LGBT Representations on Facebook

Representations of the Self and the Content

Yawen Chu
The topic of LGBT rights has been increasingly discussed and debated over recent years. More and more scholars show their interests in the field of LGBT representations in media. However, not many studies involved LGBT representations in social media. This paper explores LGBT representations on Facebook by analysing posts on an open page and in a private group, including both representations of the self as the identity of sexual minorities, content that is displayed on Facebook and the similarities and differences in two different settings (a private group and an open page). This study aims to fill the gap of self-representations of sexual minorities in non-anonymous online settings. Main concepts in this study include communication, gender, and sexuality, media representation, power, identity, stereotypes, self-representations, and discourse. A content analysis was conducted on posts from an LGBT open page and a private group with CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis) being used as the method. Results suggest that both the open page and private group express values of non-discrimination, equality, and respect by presenting links, images and with an extra form of representation - personal statements in the group. Compared to the neutral environment on the open page, more personal emotions are involved in the private group and some of them tend to be negative. However, some images can go extreme, they overemphasise same-sex marriages but neglect other ones.

Keywords: LGBT, Self-representation, Media-representation, Facebook, Identity, Power
# Table of contents

1. Introduction..............................................................................................................................4
2. Aim and research questions....................................................................................................7
3. Previous research....................................................................................................................8
4. Theoretical frame and concepts............................................................................................14
5. Method and Material ..........................................................................................................22
6. Analysis and Results..............................................................................................................27
7. Conclusion.............................................................................................................................40
References ................................................................................................................................43
1. Introduction

In recent years, the term LGBT as a newly emerged topic has drawn so much attention of the public, such as same-sex marriages being legal in the UK and Taiwan. Due to the development of technology and the Internet, social media has played an increasingly important role in people’s life. As one of the most important social media platforms, Facebook has gradually penetrated both into people’s life and the society as a whole. Therefore, it is important to explore LGBT representations on Facebook, since it is not always easy for everyone especially those who are identified as sexual minorities on a relatively non-anonymous online setting.

This thesis explores representations of LGBT individuals in social media, more specifically on Facebook. Thus, the thesis seeks to contribute to research about a specific group of people, LGBT individuals, in order to fill a knowledge gap regarding the self-representations of sexual minorities in non-anonymous online settings. According to the research I have done, there are studies about LGBT representations in media yet only a few mentioned social media. Furthermore, those studies of LGBT representations in social media focus more on the process of LGBT identity constructions in media rather than to examine from the perspective of the self. In other word how do LGBT individuals represent themselves and what do they share (information, values and opinions) through social media. Facebook is used as a case of social media platforming because of its relatively non-anonymous feature and the intertwining personal networks in spite of the identity fraud. Expressing oneself in a non-anonymous setting is not as free and easy as it in an anonymous one, especially when the ‘self’ is not part of the ‘mainstream’ group.

The Term - LGBT

LGBT, or GLBT, is an acronym that describes lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT, n.d.). A lesbian, the term to describe a female homosexual, is a female who experiences love or sexual attraction to other females (Lesbian, n.d.); Gay is mainly the term for a homosexual person or the feature of being homosexual. It was primarily utilised to mean “happy”, “joy”, or “showy and bright”(Gay, n.d.); Bisexual, or bisexuality, refers to people who have romantic attraction, sexual attraction, or sexual action towards both females and males or any sex or gender identity; the latter could be termed as pansexuality occasionally (Bisexuality, n.d.); Transgender are people who have a gender identity or expression that is different from their sex that has been assigned (Transgender, n.d.).

LGBT and Scholars

Scholars have shown great interests in the field of LGBT and media study. Mcinroy and Craig (2016) indicate that although there has been more and more representations of LGBT in
traditional (offline) media over the past twenty years, there are no adequate studies concentrated on the representations in contemporary media. As Szulc and Dhoest (2013) demonstrate, the role of LGB identity construction in mass media has drawn some scholars' attention, they find that previous studies often concentrated on representations of LGBs in mass media. The media is according to Gray (as cited in Mcinroy & Craig, 2016: 33), “the primary site of production for social knowledge [regarding] LGBTQ identities’”, and today, the media is usually the first place that people encounter LGBTQ identities. Due to the increase of LGBTQ representations in the media, not least in digital media, these identities has become more approachable, and easier than before for a wider public to obtain knowledge about. Szulc and Dhoest (2013) also indicate that due to the increase of LGBTQ representations, identities of LGBTQ have become more and more approachable. People obtain knowledge of LGBTQ individuals through media and it is usually the first place that people encounter LGBTQ identities (the authors use LGBTQ /LGB in their articles. In order to maintain the original content of the texts, I did not replace the terms into that in my study - ‘LGBT’. This also applies to the preview research part. As for the ‘Q’, according to LGBT (n.d.), is a popular term to describe people who are inquiring their sexual identity or identify themselves as queer).

Moreover, LGBTQ representations in digital media has been shown to be highly important for young LGBTQ individuals’ identity development. Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin (2008) claim that there has been research about the role of the digital media practices for identity construction over the past decades. However, most of these previous studies have concentrated on identity formations on Internet in anonymous settings, and not so much focus has been given to the use of digital media for identity construction among sexual minorities in non-anonymous online settings, like Facebook. Being a platform with non-anonymous features and a place for intertwining personal networks, Facebook holds a special significance for people who perceives themselves as belonging to a minority group, for example as part of the LGBT-community.

Taylor, Falconer and Snowdon (2014) claim that digital media is able to offer a safe environment especially for those who have non-normative sexual orientations to frame their identity, create relations and networks and make their voices – that are often silenced in offline settings – heard. Their study examines the complications of ‘coming out’ as LGBT and/or religious identities, and inquire into the way in which Facebook negotiates with this issue. Their approach further explores the role of (dis)embodiment in online identities formation, developing the previous scholarly studies about Facebook in order to combine and problematise more theories on ‘online embodiment’. Similarly, a study by Zhao et al. (2008) seek to explore the extent of identity declarations that people prone to make in a non-anonymous online environment in order to discover whether non-anonymity of online setting affects identi-
ty representations. Enli and Thumim (2012) also analyse how Facebook and its technological characteristics frame the probabilities for self-representation and socialites.

**Research Problem**

Studies concerning LGBT rights have increased significantly across several academic disciplines in recent years, also in media and communication studies where scholars have focused on LGBT content in media (Bond, 2014; Tan, 2016; Fouts & Inch, 2005; Deborah, Douglas, Joel & Enid, 2007; Draper, 2012; Billings, Moscowitz, Rae, & Brown-Devlin, 2015), media usage of communication (Venzo & Hess, 2013; Costanza-Chock & Schweidler, 2016; Szulc & Dhoest, 2013), and influence of LGBT representations in media (Penney, 2015; Evans, 2007). As noted by McInroy and Craig (2016), although there has been a lot of focus on representations of LGBT individuals in traditional mass media, and the media framing of LGBT identities over the past twenty years (see for example Szulc and Dhoest 2013), far less attention has been given to LGBT individuals in digital media, and how digital media is used for identity construction practices. Also some research tend to and what they more specifically share (information, values and opinions) through social media.

