be regarded as bringing shame to parents and ancestors. Thus, such a person would be perceived as being psychologically and socially deviant and therefore stigmatized, dehumanized, and delegitimized within society.

In Hong Kong, transpeople often experience prejudice and discrimination within the family, in school and the workplace, and in society more generally (Ma, 1997, 1999; Ng & Ma, 2001). However, as affirmed by Emerton (2006, p. 254), the Hong Kong government has, in recent years, allowed for various administrative concessions “to facilitate the daily lives of transgender people who have completed sex reassignment surgery, but these do not extend to other (pre-operative or non-operative) TG people.” Besides providing funding for the psychiatric, endocrinological, and surgical treatment of TG people, post-operative transsexuals have the ability to change their identity cards, passports, and other documents. Nevertheless, the legal status of transsexual people in Hong Kong does not allow for rights and privacy granted to heteronormative people, including marriage, adoption, and privacy (see for example Ng, 2001).

With regard to the legal recognition of transgender and transsexual people, the Hong Kong Government remains less progressive than many other societies worldwide, and even in Asia. For example, in 2003 the Japanese parliament unanimously approved a new law (“Law Concerning Special Cases in Handling Gender for People with Gender Identity Disorder”) that enables transpeople who meet the requirements specified in the law to request the Family Court to change their registered gender in the family registries. In 2006, the South Korean Supreme Court ruled that post-operative

transsexuals could change their gender in the official family registry (*Korea Times*, June 23, 2006). In 1996, the Singapore government, in spite of conservative attitudes, announced that post-operative transsexuals would be permitted to marry people of the opposite sex. In the People’s Republic of China, there have been media reports of administrators in certain provinces granting full legal recognition to transgender persons, including for the purpose of marriage (e.g., Chan, 2004; Cheung, 2004; Yan, 2004). However, there is currently no law that clearly states whether it is legal for transsexual people to adopt children (*China Daily*, July 7, 2005). In 2004, Taiwan passed its Gender Equality Education Law, which protects against discrimination in the public education system on the grounds of gender and sexual orientation (Hong, 2004). In 2002, Taiwan lifted its ban on hiring gay military police (Hsu, 2004). Taiwan has even considered legislation that would legalize same-sex marriage and gay adoptions (Cohn, 2004). According to the Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor, Taiwan has been proclaimed as one of the gay-friendliest jurisdictions in Asia, and even the world.

THE CONSTRUCT OF TRANSPREJUDICE

The latent psychological construct operationalized in this study is *transprejudice*, which is theorized to result from the internalization of *trans stigma* perpetrated by heterosexuals (adapted from Herek’s conceptualization of sexual stigma, 2004). *Trans stigma* is based on the transperson’s gender non-conformity, and represents the shared belief system through which transgenderism and transsexuality are delegitimized and constructed as invalid relative to heteronormativity. It results from heteronormative peoples’ perception of individuals who express a gender identity that is incongruent with their natal sex as depraved, mentally ill, and inferior. *Trans stigma* is rationalized and justified by the ideological systems of a given society, which may include ideologies of gender, morality, and “humanness” that define transgenderism and transsexuality as deviant,

sinful, and outside the laws of human nature. If *trans stigma* signifies society's aversion towards that which is not heteronormative and gender conforming, *transprejudice*, as introduced by the first author, can be used to refer to heterosexual's negative valuing, stereotyping, and discriminatory attitudes toward and treatment of individuals whose appearance and/or identity does not conform to the current social expectations or conventional conceptions of gender (King et al., under review). *Transprejudice* provides the rationale for the pathologization, stigmatization, and delegitimization of transpeople, and can be seen as justified and even essential in order to maintain the traditional, perceived gender and sex roles that are expected in social and familial structures. This is particularly the case in the context of Hong Kong Chinese society. *Transprejudice*, then, may provide the psychological and social foundations for the dehumanization, social distancing and social discrimination, as well as the legal delegitimization of transpeople.

INTERGROUP CONTACT THEORY AND ATTITUDES

In studies focusing on prejudicial attitudes held by the majority group toward members of stigmatized minority groups, researchers have focused considerable attention on the effects of intergroup contact on attitudes. Over the past several decades, a great deal of research into prejudicial attitudes has been guided by the contact hypothesis, which stipulates "prejudice (unless deeply rooted in the character structure of the individual) may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals. The effect is greatly enhanced if this contact is sanctioned by institutional supports (i.e., by law, custom, or local atmosphere), and if it is the sort that leads to the perception of common interest and common humanity between members of the two groups" (Allport, 1954, p. 281).

Although numerous studies in the social psychology literature have tested the contact hypothesis on attitudes toward mental illness (Callaghan, Shan, Yu, Ching, & Kwan, 1997;

Corrigan, Green, Lundin, Kubiak, & Penn, 2001; Corrigan & Penn, 1999; Corrigan et al., 2002; Reinke, Corrigan, Leonhard, Lundin, & Kubiak, 2004), ethnic minorities (Bratt, 2002), the homeless (Shoemaker, 2006), gays and lesbians (Bowen & Bourgeois, 2001; Herek & Capitanio, 1996; Overby & Barth, 2002) and HIV (Herek & Capitanio, 1997; Takai et al., 1998), studies that have investigated the effect of contact on attitudes towards transpeople as a dependent measure, particularly using samples of Chinese people, are absent from the indexed literature.

Over the past several decades, a number of studies from various disciplines have attempted to provide empirical support for the contact hypothesis, and several have demonstrated significant relationships between contact with and greater tolerance for homosexuals (Basow & Johnson, 2000; Herek, 1984, 1988, 2000a; Herek & Capitanio, 1996; Herek & Glunt, 1993), transsexuals (Harvey, 2002; Hill & Willoughby, 2005), or support for transsexual civil rights (Tee & Hegarty, 2006). These studies indicate, in general, that heterosexual individuals hold more favorable attitudes toward gay men, lesbian women, and transsexual persons if they have had prior contact, or know someone who is gay, lesbian, or transsexual. Some argue that the problem with all of these studies, even the best ones, is that they are correlational. It is possible that people choose to have contact with sexual orientation and gender identity minorities because they have positive attitudes; because they are not homo- and/or transprejudiced. Similarly, some may choose not to have contact with such people simply because of the prejudice they hold against non-heteronormative people.

A number of researchers have found gender differences in attitudes, with heterosexual men manifesting more negative attitudes toward transsexuals (Harvey, 2002; Landen & Innala, 2000; Tee & Hegarty, 2006) and gay males and lesbian women than do heterosexual women (D'Augelli & Rose, 1990; D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1995; Glassner & Owen, 1976; Herek, 1988, 2000a, 2000b; Herek & Capitanio, 1995, 1996; Herek & Glunt, 1993; Kite, 1984; Kite & Whitley, 1996, 1998; Kurdek, 1988; Luhrs, Crawford, & Goldberg, 1992; Pratte, 1993; Seltzer, 1992; Whitley & Kite, 1995).

Additionally, Logan (1996) reported that overall attitudes toward gay men are more negative than attitudes toward lesbian women. With regard to age differences, it is generally accepted that younger age groups hold significantly more positive attitudes towards transsexuals and homosexuals (e.g., Harvey, 2002; Landen & Innala, 2000; Loftus, 2001; Nyberg & Alston, 1976).

In studies focusing on attitudes toward transgender or transsexual people, Landen and Innala (2000) found that younger people held significantly more positive attitudes than the older age groups. However, in a study of attitudes towards transsexuals in the United States, Harvey (2002) found no significant differences in attitudes between younger and older people. With regard to attitudes towards homosexuality, Nyberg and Alston (1976) found that people under 30 years of age held significantly more positive attitudes than older age groups. In a review of the liberalization of attitudes toward homosexuality in the US, the changing demographics of the population and cultural ideological shifts (relevant to education) are postulated as potentially responsible for these changes in attitudes (see Loftus, 2001). In relation to the impact of education on attitudes, studies have shown that, in general, increased levels of education tend to be predictive of relatively positive attitudes towards homosexuality (Bobys & Laner, 1979; Herek & Capitano, 1995; Herek & Glunt, 1993; Klassen, Williams, & Levitt, 1989). With regard to the impact of religious beliefs, one of the most important and powerful predictors of anti-homosexual prejudice in the literature is religion, particularly fundamentalist or conservative Christianity (Wilkinson, 2004). In one study, Tee and Hegarty (2006) found that more religious persons opposed transpersons' civil rights more than those without religious beliefs.

OVERVIEW

In this paper, we introduce the construct of *transprejudice* and examine the relationship between majority group attitudes and contact with transpeople, focusing on Chinese attitudes towards transgenderism and transgender civil

rights in Hong Kong. To address the need for an empirically derived, psychological understanding of the impact of contact on Chinese people's attitude, a new instrument was developed and administered to a random sample of Hong Kong Chinese people.

An initial goal of this research was to document the extent and nature of Hong Kong Chinese people's contact with transpeople. Although this measure of contact did not indicate the frequency, intimacy of contact, or length of time prior to reporting, it did measure the participant's awareness of contact with transpeople and whether the contact was in Hong Kong or overseas. These findings would provide a background against which to interpret the test results.

A second and more central goal was to examine existing hypotheses regarding the impact of contact on attitudes toward transgenderism and transgender civil rights. Based on a review of the literature, we developed five hypotheses. First, individuals with previous contact with transpeople would predict significantly more positive attitudes on personal dimension constructs (i.e., social distancing, social discrimination, etc.) and significantly more supportive attitudes on institutional dimension constructs (i.e., support for equal opportunities, civil rights, protective legislation, etc.). Second, female participants would hold more positive attitudes than males. Third, younger people would hold more positive attitudes than older people. Fourth, participants with higher levels of education would hold more positive attitudes. Fifth, those without religious beliefs would hold more positive attitudes on both the personal and institutional dimensions.