Additionally, identity construction in a non-anonymous online setting has not been well researched. As Zhao et al. (2008) claim, Facebook as a general social media platform, boosting personal networks, some of its unique characteristics would be important to the self-representation study. Facebook provides multiple ways for users to represent themselves such as displaying pictures, describing personal interests, establishing connections with people who have the same interests and interact with one another through messages and comments. The environment of Facebook is nearly non-anonymous because it shows users’ real names and institutional relations, in spite of the fact that some users may use fake profile pictures or name. Compared to anonymous settings, the freedom of identity declarations are restricted in the non-anonymous ones for that identity verification is needed in the non-anonymous online environments.

**Contribution of this thesis**

According to what I have mentioned above, exploring LGBT representations on Facebook would not only address the inadequate studies about representations in non-anonymous environments. Also, as a marginal group, it is important and interesting to find out how LGBT individuals represent themselves and share their values with one another in such a non-anonymous online environment. This paper seeks to contribute to the field of representations in social media with a particular group - LGBT, in order to fill the gap of knowledge about self-representations of sexual minorities in non-anonymous online environments and how people perform differently within and out of private settings. As demonstrated above, in the study of LGBT representations, there are inadequate studies about LGBT representations in
digitised media. Most of the research in contemporary media did not involve much about LGBT self-representation but focus more on how media frames their identity. In this case, based on the results of this study, investigations into representations of sexual minorities in non-anonymous settings shall be further studied in the future.

**Structure of this thesis**

There are eight chapters in this thesis. After the introduction, there will be a description of the aim and research questions of this thesis. In the third part, a summary of 18 relevant previous studies will be presented. Then the theoretical background shall be focussed on, relevant concepts will be further explained and connected to this study. After that are the method and analysis (and results), details about analysis will be demonstrated. Finally a conclusion and reference shall be offered.

2. **Aim and research questions**

As Zhao et al. (2008) state, many previous studies concentrates on formations of online identity in anonymous settings. The special interest of my study is therefore to find out LGBT self-representations in a non-anonymous online environment - Facebook. This thesis aims to analyse self-representations of LGBT individuals as the identity of sexual minorities on Facebook. More specifically, it seeks to study the way that LGBT individuals use Facebook to represent themselves with an identity of LGBT, the content they share on Facebook as well as the similarities and differences of the representations in different settings (an open page and a private group on Facebook).

Therefore, three research questions will be addressed in this thesis:

1) How do LGBT individuals represent themselves as part of sexual minority in the private group on Facebook?

2) What kinds of content are shared on the open page on Facebook?

3) What are the similarities and differences of the representations in the private group and the open page on Facebook?

**Social importance and relevance of this thesis**

The study of LGBT is of great importance for not only LGBT individuals, but also society as a whole. Through this study, the demonstration of knowledge about LGBT as well as LGBT representations on Facebook enable readers to gain a more balanced comprehension of LGBT. As a result, there will be more and more people who support LGBT individuals so that LGBT movements would be boosted. The society would thus become more tolerant and acceptable towards LGBT individuals.
3. Previous research

18 articles are chosen as my previous research. They are divided into five categories: LGBT media content, media usage of LGBT individuals, identity of LGBT in media, influence of LGBT representations in media and self-representations on Facebook. Facebook as one of social media platforms, is part of media. It is therefore necessary to understand how LGBT people are represented in media in general. Also, essential knowledge about Facebook shall be involved, such as features, function, interface of Facebook and so on.

LGBT Media Content

LGBT media content could be seen as LGBT representations in media such as LGBT image in television (series, films, TV programs). In this research field, Bond (2014) states in his article that media might be regarded as a significant sexual medium of socialization for LGB individuals who always have limited interpersonal resources to obtain sexual information. A content analysis was involved in this article, with the sample of TV programs, magazines, movies and music that is prevalent with LGB young individuals to quantify the sexual message they receive in media. Results demonstrate that LGB sexualities are underrepresented while heterosexuality is overrepresented in media that are prevalent among LGB youths. And LGB sexual talk was always about indignity or stereotypes. LGB sexual actions barely existed. LGB sexual talk tends to be growing in entertainment television yet LGB sexual actions have stayed rather usual over time.

Fouts and Inch (2005) focus on 22 television sitcoms in order to determine the incidence of homosexual characters, their demographics, and whether they orally discussion about sexuality. Results showed that only 2% of the 125 main characters were homosexual compared to real population rates of homosexuality in North America. Thus, homosexuality is largely under-represented in programs that are watched by youths and young adults. All the homosexual characters were male and with the age group of 20-35, which demonstrates that homosexual youths audiences have no peer role models of identity. More discussions about sexuality made by homosexual characters than heterosexual characters indicates that television producers/authors display sexuality as a key subject in a homosexual characters’ life.

Deborah et al. (2007) also concentrate on television programs to address the questions about the popularity and frequency of sexual actions and sexual discussion about homosexuals. In conclusion, the results of this research showed that talk or image of LGBT sexual conditions are still fairly infrequent, especially compared with the popularity of sexual content on heterosexuals on television. Based on the theory of cultivation, audiences of television are more tend to believe that homosexual conduct is highly uncommon or abnormal. However, LGB adolescents still have few examples of homosexual characters, particularly if they are not able to get access to satellite television or cable.
Similarly, Draper (2012) inspects the media concept and debate about the sexual-orientation of Adam Lambert. The article introduces the notion of a ‘lens of detection’, it argues that the media coverage depicts Lambert as a man in the closet and encouraged audiences to watch his performances onscreen in order to prove this identity. This media-imposed lens of detection has crucial significance for the way viewers might understand queer representations in media texts. Identity, media theories of paratextuality and the queer studies literature on “the closet” have been used in the article. The author utilised text and paratext to analysis the program, media coverage of Lambert and its relations. Pushing audiences to understand abnormal performances of self through hegemonic gender modules restrains the challenge probability of representations and impede audiences from thinking outside of leading comprehension of sexual-orientation.

There is another study about LGBT content in media. Billings et al. (2015) use Jason Collins as the case, particularly address the media frames after Collins’ coming out. Initial research questions such as - “What kinds of subjects will be presented in newspaper articles by traditional journalists about the coming out of Jason Collins?” is presented in the study. Additionally, two final questions offer proof of connection between the two media models: (1) what percent of newspaper articles will straightly quote Jason Collins? (2) what percent of newspaper articles will directly refer responses to Twitter? A quantitative content analysis was utilised in this study. Results demonstrate an overwhelmingly positive but bifurcated reaction between traditional media and social media.

As well as Western media, the study of media in China is also contained in this field. Tan (2016) focuses on videos that are made in the foundation of community documentary workshops in order to conjoin LGBT media studies with Chinese communication technologies studies. Many of the videos are combination and regeneration of picture and sound. Particularly, the expressional individual histories in the videos compete the ‘real’ homosexual topic that act as the target of information in mainstream media. The corporality on screen and the intimacy of the video facilities function as an identity inquiry that involves the onward discursive discussion between the determinist of biology and socially framed perspectives on homosexuality. Moreover, video-making turns into a conduct of coming out via confessional or behavioral patterns of audio-visual connections. As a result, video is an important intermediary to work through and among the procedure of identification and constitution of community.