Finally, this research included a series of supplementary, exploratory analyses. These analyses included an examination of the interaction between contact, level of education, and gender. The purpose was to explore the timing of public education and targeted interventions to promote better understanding, awareness and more positive attitudes towards gender diversity in general, and transgender people in particular. We discuss the implications for these findings for public education interventions and public policy, as well as for research.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 856 (362 men, 494 women) Hong Kong residents ranging in age from 15 to 64 years old ($M = 33.3$, $SD = 13.8$). All participants were ethnically Chinese. Participants reflected a wide range of educational levels, including 10 (1.2%) with no schooling or only kindergarten levels of education, 48 (5.6%) had a primary education, 133 (15.5%) had a lower secondary education, 315 (36.8%) had an upper secondary education, 75 (8.8%) reported a matriculation education, 54 (6.3%) had tertiary (non-degree course) levels of education, and 217 (25.5%) had completed a degree course or above. With regard to religiosity, 257 (30%) participants reported having a religion, while 599 (70%) reported as having no religion. Of the participants reporting a religion, 147 (57.4%) reported Christianity (non-Catholic) and 28 (10.9%) reported Catholicism as their religion. 69 (27%) participants reported Buddhism and 7 (2.7%) were Taoist. The category "Others" was comprised of 5 (2.0%) participants.

Measure

The instrument used in this study is the Chinese Attitudes toward Transgenderism and Transgender Civil Rights Scale (CATTGRS), which is a structured interview questionnaire including eight background items, two of which were dedicated to contact with TG/TS individuals where that contact occurred in Hong Kong or overseas, or both. The other background items include familiarity with terms related to transgenderism in the Chinese language, an evaluation thermometer, and items related to etiological and biological essentialist beliefs. The demographic data collected in this study included the participant's gender, age, educational level, religious beliefs, marital status, number of children (if any), nationality, occupation, monthly personal income, and monthly household income.

The instrument also included 38 items intended to reflect eight *a priori* constructs. These constructs are embedded in either the personal

(Social Distance, Social Discrimination, Gender Essentialism, Transprejudice) or the institutional (Awareness of TG Discrimination, Support for Equal Opportunities, Support for TS Civil Rights, Support for Anti-Discrimination Legislation) dimensions (see Table 1 for examples).

On the personal dimension, Social Distance measures acceptance of transpeople in various social circumstances and acceptance of TG/TS persons generally in Hong Kong. Social Discrimination measures attitudes towards discrimination against transpeople in various spheres. Gender Essentialism measures aspects of the Chinese cultural gender belief system, as well as ethics and morality in Chinese society surrounding cross-gender behaviors. Transprejudice measures attitudes toward psychological and behavioral aspects of transgenderism and transsexuality.

On the institutional dimension, Awareness of Discrimination against TG/TS measures belief about the level and impact of discrimination against TG/TS. Support for Equal Opportunities measures attitudes toward the legal protection of transpeople. Support for TS Civil Rights measures attitudes toward marriage, adoption, and the ability to change legal documents such as birth certificates. Support for Anti-Discrimination Legislation measures government responsibility to protect TG/TS citizens from discrimination. A principal axis factor analysis revealed that all eight constructs were shown to be uni-factorial suggesting each was a valid construct in its own right. A full report on the development and validation of this instrument (King, Webster, & Winter) is currently under review.

Internal consistency using Cronbach alpha estimates were calculated, and ranged from .68 for the Social Discrimination construct, to .91 for the Support for Equal Opportunities construct (see Table 2). No reliability estimate was presented for "Awareness of TG Discrimination" as it is not appropriate to estimate alpha for a two-item factor (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991). These Cronbach alpha estimates indicate acceptable to excellent internal reliability (George & Mallery, 2001), an estimate of 0.60 long being regarded as a threshold for research purposes (Nunnally, 1978). In addition, the

TABLE 1. Sample items of the CATT CRS

	Construct	Example items
Personal Dimension	Social Distance	Would you support a friend choosing to have a sex change?
	Social Discrimination	An employer should be able to refuse to employ a qualified person because he/she is TG/TS.
	Gender Essentialism	It is morally wrong for a man to present himself as a woman in public in Chinese society.
	Transprejudice	A man who identifies as a woman is psychologically abnormal.
Institutional Dimension	Awareness of TG Discrimination	Transgender people face discrimination in Hong Kong.
	Support for Equal Opportunities	TG/TS persons in Hong Kong should have the legal right to equal opportunities in education.
	Support for TS Civil Rights	Post-operative transsexuals in Hong Kong should have the legal right to get married in their new sex.
	Support Anti-Discrimination Legislation	TG/TS people in Hong Kong need specific anti-discrimination laws to protect them based solely on their gender identity.

factor correlation matrix (also included in Table 2) show that the constructs on the personal dimension are significantly and positively correlated with each other and the constructs on the institutional dimension are also significantly and positively correlated with each other.

Procedure

The computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI) lab at the Social Science Research Centre at the University of Hong Kong completed the sampling using a random digit dialing technique to select the households, and a random method was employed in sampling each individual within the household. No substitutions were

permitted and three callbacks were made. The sample included 1358 telephone numbers, and as a result of phone calls to those numbers, 856 respondents agreed to participate in the phone interview. A total of 353 people refused to participate and 149 dropped out or only partially completed the interview. The final response rate was 63.03% with an estimated sampling error of 3.35% ($\alpha = .05$). This telephone survey was administered via telephone interviews conducted in Cantonese. At the beginning of each interview, participants were informed about the purpose and nature of the study. Once informed consent was obtained, participants were asked to provide answers to single-item questions (e.g., familiarity with linguistic terms

TABLE 2. Alpha reliability and correlations of the CATT CRS

Construct	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Social Distance	.85	1.00							
2 Social Discrimination	.87	.394*	1.00						
3 Gender Essentialism	.75	.369*	.275*	1.00					
4 Transprejudice	.73	.422*	.369*	.461*	1.00				
5 Awareness of TG Discrimination	n/a	-.056	-.102*	.121*	-.034	1.00			
6 Support for Equal Opportunities	.91	-.368*	-.468*	-.121*	-.226*	.110*	1.00		
7 Support for TS Civil Rights	.77	-.468*	-.340*	-.273*	-.286*	.123*	.369*	1.00	
8 Support for Anti-discrimination Legislation	.68	-.368*	-.362*	-.117*	-.182*	.155*	.442*	.423*	1.00

Note: *Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

TABLE 3. Descriptives and confidence intervals of CATTGRS

Construct	95% Confidence interval		
	M (sd)	Lower	Upper
Social Distance	2.75 (.75)	2.70	2.81
Social Discrimination	2.27 (.84)	2.18	2.29
Gender Essentialism	3.48 (.86)	3.43	3.54
Transprejudice	2.93 (.69)	2.88	2.98
Awareness of TG Discrimination	3.52 (.88)	3.52	3.58
Support Equal Opportunities	4.26 (.77)	4.21	4.31
Support TS Civil Rights	3.30 (.83)	3.24	3.35
Support Anti-Discrimination Legislation	3.76 (.67)	3.72	3.81

related to TG, the contact measure, etiological and biological essentialist beliefs). Not all of this data collected will be considered in this paper. The participants were then asked to rate their level of agreement with each of the attitudinal items constituting the main body of the CATTGRS. The responses ranged from “strongly agree/absolutely acceptable” (scored “1”) to “strongly disagree/absolutely unacceptable” (scored 5). Low scores on the personal dimension constructs indicate positive attitudes and high scores on the institutional dimension constructs indicate positive attitudes. At the end of the interview, participants were asked to provide socio-demographic information (e.g., gender, age, level of education, religious beliefs, etc.) as well as their willingness to participate in a follow-up interview.

RESULTS

The results of this study indicate that Hong Kong people have a clear understanding of transgenderism, with 834 (97.4%) of participants able to accurately define the term in Cantonese (the dialect of Chinese spoken in Hong Kong). Only 22 (2.6%) of the participants required the definition to be explained to them. With regard to the terms participants would normally use to describe transgender people, over half reported *yen yiu* (“human monster”) as the most commonly used descriptor of transgender and transsexual people.

The means scores, standard deviations, and confidence intervals for each of the eight constructs of the CATTGRS are reported in

Table 3. The results of this study indicate that Hong Kong Chinese people generally have positive attitudes towards transpeople and are supportive of civil rights, equal opportunities, and anti-discrimination legislation for transpeople. Within the personal dimension, positive attitudes related to Social Distancing ($M = 2.75$, $SD = .75$) and those related to Social Discrimination ($M = 2.27$, $SD = .84$) were indicated by low mean scores. Attitudes related to Gender Essentialism ($M = 3.48$, $SD = .86$) and Transprejudice ($M = 2.93$, $SD = .69$) were neutral. Regarding the institutional dimension, people’s Awareness of TG Discrimination ($M = 3.52$, $SD = .88$) was evident but not high, but their Support for Equal Opportunities ($M = 4.26$, $SD = .76$) was high. Participant’s Support for TS Civil Rights ($M = 3.30$, $SD = .83$) and Support for Anti-Discrimination Legislation ($M = 3.76$, $SD = .67$) and was also evident, but again not high.

The results indicate 31.3% of the participants reported contact with transpeople in Hong Kong, 67.3% reported no contact with transpeople in Hong Kong and only 1.2% of the participants reported that they did not know whether they had been in contact with a trans person in Hong Kong or not. Regarding contact with transpeople overseas, 34% of the participants reported that they had, 65.7% reported never having contact with transpeople overseas and only 0.6% indicated they did not know. Of those participants who reported coming into contact with transpeople overseas, 30.8% provided a specific country. Participants were able to provide up to five countries where they had known contact with trans persons. The most frequently reported country

was Thailand (78%) followed by the USA (13.3%), the UK (7.2%), Australia (5.3%), and Canada (4.5%). Participants indicated China, Japan, and the Philippines (4.2%) respectively. Reported contact between 1% and 3% occurred in Singapore, Korea, Holland, France, New Zealand, Germany, Italy and Spain.

Contact

In order to test the hypothesis related to the impact of contact on attitudes towards transpeople, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted including all of the eight CATTCS constructs (see Table 4). Significant multivariate effects were identified as indicated by Wilks' Lambda ($F = 3.16, p = .002$). A closer examination of the between subject effects revealed the main effects of previous contact for Social Distance, Social Discrimination, and Transprejudice on the personal dimension, and Awareness of TG Discrimination, Support for Equal Opportunities, Support for TS Civil Rights, and Support for Anti-Discrimination Legislation on the institutional dimension. It should be noted here that although these results are statistically significant, the calculated partial effect sizes for these results were small (0.007–0.10). However, it would be reasonable to only expect small substantive effects with an attitude instrument such as the CATTCS.