**Media Usage of LGBT Individuals**

Media as a platform offers individuals a stage to express themselves and share information. The way LGBT use media to communicate is essential in the process of LGBT representations in media. Venzo and Hess (2013) depict in their article how sexual minorities have been ne-
glected, denounced or trivialized by the media in their article. The aim is to de-center re-
search from media representation problems to consider the ability minority groups initiative-
ly using new media and its different ways for interactivity, social networking, and feedback to
strive for social exclusion. Theory of ‘symbolic annihilation’ or ‘symbolic violence’ has been
utilised in this literature. A semi-structured interview and a qualitative content analysis were
also involved. The research indicates that the group is becoming more and more proficient
and comfortable to use a cross-section media platforms to accomplish their own purposes,
instead of regarding themselves as negative media representation subjects.

Costanza-Chock and Schweidler (2016) conclude central discoveries from advantages and
evaluation of media work by LGBTQ individuals and Two-Spirit corporations in the US in the
period of 2014-2015. Five research questions and the usage of a mixed-methods approach are
displayed in their article. The authors discover that many LGBTQ and Two-Spirit corporation
have an intertwined analysis of connected systems of class, race, gender, sexuality, and others
inspire of the lack of resources. Many sought to do media work that promoted the critical
awareness and leadership of their communities, established media that are greatly responsi-
bile to their social foundation, and utilised participatory ways to model media.

The Internet as a newly developing technology is more and more important in media repre-
sentations. Especially for LGBT individuals, their usage of the Internet during the process of
coming out is important. Szulc and Dhoest (2013) explore the Internet usage of the LGB
community in the Northern Belgium in their article. The article aims to provide a wider,
more balanced and more accurate picture of the particular role of the Internet for constitut-
ing LGB identities. The main research questions are: How much and for which aims is the
Internet being utilised relating to sexual identity constitution problems? What are the differ-
ences in Internet usage of LGB individuals before, during and after coming out? Both quanti-
tive and qualitative methods were combined in this study. Results show that before and dur-
ing coming out, online anonymity largely promotes the constitution of LGB identity for par-
ticipants to use the Internet more to seek for information about LGB. Simultaneously, most
participants use the Internet less for LGB-particular aims after coming out.

LGBT Identity in Media

The main issue of LGBT individuals is their identity. On the one hand, there are still people
in the society who do not accept or respect people identifying themselves as LGBT just be-
cause they have ‘different’ preferences. On the other hand, there is still a number of LGBT
individuals who are afraid of or confused about their identities. In this case, studies about
LGBT identities in media could be seen as the foundation of research of LGBT representation
in Facebook. Rodgers (2012) devotes to queer media discipline by filling the gap that is iden-
tified by Cover and to the rich scholarship on queer community negotiations. The author
wrote from a grounded queer theoretical perspective. An ethnographic approach was being used in the study to examine the way editors frame identity of queer and community in queer student media. When he comes to analysing identity and media, the author’s editorial decisions consideration and production contexts conducts the absence of queer theory’s concerns. As a result, queer identity is formed by editorial decisions, like selection of articles and publications’ chosen subjects.

Another form of identity, namely religion is involved in the study of Taylor et al. (2014). The researchers investigate the way Christian adolescents negotiate sexual-religious identities. Taylor et al. (2014) explore Facebook, broader social network websites and the online communities and conditions. The Central concept of ‘online embodiment’ was used in the article. A qualitative research method was utilised in the article to examine the methodological challenges triggered by Facebook existence. Results showed that analysis of Facebook has become broadly interpreted as the crucial or even final identity constitution, displaying instant information about identities, religions, bodies, religious relations and sexuality. It could be argued that social networking is always there and it is impossible for us to entirely present our online bodies from the area. There would only be one ‘end’ to the research project when all profiles of Facebook and Twitter are completely removed.

Identities of LGBT celebrates in media representations draw more attention of the audiences since ‘coming out’ in public is not that easy, especially for a public figure. Dow (2001) establishes the coming-out of Ellen Degeneres. The author concludes that the visibility of lesbian identity in Ellen is positive, but it is not the same as political advancement - or even political consciousness, and it is wrong to mix them up. Comprehension of lesbian identity of Ellen makes it easier to everyone - particularly to audiences in middle America. The individualisation of lesbian identity in Ellen and its relevant discourse is what television and main-stream media conduct, and to a large degree, making us like characters instead of problems. Ellen’s popularity does not mean that America should like lesbians nor would it. Essential problems of civil rights, liberation of choice and social justice should not rely on liking. Such political stakes in media avoidance is more than just ellipsis: it shall be charactered as a representation, certainly a production of power.

**Influence of LGBT Representations in Media**

Orgad (2012) claims that all representation is connected to power. Therefore, in the study of LGBT representations, it is necessary to take a look at researches about the influence of LGBT representations in media. The article of Penney (2015) critically investigates the censorious movements of media watchdog corporations like Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), challenging the hypothesis about influences and power of media beneath this discourse. Penney (2015) uses Finnegan and Kang’s Latourian theoretical framework of
iconophilia. Penney (2015) argues that current prevalent practices of digital remix and burlesque facilitate a prospective strategy for media activists to enfold and enthusiastically convert the implication of offending images at the same time opposing an iconoclasm that presumes their static power over fragile and inferior viewers.

Evans (2007) focuses on the way the present gay and lesbian images on television and networking influent gay adolescents when it comes to their sexual identities. Both quantitative and qualitative methods are included in this article. Results show that all the gay characters in all the shows assessed were well imploded in the series plots and not sidelined from the main counterparts, and some advancements have occurred in gays and lesbians television landscape. Evans (2007) also suggests that analysing the description of transexuals, bisexuals, omnisexual pansexuals etc on cable television and networking shall be added to the field and supplement this research since this study only concentrated on gay and lesbian images.

**Self-representations on Facebook**

Since Facebook is the case of my study, relevant studies about representations especially self-representation on Facebook are indispensable. Enli and Thumim (2012) further explore and investigate Facebook. They indicate that social network sites like Facebook have mediatised and institutionalised personal socialising and identity demonstration procedures, which used to belong to the non-mediated and personal realms. The study discusses the concept of digital friendship and areas of socialising and self-representation. It also addresses one thought of the procedure of mediation: the ‘textual mediation procedures’ to discover self-representation in Facebook. The combination of examining self-representation and socialising enables us to surmise the probabilities and limitations for self-representation in Facebook, and the way in which these intersect with negotiation of users’ mixed status between private and public settings.