To further explore the relationships between having contact with transpeople and attitudes towards transpeople, a new variable was devel-

oped by combining contact in Hong Kong and contact overseas to obtain a degree of contact measure (0 = no contact, 1 = contact either in Hong Kong or overseas, 2 = contact both in Hong Kong and overseas). A Spearman's Rho correlation revealed that the degree of contact, as measured in this study, was significantly related to all dimensions of the CATTCS with the exception of Gender Essentialism (see Table 5). Although the achieved effect sizes (the Rho values) were small, these results still indicate that the more contact participants had with transpeople the more positive were their attitudes towards them, the more supportive they were of Equal Opportunities and Anti-Discrimination Legislation, and the more aware they were of discrimination against TG people.

Gender

To test the hypothesis related to gender and degree of contact, a Chi-Square was conducted. The results indicated that more males (51.4%) and more females (50.8%) have not had contact with TG people than have had contact, however results were not significant, indicating that having contact or not was independent of gender ($\chi^2 = .158, p = .924$).

Age

To test the hypothesis related to age and degree of contact, a Spearman Correlation was conducted. The results indicated that there was a significant positive relationship between age

TABLE 4. MANOVA analysis of Contact with TG and CATTCS

Construct	Have you ever encountered any TG people in Hong Kong or overseas?		Between-subject effects	
	Yes n = 262 M (sd)	No n = 569 M (sd)	F	P
Social Distance	2.77(.68)	2.89 (.64)	6.98	.008
Social Discrimination	2.15 (.81)	2.32 (.86)	7.91	.005
Gender Essentialism	3.46 (.88)	3.50 (.84)	0.44	.507
Transprejudice	2.84 (.68)	3.01 (.69)	13.89	.000
Awareness of TG Discrimination	3.61 (.91)	3.44 (.86)	7.18	.008
Support Equal Opportunities	4.32 (.78)	4.20 (.74)	5.02	.025
Support TS Civil Rights	3.37 (.85)	3.23 (.81)	5.72	.017
Support Anti-Discrimination Legislation	3.81 (.72)	3.71 (.61)	4.99	.026

Wilks' Lambda = .970. $F = 3.16, p = .002$.

TABLE 5. Correlations between Contact with TG and the CATTGRS

Construct	<i>Rho</i>	<i>P</i>
Social Distance	-.134	.000
Social Discrimination	-.111	.001
Gender Essentialism	-.011	.750
Transprejudice	-.146	.000
Awareness of TG Discrimination	.102	.003
Support Equal Opportunities	.097	.005
Support TS Civil Rights	.095	.006
Support Anti-Discrimination Legislation	.123	.000

and contact ($\rho = .075$, $p = .036$). Although this shows that older people are those who have more contact, the effect size of .075 is small.

Religiosity

To test the hypothesis related to religiosity and degree of contact, a Chi-Square was conducted. The results indicated that more people without religion (52.9%) had contact than people with religion (46.7%). However, results were not significant, indicating that having contact or not was independent of having religion ($\chi^2 = 3.218$, $p = .200$).

Education

To test the hypothesis related to level of education and degree of contact, a Spearman Correlation was conducted. The results indicated that there was a significant positive relationship ($\rho = .170$, $p = .000$). People with higher levels of education were also those who had had contact with transpeople.

Education level in this study was measured with a 7-point scale from 1 (no education) to 7 (postgraduate tertiary education). Results of a Spearman *Rho* indicate that on the personal dimension, levels of education were significantly correlated with Social Distance, Social Discrimination, and Transprejudice. People in this sample with higher levels of education had more positive attitudes towards transpeople as reflected by these constructs. People with higher levels of education, however, exhibited significantly more

negative attitudes on the construct of Gender Essentialism, which indicates they uphold the traditional Chinese cultural gender belief system that prescribes strict standards of normality and abnormality in peoples' social and private lives, particularly surrounding gender roles and sexual behavior. On the institutional dimension, people with higher levels of education were more aware of the discrimination against transpeople, and showed significantly more support for equal opportunities and anti-discrimination legislation. No significant relationship was identified between support for TS civil rights and level of education (see Table 5).

These results indicate that those who go on to higher education are those more likely to have contact with transpeople and those more likely to have more positive attitudes. However, it is important to identify at what point in the education system would be the best time to target public education programs. At what point(s) in the education system do attitudes change most?

To further investigate this question, an exploratory grouping of level of education was conducted with analyses on participants with lower secondary and below in one group, and upper secondary and above in another group. Results of a t-test of these two independent groups revealed significant differences for the CATTGRS constructs, with the exception of Gender Essentialism and Support for TS Civil Rights (see Table 6). Participants who had upper secondary and above levels of education had significantly more positive attitudes towards transpeople than those who had, at most, completed lower secondary school.

On the personal dimension, upper secondary and above levels of education had significantly more positive attitudes on the Social Distance, Social Discrimination, and Transprejudice constructs. On the institutional dimension, Awareness of Discrimination against transpeople, Support for Equal Opportunities, and Support for Anti-Discrimination Legislation were all significantly higher in participants with at least an upper secondary education than for those who had no more than a lower secondary education. However, there were no differences in Support for TS Civil Rights.