Ivcevic and Ambady (2012) investigate the identity claim that reveals impressions of personality on Facebook. As they state, profiles on Facebook are frequently seen and judged by other people. They also examine the types of information that are used by viewers and they examined the predictable validity of gradings personality on the base of Facebook Info pages. Evaluators made judgements of personality towards aimed users, either founded on whole Facebook Info pages or sole types of information such as profile picture, sexual orientations, interests, etc. Gradings of personality for the Info page were most highly related to that of profile pictures, followed by shared interests and quotes. Analysing regression indicated that pictures and shared self-narrative favors solely devote to impressions of Info pages. Gradings from stranger of Info pages more intensely forecasted online than daily action.
Moreover, Zhao et al. (2008) explore construction of identity on Facebook. They indicate that previous research about online self-representation mainly concentrated on identity formations in anonymous online settings. These studies found that individuals are more likely to participate in role-play games and non-normative actions in the online space. The current study examines identity formation on Facebook, a recently generated non-anonymous online setting. They use content analysis of 63 accounts on Facebook, they find that the identities emerged in the non-anonymous settings are different from those generated in the anonymous online settings as formerly reported. Users on Facebook mainly declare their identities implicitly instead of explicitly; they ‘show rather than say’, consumer identities and emphasize group are more than individually depicted ones.

Van Dijk (2013) compares self-performance on both Facebook and LinkedIn and points out that social media are prevalent platforms for self-representation, interaction and self-promotion. The article provides a comparative analysis of interface between Facebook and LinkedIn. Van Dijk (2013) indicates that while Facebook is specifically concentrated on boosting personal self-representation, interface of LinkedIn meets the need for professional self-promotion. However, both platforms allocate similar roles of connectivity and descriptive strategies that could be briefly demonstrated in recent interface alterations. These altering digital structures from the essential backgrounds for asking critical questions about online self-representation: How are public identities formed through platform interfaces? How do these characteristics restrict and enable the shaping of personal professional personality? And what are the aftermats of forced connectivity and descriptive equality on individual’s online identities?

**Summary of Previous Research**

Most of the previous research focus on LGBT media content. The study of media usage of LGBT individuals explores the way LGBT individuals use media to communicate and interact with each other. Research on the influence of LGBT representations in media illustrate the impacts of LGBT representations in media on viewers and the society. Scholars explore Facebook from different perspectives such as further analysis of Facebook interface (Ivcevic & Ambady, 2012), identity construction on Facebook (Zhao et al., 2008) and comparison of self-performance between LinkedIn and Facebook (Van Dijk, 2013). Although there are studies about LGBT identity in media, they emphasise the way that media constructs LGBT identity. This thesis focuses on LGBT representation on Facebook with the extra interests of self-representation, representational content as well as similarities and differences of the representations in different places (the private group and the open page) on Facebook. Concepts such as media representations, power and identity that displayed in these previous research could bring the theoretical frame of this thesis, which will be further explained in the following chapter.
4. Theoretical frame and concepts

LGBT representations on Facebook is highly relevant for the field of media and communication, and concepts of communication is therefore fundamental and necessary to understand this phenomenon. As the social context, concepts of gender, sexuality, and LGBT and stereotype are also needed in the study since the study concentrates on a particular group - LGBT. Furthermore, the central concept is representations, and in this case more specifically media representations. Apart from that, concepts of power is crucial for my study for it is closely related to media representations (Orgad, 2012). Since one of my research questions is about LGBT self-representations, concepts of self-representations in social media will be considered in particular. Also, identity, and especially sexual identity will be discussed. Discourse is important to mediated communication like Facebook since both language and non-verbal communication (Jones & Holmes, 2011) are included in discourse and Facebook posts. Also, it is related to CDA, the method that used to analyse posts on Facebook in this thesis.

Communication

As Thompson (1995) claims, human beings participate in the production and interchange of communication and symbolic content in all societies, from the initial posture modus and language usage to the latest computer technology advancement. In the modern world, the nature of symbolic production and interchange have converted by the development of media. Facebook is like many other types of social media and online community, which advocates computer-mediated communication (Papacharissi, 2011). “Facebook can also be regarded as a public space, which is defined as “the space of societal, meaningful interaction where ideas and values are formed, conveyed, supported, and resisted; space that ultimately becomes a training ground for action and reaction” (Castells, 2009:301).

Owners of platforms utilise techniques of interface to facilitate unintentional self-representation and simultaneously also allowing intentional self-promotion. The formation of ‘mass self-communication’ which is defined by Castells (2009) refers to a networked interplay global system - a system including platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter that provide important methods to facilitate the online representation of identity. According to Goffman’s theory of symbolic interactionism (as cited in Van Dijk, 2013:211), self-performance differentiates symbols presented unintentionally and those given off intentionally. For example, one could be able to show his/her gender or sexuality unconsciously by communicating with others, they can also be stressed or oppressed. Unconscious representations of identity are always a part of self-expression as well. As part of social actors, LGBT individuals intentionally or unintentionally identified themselves as sexual minorities through communication on Facebook, including representing the self and sharing information with one another.
LGBT and Media Representations

This study explores LGBT representations in social media. Media representation generally refers to texts and images on 'old media' such as television and newspaper, but not to texts and images on contemporary media such as mobile phones and the Internet until recently. Some studies comprise the relationships between these sections. Media representation are more and more relied on and decided by various social contexts networking and global areas. A branch of media representation research concentrates on the importance of representations for identity dimension such as gender, sexual orientation, class, ethnicity, or related to sections and communities beyond the nation (Orgad, 2012). “‘Representation’ refers to the process of re-presenting, the process by which members of a culture use systems of signs to produce meaning” (Orgad, 2012:17).

Due to the development of technology and the Internet, media, especially social media has become increasingly important in representations. Orgad (2012) illustrates that the study of media representations concentrates on analysing representations as texts, through their audio, visual, textual and discursive characteristics to set up a better comprehension of the procedure of generating meaning. As Richard Dyer describes (as cited in Lacey, N., 2009:146), re-presentation, which is essential in media language, are the traditions that are utilised to display the world to the viewers. Representation emphasises that there is an authentic world, but our interpretation of it is constantly intervened by the selection of media.

Through media, LGBT individuals display the world they are living in and it is essentially the same world as others’ but with some differences. LGBT representation in media differs according to the medium. The representation is usually more authentic in social media than it is in traditional media (TV, radio etc) since it is the representations of the self in social media. Consequently, it influences peoples’ different comprehension of LGBT individuals. Orgad (2012) also points out the power of representations, they nurture a broad and profound comprehension and sensation that direct and form individuals’ performances and behaviors. However, this must be viewed critically because as intermediaries of imagination, power of media representations is conditional. The representations in the media have meanings to their audiences, they have to be efficient, which means they have to ‘function’ and achieve specific things. For example the open page of LGBT in Facebook, the posts (whether there are images or texts) shall be deep enough to align the viewers thereby to fulfill the purpose of eliminating prejudice and discrimination as much as possible.

As Orgad (2012) indicates, the work of media representations is characterised by much debate: actors (groups, organisations, individuals) more and more contend for existence and a voice through symbolic representations on to the space of media. The visibility in the media is a way of stating acknowledgement and performing power. Representations’ debate controls
mediated space, conveys enormous prospect for the extension of individual and collective imaginations. Exposure to an increasing scope of feelings and opinions is key to opening people’s imagination, especially to caring and thinking about people and phenomena that are beyond themselves, to foster an external direction to others and the world, and to cultivate more critical thinking towards what and how we think about ourselves, others and the world. LGBT individuals claim their voice of equality by posting their values and beliefs in media and of course there will be negative comments. However, the information and debates enable people to further think about this phenomenon and their imagination of the world, of others and even themselves could be influenced.

**Media Representations and Power**

All representation is essentially and indivisibly related to power, relations of power are embedded in media representations. And conversely, media representations generate and regenerate power relations by establishing values, knowledge, beliefs and notions. That is why representations are of great importance (Orgad, 2012). As mentioned above, representations are powerful. Power thus becomes an important concept when it comes to media representation. Thompson (1995) defines power as the capability to conduct or pursue one’s purpose and interests, the capability to interfere the phenomena and to influent the result. Flew (2007) interprets Thompson’s definition as a social conduct, where mediums of communication participate in constructed social contexts. If communication is thereby comprehended as intended social activity, rather than just simply as information transmission, then communication can be comprehended as one of the types by which means power can be conducted. People apply the accessible resources to perform power; resources are the methods which allow them to fulfill their goals and interests efficiently. They are able to increase their power by collecting different kinds of resources such as material and financial resources of economic power, authority resources of political power and so on (Thompson, 1995).

Although power of representations can be huge, we are not coerced to think in specific ways. Studies demonstrate that the same representation can bring various, fairly different, often conflictive meanings. Representations do not control our minds, instead, representations attract our wishes, imaginations and interests. Referring to Foucault (as cited in Orgad, 2012:28), the representation generates meaning through image and text and it converts relations of power and subjectivities and how we experience and identify ourselves.

Castells (2009) states that values and organisations define society and that the most essential procedure in society is power, and the relationships of power define what is institutionalized and treasured. Various means of coercion and manipulation of messages and communication in the public space are the center of generating power. As the relational capability, power allows a social actor to affect unevenly the determinations of other social actor(s) in ways that
meet the empowered actors’ interests, values and wishes. Power is performed by ways of domination (or the probability of it) and/or by the formation of implication based on the discourses which enables social actors to conduct their behaviors. The power of LGBT representation in Facebook enables LGBT individuals to express themselves more freely and disseminate positive attitudes so that more people could understand the world they live in. And once there are more advocates of LGBT people, LGBT movements (such as gay pride) would be facilitated and their purpose of achieving equality would be accomplished.

**Self-representations in Social Media**

One of my research questions is about LGBT representing themselves as identity of sexual minorities in Facebook. Self-representation, according to Orgad (2012), distributed on contemporary media such as social media and blogs are the latest representational development in which the self becomes the central of the imagination of others. Self-representations enable previously unseen and unheard others to achieve visibility and declare a voice. Just as stated before, self-representation of LGBT enables them to be more visible and thus to claim a voice proposing that they deserve the same rights as others. All representation is essentially and inseparable related to power. In the process of ‘symbolic rehabilitation’ (relocation and redistribution of symbolic, political, material and social resources) which is proposed by Cottle (as cited in Orgad, 2012:162), the self often becomes a public text.

Illouz (as cited in Orgad, 2012:162) indicates that the Internet is a platform for multiple self-representations that specifically emphasises the self as an aim that can be interpreted through texts that are assorted, expressed and demonstrated publicly. Orgad (2012) states that difference between self-representation online (Youtube, Facebook, blogs, etc.) and in public (TV programs or films) is becoming vague. Private life is displayed in public, people are increasingly making themselves the object of examination, and participating in a complicated, onward self-examination work that contains naming, presenting, discussing, debating, negotiating and explaining their feelings. The self has become a constitution of a main space to foster a global imagination: imagination of others, ourselves, probable lives and the world. The stories and images in traditional media (news, magazines, television, etc.) and the Internet comprise important symbolic resources we depend on to figure out our lives and the world we are in. We generate our own images and stories as well, which allows us to narrate to selves and others about who we are.

Orgad (2012) demonstrates that media representations have two important functions in this process. First, the centrality and impact of representations in media and discourses in constructing people’s imaginations, self-identities, subjectivities and self-depictions, with non-mediated symbolic materials, including nostomania and memories of family and friends.
Second, in shaping and redefining people’s identities, people frequently tell stories that are revised and remodeled constantly. The spread of representations in new media extends, promotes and complicates how we conceive others in distant and, inseparably, how we identify ourselves. On the other hand, it enables us to identify others through representations of them as individuals with visibility and voice. Which is exactly because these representations are stories of themselves, they depict the other from the viewers’ perspectives, and be able to narrow the gap between ‘them’ and ‘us’, and allow an imaginable ‘you’ and ‘me’. Simultaneously, these types of self-representation subject conceiving others to the depiction of the self, the self is regarded as the majority, if not only, means of presenting and interpreting others. Individuals within the LGBT community represent themselves on Facebook by sharing their personal stories, feelings and opinions and displaying a real world they live in, so that they can be visible and claim a voice that people have the same rights regardless of sexuality.

**LGBT and Stereotype**

Stereotype in social psychology, is a term that can be used to describe certain types of people or particular behaviors (Stereotype, n.d.). From the perspective of relationship between media and reality, referring to the definition of stereotypes that is proposed by Walter Lippmann (as cited in Lacey, 2009:153). Although media has a fairly strong effect on the propagation of stereotypes, they were not established by media. They are notions that are part of daily life. Richard Dyer (as cited in Lacey, 2009:153) depicts four characteristics of the definition of Walter Lippmann: “An ordering procedure” - stereotypes seek to make the reality easy to understand and are a fundamental part to make sense of the society and world; due to the feature of simplicity, stereotypes could perform as “short cuts” to meaning.

Usage of stereotypes in iconography is one of the most powerful ‘short cuts’ in meaning, “a way of referring to the world” - stereotypes are constructs of society and they are original from the real world. Moreover, stereotypes in fiction are not only social structures, they are aesthetic as well; “an expression of ‘our’ beliefs and values” - stereotypes are a presentation of the leading ideology, they seeks to naturalize relations of power in society. And they have a hegemonic feature, like women are always stereotyped as being dominated by men or the image of housewives, which all demonstrate their inferior situation. Stereotypes shall also be taken into consideration regarding to LGBT. It is because, for instance, for most people especially those who are heterosexual, the image of a gay man would usually be a man who is quite feminine, with tight jeans or exaggerated haircut.

Referring to Tessa Perkins (as cited in Lacey, 2009:149), “Stereotypes are very common, so common that even the concept of ‘stereotype’ itself has a stereotype”. She also summarises the presumptions of many people about stereotypes: stereotypes are always wrong in con-
tents; they have negative meanings, which means stubborn, rigid and unwilling to change; they are about groups with little/no social interaction; they belong to minority groups (or repressed group) such as LGBT, there are always stereotypes about them; they are uncomplicated; they are stiff and never change; they are not structural strengthened; the being of conflictive stereotypes is proof that they are wrong; people either ‘keep’ stereotypes of a group (believe they are true) or do not; someone keeps a stereotype of a group so that his/her conduct towards a person in that group is able to be forecasted. For instance, when people see a man who wears tight jeans or has ear pierced on the right, the first thing that comes into their mind is - there is maybe an 80% chance he is gay. Stereotypes are represented through media and are perceived differently by audiences.