TABLE 6. T-test of CATTGRS by level of education

Construct	Level of education		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	Lower secondary & below <i>n</i> = 191 Mean (sd)	Upper secondary & above <i>n</i> = 661 Mean (sd)			
Social Distance	2.97 (.69)	2.79 (.65)	3.20	.001	0.219
Social Discrimination	2.46 (.84)	2.17 (.84)	4.19	.000	0.287
Gender Essentialism	3.42 (.80)	3.50 (.87)	-1.15	.252	0.078
Transprejudice	3.07 (.65)	2.89 (.70)	3.15	.002	0.216
Awareness of TG Discrimination	3.24 (.88)	3.61 (.87)	-5.11	.000	0.352
Support for Equal Opportunities	4.11 (.81)	4.31 (.74)	-3.20	.001	0.219
Support for TS Civil Rights	3.23 (.84)	3.32 (.83)	-1.21	.225	0.083
Support for Anti-Discrimination Legislation	3.62 (.63)	3.80 (.67)	-3.36	.001	0.230

Although the achieved effect sizes for the above analysis are small to medium (Cohen, 1969) the above results still indicate significant differences on all but one of the CATTGRS constructs and levels of education.

In relation to public education and targeted interventions to promote better understanding, awareness and more positive attitudes towards gender diversity in general, and transpeople specifically, it is important to identify if there are differences between males and females at different levels of schooling. We then examined whether the attitudes of males and females change in the same way and at the same points in their educational careers. In short, education appears to be associated with more positive attitudes in females rather than males. (see Table 7).

On the personal dimension, females with upper secondary and above levels of education had more positive attitudes as reflected by the Social Distance, Social Discrimination, and Transprejudice constructs than females with only lower secondary and below levels of education. For males, significant differences were only found on the Social Distance construct, where again males with upper secondary and above levels of education had more positive attitudes on this construct than males with only lower secondary and below levels of education.

On the institutional dimension, females with upper secondary and above levels of education were more aware of discrimination against

transpeople and showed more support for equal opportunities and anti-discrimination legislation than females with only lower secondary and below levels of education. For males, significant differences were only found related to Awareness of Discrimination against transpeople, where again males with upper secondary and above levels of education were more aware of discrimination against transpeople than males with only lower secondary and below levels of education. Although the achieved effect sizes for the above analysis were small to medium (Cohen, 1969), the above results still indicate significant differences by gender and level of education.

The results indicate that public education should be targeted for females before they reach upper secondary school, because those who go on to complete upper secondary levels and above hold significantly more positive attitudes in six dimensions of the CATTGRS, with the exception of Gender Essentialism and Support for TS Civil Rights, than those who do not. Males, however, even when they do complete upper secondary school levels and above, reveal significant differences on only two of the dimensions of the CATTGRS: Social Distance and Awareness of TG Discrimination. Therefore, for males, it would still be valuable to provide intervention at the higher levels of their schooling.

Leaving aside any gender differences, let us consider another explanation for an education effect. Compulsory secondary education began

TABLE 7. T-test of CATTGRS by level of education and gender

Construct		Level of education		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>D</i>
		Lower secondary & below Mean (sd)	Upper secondary & above Mean (sd)			
Social Distance	M	2.98 (.71)	2.81 (.66)	2.44	.041	0.216
	F	2.95 (.67)	2.78 (.65)	4.23	.014	0.222
Social Discrimination	M	2.33 (.88)	2.18 (.88)	1.36	.176	0.143
	F	2.55 (.81)	2.16 (.80)	4.47	.000	0.405
Gender Essentialism	M	3.52 (.75)	3.63 (.86)	-1.04	.300	0.109
	F	3.34 (.83)	3.40 (.87)	-.622	.534	0.056
Transprejudice	M	3.02 (.59)	2.95 (.71)	.865	.388	0.091
	F	3.10 (.69)	2.84 (.69)	3.41	.001	0.308
Awareness of TG Discrimination	M	3.24 (.89)	3.67 (.89)	-3.81	.000	0.404
	F	3.24 (.88)	3.56 (.85)	-3.45	.001	0.313
Support Equal Opportunities	M	4.19 (.82)	4.29 (.79)	-.918	.359	0.096
	F	4.05 (.80)	4.33 (.71)	-3.52	.000	0.318
Support TS Civil Rights	M	3.29 (.81)	3.33 (.86)	-.329	.742	0.034
	F	3.19 (.86)	3.31 (.81)	-1.33	.185	0.120
Support Anti-Discrimination Legislation	M	3.67 (.68)	3.82 (.70)	-1.17	.081	0.184
	F	3.58 (.60)	3.79 (.65)	-2.95	.003	0.267

in Hong Kong in 1978, and higher secondary education has developed over subsequent years. Perhaps those with “x” years of education hold more positive attitudes toward transpeople than those with “y” years, not as a result of education instilling more positive attitudes (i.e., the civilizing effect of education), but because those who received higher levels of education were in any case more privileged (i.e., middle class, more affluent, more in tune with Western ideas, etc.). It is possible that if all of the other individuals who left school had stayed on longer, then they would have come out with similar positive attitudes in this regard.

DISCUSSION

The principal purpose of this study was to explore the impact of contact on Chinese attitudes towards transgenderism and transgender civil rights in Hong Kong, and to introduce the construct of *transprejudice* as a lens through which to refract these attitudes within a Chinese cultural framework. Noting that previous work in the study of contact has been hampered by the use of convenience samples, we sought

to minimize such problems by using a randomly generated population sample. Although the measure of contact in this study did not indicate the frequency or intimacy of contact, as required by Allport’s hypothesis, this study did measure participants having known contact with transpeople, and whether the contact was in Hong Kong or overseas. The distinction between contact in Hong Kong or overseas was important because we believed that there would be limited possibilities for contact in Hong Kong, given the invisibility of transpeople.

In this study, the overall amount of intergroup contact was surprisingly high; with one-third of the participants reporting contact with transpeople in Hong Kong and just over one-third reporting contact with transpeople overseas. This may be explained by the contact measure itself, as we did not limit the length of time between previous contact and time of reporting, nor did we assess the type and intimacy of participants’ contact with transpeople. One of the limitations of this study is the lack of data on the participant’s sexual orientation and gender identity conformity, which makes the heteronormativity of the participants our assumption. These findings provide a background against which to interpret the results.

The present research adds to a growing body of evidence showing that members of the general public who have contact with transpeople tend to report more favorable attitudes towards transgenderism and transgender civil rights. In addition, the present study shows that the positive association with contact is related to age and educational level, but not to gender and religiosity. Indeed, our first prediction, that participants with previous contact with transpeople would have significantly more positive attitudes as reflected by the personal and institutional dimension constructs, was confirmed. Specifically, previous contact with transpeople was associated with less social distancing and social discrimination, as well as significantly more positive attitudes surrounding the prejudicial treatment of transgender and transsexual people. Previous contact was associated with significantly higher levels of awareness of the discrimination directed against transpeople in Hong Kong Chinese society, as well as an increased understanding of the negative impact of such discrimination on the mental health and quality of life of transpeople. Although those with and without previous contact were highly supportive of equal opportunities, those with contact were significantly more supportive of such egalitarian ideals. With regard to the civil rights that ought to be provided for post-operative transsexual people, those with previous contact were significantly more supportive of the ability of transsexual people to have rights to privacy, marriage, adoption, and the legal right to change their birth certificate to reflect their chosen gender. As regards to the legislative and judicial protection of transpeople in Hong Kong, people with contact expressed more positive attitudes towards the needs and impact of the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation for gender identity minority people.

These findings indicate that participants who had previous contact with transpeople have more positive attitudes, but it was unclear whether the impact of contact on attitudes was recursive. In this study, contact was measured, not manipulated, and consequently it is unclear whether contact caused the difference in attitudes or whether more positive attitudes caused increased contact. Although this study was not

designed to tease apart the causal relationship, the findings reported here are broadly congruent with research on the impact of contact on attitudes towards gender identity and sexual orientation minorities (Anderssen, 2002; Gentry, 1987; Harvey, 2002; Herek & Capitanio, 1996; Herek & Glunt, 1993; Lemm, 2006; Overby & Barth, 2002; Sakalli & Ugurlu, 2001, 2002; Tee & Hegarty, 2006).

In contrast, our second prediction that female participants would hold more positive attitudes than males was not confirmed. Similarly, our fifth prediction, that religious beliefs would result in more negative attitudes was also not confirmed. However, our third prediction, that age and degree of contact would result in younger people holding more positive attitudes than older people, was confirmed. Likewise, our fourth prediction, that participants with higher levels of education would hold more positive attitudes, was also confirmed. People with higher levels of education were also those who had previous contact with transpeople, and those with less social distancing, social discrimination, and transprejudicial attitudes. On the other hand, those with higher levels of education also endorsed views relating to the culturally based system of values that perpetuate negative attitudes and beliefs toward individuals who fail to conform to cultural expectations of gender. People with higher levels of education were more aware of the discrimination against transpeople, and were significantly more supportive of equal opportunities and legislative protection than those with lower levels of education. These findings will have significant implications for educational interventions and public policy.

In this study, we sought to identify at what point in the education system would be the best time to target public education programs and where the most substantive differences in education are occurring, as well as to whether there were any differences in attitudes for boys and girls. We identified those participants who had upper secondary levels of education and above as having significantly more positive attitudes (with the exception of Gender Essentialism and Support for TS Civil Rights) toward transpeople than those who, at most, had completed lower secondary school. We

argue that attitudes reflected by the Gender Essentialism construct constitute strongly held beliefs about males and females and about the purported qualities of masculinity and femininity, stereotypes about men and women, attitudes toward appropriate roles for the sexes, and perceptions of those who presumably violate the modal pattern. This view would provide evidence that higher levels of education would not ameliorate gender essentialist attitudes, but may actually reinforce such attitudes. The lack of statistically significant differences in attitudes as reflected by the Support for TS Civil Rights construct might be due to the pathologizing and delegitimizing attitudes Hong Kong people may hold toward gender non-conformity, combined with a lack of understanding about the issues surrounding civil rights protection. Regarding gender differences in the effects of education on attitudes, we found that females had significant differences in six of the CATTCSRS constructs, whereas males had significant differences in only two of the constructs. These are areas of concern that ought to be addressed through educational interventions and public policy.

Implications for Educational Interventions

Because attitudes toward transpeople in Hong Kong have complex cultural roots and are affected by a host of social, psychological, and emotional variables, we argue that they cannot be eradicated through a uni-dimensional approach. Nevertheless, two clear conclusions can be drawn from this study. First, Hong Kong Chinese people who have had contact with transpeople are more likely than others to hold accepting attitudes at personal levels and supportive attitudes at institutional levels. Second, that age and level of education in Hong Kong play a significant role in shaping attitudes. As was revealed in this study, the timing of educational interventions to promote better understanding, awareness and more positive attitudes toward gender diversity in general, and transpeople in particular is critical.