**LGBT and Identity**

“On a basic level, one can identify and construct oneself as a lesbian by expressing sexual desire for and/or identification with other women, where ‘women’ is socially understood as a gender category or as a biological sex category. One does not say, for example, that one is ‘white’ or ‘working class’ because one desires or identifies with women. Gender is not an integral resource in the enactment of other forms of social identity in the way that it is in the enactment of sexual identity” (Harrington et al., 2008:275)

There are always obviously conflictive situations in gender and sexuality. On the one hand, gender and sexuality cannot be understood apart from each other, on the other hand, sometimes it is indispensable to detach them academically (Harrington et al., 2008). Harrington et al. (2008) indicate arguments of other scholars that although potentially, ‘analytic distance’ between gender and sexuality could be established, “they are inextricable in that one can only be expressed in terms of the other” (Harrington et al., 2008:274). Shortly, there could be no notion of homo/heterosexuality without the term of gender, and vice versa. The relationship between gender and sexuality cannot be detached for the aim of analysis. A significant perspective of the relation between gender and sexuality is that gender hierarchies are generated by heterosexuality and challenged by homosexuality and particular patterns of ‘non-normative’ conduct of heterosexuality.

Self-Representation reflects identity which is also one of the important issues to LGBT individuals. More specifically, it is the issue between identity identified by others and themselves, just as some people do not accept or respect the existence of identities as LGBT, while some LGBT individuals are confused about their identities and sometimes even deny or resist who they really are. Cognition about others is essential for understanding and proclaiming one’s identity. “To understand and define ourselves, as individuals and groups (communities, nations, etc.), we need another to relate to, and to distinguish ourselves from” (Orgad, 2012:53).
The reason is that our capability to determine and comprehend ourselves mostly depends on, and originates from the sense of who we are not. Self-comprehension and the way in which we represent ourselves relies mostly on the way we imagine others, and on who is and who is not involved in the symbolic area of representations that based on our imagination (Orgad, 2012).

Furthermore, the role of identity in relation to the media is different depending on the different social and architectural dimensions of the medium. For instance, in the field of broadcast communications, the priorities are language and ideology questions, however, the concepts of anonymity, a ‘second self’ or avatar appear in network communications (Jones & Holmes, 2011). Identity is completely produced by what is able to be typed or posted in text and images. Advocates of avatar regard this as a completely neutral place of interaction that offers participants a newly established freedom without restrictions of actual embodiment (sex, age, class etc.). According to Foucault (as cited in Jones & Holmes, 2011:109 ), “people are what they are as a result of the discourses they produce, which, in turn, produce them”. In this case, study about LGBT self-representation in a non-anonymous online environment - Facebook appears to be interesting and important, since the objects of focus are sexual minorities and it is not as free and easy to represent themselves in a non-anonymous setting as it in an anonymous one. Which is also the gap this study seeks to fill in.

**Discourse**

“Discourses are ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes. A discourse is a sort of identity kit which comes complete with appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk, and often write, so as to take on a particular social role that others will recognize” (Cleary, 2013: 102).

Chouliaraki and Fairclough (as cited in Jones & Holmes, 2011:69) illustrate that discourse includes language (spoken and written and combined with other semiotics), non-verbal communication (gaze, facial expression, poses etc) and visual image (iconography, videos). Discourse is significant in our lives because it helps us to interpret information. Numerous discourses are accessible for every individual, and any of which could be the lead in a given period of time. Socialisation and education determine the discourses we have: the more knowledge one acquires, the more discourses one is able to enter (Lacey, 2009). As Cleary (2013) states, what we expand as the self is a reaction to the claims of a context, a particular expression and representation. Which leads to another concept that closed related to identity - discourse:
As Jones and Holmes (2011) indicate, there are two main forms of discourse with implications for media and communication. Firstly, its usage of philosophy and theory and secondly the detached but related development of discourse analysis field, which generally refers to functional linguistics that has been conducted to media. Fairclough’s media discourse (as cited in Jones & Holmes, 2011:69) makes a list of ‘necessary conditions’ for critical analysis in the field of media discourse, including genre analysis, language and semiotic analysis and so on. Proper representational strategies are therefore important especially in particular social settings. The linguists from America Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf (as cited in Machin & Mayr, 2012:16) argue that human beings do not live in an objective world, but in a world that is established by language that has become the way of representation in their society.

Thus, language is not only a medium to depict the world, but rather contains our opinions about ‘the real world’. Sapir (as cited in Machin & Mayr, 2012:164) states that “According to this view, different languages will shape the world differently. So the worlds different language speakers inhabit are not simply ones with different labels but are therefore distinct worlds”. Towards an extreme approach, this is what Machin and Mayr (2012) define as “linguistic determinism”, in which our thoughts are determined by the language we use. As a matter of fact, some linguists agree with this extreme opinion, but rather believe how the language we use might affect the way we think about the world rather than determine it. They would view this as a double-way procedure so that the language we use is affected by how we think about the world. In this case, since the posts mainly contain text, CDA would be a proper method for analysing posts on Facebook.
5. Method and Material

Content Analysis as Qualitatively Research

This thesis builds on qualitative research with a content analysis being used in order to examine LGBT representations on Facebook. The aim of content analysis is to analyse the communication and its content (Hansen & Machin, 2013). Qualitative research, according to Bryman (2012), generally focuses on words and meanings instead of frequencies of data. In this case, this thesis belongs to qualitative research for it aims to explore self-representations of a particular group - LGBT on Facebook and it analyses content and thematics of the posts on Facebook rather than the quantity.

Sample and Selection Criteria

A content analysis will be conducted on posts from both a private LGBT group and an open page - “LGBT News”. The results of analysis are answers to these three questions in order to explore self-representations of LGBT as sexual minorities on Facebook. Since the content in the private group is only available to people who are in the group, analysis of posts from the group will remain anonymous. The criteria for the selection of posts is based on the categories of the content. Two categories are displayed in the open page: links and images. Three categories are involved in the private group: links, images and personal statements.

The Analysis of the private group mainly focuses on the first research question: How do LGBT individuals represent themselves as part of sexual minority in the private group on Facebook? While the open page concentrates more on the second: What kinds of content are shared on the open page on Facebook? Since posts from the group are more private and personal compared to the open page. Although there is also shared information in the group, it focuses more on individuals such as posts about personal feelings, daily life, personal experiences and so on. However, the page is more public since anyone can comment or post on the page, it is a platform that aims to advocate LGBT people and their rights by disseminating positive values and information. The analysis of the private group and open page will be separated. By doing so, similarities and differences of representations in a public non-anonymous online environment and a relatively private one could be displayed which is also the answer to the third question.