The findings from this study suggest that gender diversity education should be targeted for females before they reach upper secondary

school, because those who go on to complete upper secondary levels and above hold significantly more positive attitudes than those who do not. The findings also suggest that gender diversity education should concentrate on improving attitudes as reflected in the gender essentialism construct. Further, moral and civic education should be reinforced to include the particular civil rights that are applicable to post-operative transsexual people (i.e., privacy related to previous gender status, marriage, adoption, and the legal right to change birth certificates). For males, however, we contend that gender diversity and civic education needs to be targeted at younger ages and extend into the higher levels of their education, concentrating on a host of issues ranging through social discrimination, equal opportunities, and civil rights protections.

We believe that educational interventions aimed at reducing the pathologization, stigmatization, and delegitimization of transpeople in Hong Kong should be focused on particular groups, using strategies that are target-specific. These interventions and strategies ought to be implemented at different levels (i.e., the intrapersonal, interpersonal, organizational/institutional, community and governmental/structural). Public and school-based education includes interventions that aim to inform the general public and students by increasing the awareness and knowledge about gender variance and provide facts that counter stereotypes and false assumptions on which transsexual stigma is thought to be based.

Implications for Public Policy

Anti-transgender attitudes, conceptualized in this study as *transprejudice*, cannot be eradicated within the community without simultaneously attacking their institutional roots. We argue that institutional changes, such as the enactment of anti-discrimination legislation, would have at least two effects on individual attitudes. First, legislative protection combined with education would identify transprejudice and discrimination against transpeople as unacceptable, and, as such, compel people to modify their behavior. One likely consequence of the combined effects of education and behavioral change

would be changes in the attitudes towards gender variant people, and the legislative requirement for the non-prejudicial treatment of these minority groups may subsequently manifest a change in attitudes. Second, institutional legitimization, or the conferring of judicial and legislative equality to transpeople, may encourage such individuals or their parents to disclose their gender identity issues at earlier stages of their lives and seek the medical and/or psychological help they may need. The legitimated status of trans identities in society may permit such people to disclose their desire to transition to their chosen gender through sex reassignment surgery (or not) to colleagues, neighbors, and others. The disclosure of trans identities to heteronormative society may prove to be one of the most powerful strategies transpeople have for combating transprejudice. However, many transgender people may not wish to disclose their trans identity precisely because they do not identify as trans, but rather as “male” or “female” as the case may be.

The findings highlight a number of areas for researchers and policymakers to address. By testing the contact hypothesis and using attitudes toward transpeople as a dependent variable we have added to the limited body of knowledge of public policy literature. As we come to the end of the first decade of the new century, prejudice and discrimination against transpeople appears finally to be on the radar of the Hong Kong government. This study shows that transpeople are widely perceived to be a minority group entitled to at least some of the legal protections accorded to other citizens of Hong Kong. Although no previous studies of attitudes towards gender-variant people exist in the Hong Kong context, only future studies will provide researchers and policymakers with the data to compare attitudes on personal and institutional dimensions. This study has shown that Hong Kong Chinese people consider transpeople to be entitled to equal opportunities and freedom from discrimination. Policymakers may now need to consider, in consultation with the public, the recognition of anti-transgender attitudes as a serious social problem that has social and psychological ramifications for both the general public and transpeople. The implementation of

a more transfriendly public policy is arguably the first step in hastening the elimination of transprejudice in Hong Kong.

Implications for Research

It is clear that attitudes are influential in determining behavior, and recent research by Winter, Webster and Cheung (in press) suggests that behavioral aggression may be a component of anti-transgender attitudes in Hong Kong not investigated in the current study. This is an area that requires further investigation. Specifically, studies that examine negative affect and behavioral aggression will provide important data for educational interventions and increased impetus for protective legislation. In addition, like members of other stigmatized groups, transpeople face numerous psychological challenges as a result of society’s discrimination towards them. To date, social scientists and mental health professionals have failed to pay adequate attention to the psycho-social and developmental issues which shape the trans persons’ life, and may result in anxiety, hopelessness, depression, and suicide. The mental health aspects of transprejudice on the psychological and social well-being of transpeople in an important area of research that needs to be investigated. Further studies on intergroup contact should also be undertaken.

CONCLUSION

Identifying correlates of prejudice towards particular social outgroups is an important step in exploring how such prejudicial attitudes can be reduced. Empirical research with other minority groups has shown that inter-group contact often reduces prejudice in the majority group when the contact meets several conditions: When it makes shared goals salient, when inter-group cooperation is encouraged, when the contact is ongoing and intimate rather than brief and superficial, when representative of the two groups are of equal status, and when they share important values (Allport, 1954; Amir, 1969). With regard to transpeople, these conditions are most fulfilled when they disclose

their gender variant identities to their relatives, friends, neighbors, and colleagues. Through the process of transitioning, transpeople can change social perceptions about what it means to be transgender or transsexual, as well as challenge traditional moral values regarding gender conformity and gender role expectations. Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis has had broad-reaching implications for prejudice reduction, and the present study shows that contact has a positive relationship with attitudes towards transgenderism and transgender civil rights.

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