Method: Critical Analysis Discourse (CDA)

Critical Analysis Discourse is used as the method of this thesis. First of all, “The word ‘critical’ has been central to CDA as it was in Critical Linguistics” (Machin & Mayr, 2012:5). Machin and Mayr (2012) also indicate that CDA focuses more on depicting and detailing linguistic characteristics than on the reason why and in what way these characteristics are generated and what ideological goals they are likely to serve. As such a detailed analysis, CDA enables
us to disclose more exactly the way authors and speakers make use of language and grammatical characteristics to generate meaning, to convince people to think specifically about events, sometime even to try to control them while simultaneously obscure their purposes of communication.

Moreover, CDA seeks to develop methods and theory that is able to better seize the interrelationship between language, power and ideology and particularly to pull out and depict the conducts and routines within and beyond the texts that discloses investment of politics and ideology. Our capacity to depict texts and to document the way different texts interact can be increased by CDA. CDA is publicly engaged in social change and political intervention as well. CDA presumes that the relations of power are discursive which means power is transferred and practiced by discourse. CDA usually reveals a normal or neutral surface of strategies but one which might be ideological and try to shape the performance of events and individuals for specific ends.

‘Critical’ means ‘denaturalising’ the language to disclose the types of absences, thoughts and presumptions that are taken for granted in texts. This will enable us to discover types of power interests concealed in these texts. Also, there are various instruments in CDA to analyse texts and images which are basically the content of the posts in Facebook. Instruments such as semiotic resources for expressing speakers’ attitudes, linguistic and visual semiotic resources to represent individuals, metaphorical tropes in discourse, nominalization & presupposition in language and modality & hedging used in visual communication and texts. Connecting analyses to procedures could better enable us to comprehend how discourses could exist in society (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

**Critical Discourse Analysis Tools**

In order to analyse the posts, relevant CDA analytical tools will be displayed below:

**Quoting verbs:** Machin and Mayr (2012) claim that it is remarkably revealing when we take a close look at the words selected to represent how someone has spoken in both texts and speech. The way these word selections, depicting how someone has spoken, is able to greatly influence the way that authors shape comprehensions of events. Machin and Mayr (2012) classified five kinds of verbs: Neutral structuring verbs, Metapropositional verbs, Metalinguistic verbs, Descriptive verbs and Transcript verbs. All of these verbs of saying can be utilised to make particular participants more authoritative or subservient, legitimate or non-legitimate. Quoting verbs is also able to guide us to consider if some participants have a negative attitude or being friendly. (such as the post about the transgender person Caitlyn Jenner in the following chapter)
Material Processes: “Material processes describe processes of doing” (Machin & Mayr, 2012: 106). They indicate that generally, these processes are actions that have a material consequence, for example ‘The doctor save the patient’. (such as the post about the transgender person Caitlyn Jenner in the following chapter)

Mental processes: Mental processes are processes of sensing. Machin and Mayr (2012) divided these processes into three categories: ‘cognition’ (thinking, knowing and comprehending verbs), ‘affection’ (liking and disliking, fearing verbs) and ‘perception’ (perceiving, hearing and feeling verbs). (such as the post about the transgender person Caitlyn Jenner in the following chapter)

Metaphor: “A metaphor is basically the means by which we understand one concept in terms of another” (Machin & Mayr, 2012: 167). Machin and Mayr (2012) indicate that metaphor is not only about language or visual communication, but also about ideas itself and the embodiment of people’s experience. Metaphor helps us understand better and be able to deal with colliding objects more easily. (such as the post about Katy Perry in the following chapter)

Representational strategies in language: According to Machin Mayr (2012), there are no neutral ways to represent a person in any language. All choices of language aim to draw attention to particular respects of identity that in relation to specific kinds of discourses. (such as the post about NBA legend Magic Johnson in the following chapter)

Functionalisation: Functionalisation is used to depict participants in terms of what they do. Use of functionalisation is able to sound more official, it can also dehumanise people to a role. Functionalisation can also imply legitimacy ((Machin & Mayr, 2012). (such as the post about NBA legend Magic Johnson in the following chapter)

Functional honorifics: The use of ‘functional honorifics’ is able to display the way people are represented. These normally involve official roles such as ‘President’, ‘Lord’, or ‘Judge’, which propose the degree of seniority or roles that require respect. In other word these emphasise the significance of a social actor (Machin & Mayr, 2012). (such as the post about two polar bears in the following chapter)

Colour: The use of colours can be striking colours, rich saturated colours or contrasts. Less salient components may have less saturated colours and vice versa (Machin & Mayr, 2012). (such as the image about Obama in the following chapter)

Tone: Machin and Mayr (2012) state that this can be the usage of brightness to draw attention. For example, advertisers always use brighter tones on products to attract customers. (such as the image about Sally Field in the following chapter)
**Size:** Size is used to illustrate ranking of significance, from the largest to the smallest (Machin & Mayr, 2012). In an image, the larger an object is, the more important it is, which is also what the image emphasises. (such as the image about Sally Field in the following chapter)

**Poses:** Barthes (as cited in Machin & Mayr, 2012:74) indicates that poses are one important area of connotation in images that can represent broader ideas, values and identities. Image creators can depend on these built meanings to frame how we will comprehend the values, ideas and behaviours of these person described. (such as the comic image in the following chapter)

**Gaze:** It is an important part of poses, gaze describes person, whether they look at the viewer, or whether they look upwards or downwards. All of which as resources direct viewers how they should assess the participant (Machin & Mayr, 2012). (such as the image about ‘Two mommies are better than one’ in the following chapter)

**Iconographical or iconological analysis:** It is used to examine how do the elements in images represent discourses that may not displayed in the beginning. Images show specific events, people, places and objects. Asking what an image means is asking: who and/or what is demonstrated? Apart from that, images are also used to connote concepts and ideas. From this perspective, asking what an image means is asking: what values and ideas are represented and how? For images creators, they concern more about the way they represent specific values or create particular ideas (Machin & Mayr, 2012). (such as the post of a screenshot in the following chapter)

**Pronouns:** “Pronouns such as ‘us’, ‘we’ and ‘them’ are used to align us or against particular ideas” (Machin & Mayr, 2012: 84). (such as the post about Youtube in the following chapter)

**Angle:** In images as well as in real life, there are various ways that we interact with people, ‘comforting them’, ‘face to face with them’ and so on. This can have many effects, ‘looking down’ gives us the impression of vulnerability and vice versa (Machin & Mayr, 2012). (such as the image about Hillary Clinton in the following chapter)

**Distance:** In both images and real life, distance illustrates social relations. In images, distance is interpreted as ‘size of frame’ including close, medium or long shot (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Different sizes represent different connotations and purposes of image creators. ((such as the image about Hillary Clinton in the following chapter)

**Anonymisation:** As Machin and Mayr (2012) illustrate, participants in texts can often remain anonymous in order to avoid specification and fostering a detailed and consistent de-
bate. It enables us to summon and dismiss arguments. (such as the personal post of person C in the following chapter)

**Hedging:** As Wood and Kroger (as cited in Machin & Mayr, 2012:192) state, Hedging is used to create a strategic ambiguity within authors’ claims. Hedging means that a speaker tries to avoid being straightforward to committed to something, this can be utilised to be detailed and precise. Hedging can also distance ourselves from what we say to decrease chances of any unpleasant reactions (Machin & Mayr, 2012). (such as the personal post of person E in the following chapter)

**Validity and Reliability**

CDA as a method has been critiqued by several authors. Widdowson (as cited in Machin & Mayr, 2012:209) criticises that it is not an analytical method but an interpretation exercise. He argues that CDA neglects alternative readings. That is to say, an analysis could always tell more about the audiences than the image itself. According to this critique, the internal reliability of this study would be affected. Mason, LeCompte and Goetz (as cited in Bryman, 2012:390) define Internal reliability as whether a research team has an agreement about what they observe and hear when observers are more than one. Since people have different perceptions about one item, and I am the only observer in this study, from another person’s perspective, the analysis and results may vary. Therefore, the internal reliability might be questioned to some extent due to the subjectiveness of CDA.

Additionally, the external validity of this study may also be influenced, since external validity is the extent to which findings can be generalised in social settings (Bryman, 2012). Referring to LeCompte and Goetz (as cited in Bryman, 2012:309), “...external validity represents a problem for qualitative researchers because of their tendency to employ case studies and small samples”. This study focuses on LGBT representations in social media, the results may not apply to it in other forms of media and it may not be generalised enough in social settings in general.
6. Analysis and Results

Open Page in Facebook - LGBT News

Links:

CDA tools: Quoting verbs, Anonymisation, Material processes, Mental processes

The post is from LGBTQ Buzz (2017a), which is a community and a page that offers updated information about LGBTQ community and it is connected to the page in Facebook. All of the links in my analysis are from LGBTQ Buzz. It is about a transgender person, Caitlyn Jenner, sharing her life two years after coming out with Diane Sawyer.

“‘I've grown into Caitlyn,’ she told Sawyer. ‘It's tough to take 65 years of being Bruce and being male, and then like, overnight, everything changes. At first you don't know how to handle it.’ But now? ‘All of that confusion has left me,’ she said. ‘I had a guy actually ... ask for a selfie and said, 'Oh Bruce, could you give me a selfie?' And I looked at him. Nobody's called me that in two years almost now, and I said, ‘No problem,’”

Caldas (as cited in Machin & Mayr, 2012:59) summarises the potential meanings of quoting different verbs that enables us to focus more exactly on the veiled assessment and implication through their usage. In the text above, ‘told’ and ‘said’ belong to the category of neutral structuring verbs, which mean they present a saying without assessing it clearly. “‘I've grown into Caitlyn,’ she told Sawyer” and “‘All of that confusion has left me,’ she said”. This does not convey any specific guidance to direct us the way we should think about this statement and about Caitlyn Jenner herself. The verb of ‘said’ and ‘told’ makes Caitlyn moderate, calm and authoritative. If the author used a different verb for example, “I had a guy actually ... ask for a selfie and said, ‘Oh Bruce, could you give me a selfie?’ And I looked at him. Nobody’s called me that in two years almost now, and I grumbled, ‘No problem’”, the verb of ‘grumbled’ makes Caitlyn appear emotional and probably angry.

However, if neutral structuring verbs are used solely, it may appear to be detached or even impersonalised. Considering representational strategies and transitivity, sometimes it might be crucial for authors to bring audiences closer or further from the feelings and ideas of specific social actors (Machin & Mayr, 2012). So if it is “But now? ‘All of that confusion has left me’ she smiled”, readers are more likely to feel the emotion of Caitlyn and more connected to the social actor than just using the verb ‘said’.

“Jenner, who claims she takes 20 to 40 selfies a day with strangers, told Sawyer. ‘I want them to walk away saying, ‘Oh Caitlyn Jenner was so nice’ .... that trans people, yes, are approachable ... and they are a vital part of our society.’”
In this example, we can see the influence of a different type of representation through another verb ‘claims’, which is described by Caldas (as cited in Machin & Mayr, 2012:59) as a ‘metapropositional expressive’. Claims are not factual but could cause debates and doubts, ‘feel’ has the similar meaning (Machin & Mayr, 2012). In this case, people may question the reliability of ‘she takes 20 to 40 selfies a day with strangers’.

“If you want to call me names, make jokes, doubt my intentions, go ahead, because the reality is I can take it,” she said. “But for the thousands of kids out there coming to terms with being true to who they are, they shouldn’t have to take it.”

In this text, the use of ‘you’ as the anonymisation of ‘people who are judgmental about LGBT individuals’ does not refer in particular to someone so that it could avoid specification or being critiqued as being too specific. And thus would facilitate a detailed and consistent debate. Which enable us to easily gather and dismiss the debate. The verbs of ‘call’, ‘make’, ‘doubt’ and ‘take’ represent the material process of others doing to Caitlyn and the mental process of how she reacts about this conduct.

This text describes an image of a calm, mild transgender person through the representational strategies in language of she representing herself, and expresses the values of ‘no discrimination’ and ‘accept who you really are’ without specifically referring to anyone. “A choice of word or visual element might suggest kinds of identities, values and activities due to established associations” (Machin & Mayr, 2012: 15). They also suggest that we shall therefore think from the perspective of power relations, since CDA seeks to reveal ideologies that are concealed within language, despite that the producer disclosing these power relations could be an important role of emancipatory.

**CDA tool: Metaphor**

The post below is about some sad information about childhood of a pop singer - Katy Perry. She shared that she was forbidden to talk to gay people when she was a child.

“She said: ‘My house was church on Sunday morning, church on Sunday night, church on Wednesday evening; you don’t celebrate Halloween; Jesus gives you your Christmas presents; we watch Bill O’Reilly on TV,’ she told Vogue. ‘That was my whole childhood and youth and early teens. I still have conditioned layers dropping off of me by the day.’ [I was not] allowed to interact with gay people [and] there is some generational racism’. ‘How was I going to reconcile that with the gospel-singing girl raised in youth groups that were pro conversion camps?’ she added. What I did know was that I was curious, and even then I knew that sexuality was not as black and white as this dress’. ‘I found my gift and my gift introduced me to people outside my bubble and my bubble started to burst,’ she said. ‘These people were nothing like I had been taught to fear. They were the most free, strong, kind
and inclusive people I have ever met’. ‘You don’t get to choose your family, but you can choose your tribe.’ I stand here as real evidence for all that no matter where you came from it is about where you are going, that real change, real evolution, and that real perception shift can happen, if we open our minds and soften our hearts’" (LGBTQ Buzz, 2017c).

This text can be interpreted from the perspective of metaphor. ‘I still have conditioned layers dropping off of me by the day’, there are no actual ‘conditioned layers’ on her body of course and they cannot literally be ‘dropping off’ of her. What we can understand here is that in this text, ‘conditioned layers’ means the rules that she has been taught by her family, which are that she was not allowed to communicate with gay people. And the ‘dropping off’ means that she has tried to get these rules away from herself. ‘I found my gift and my gift introduced me to people outside my bubble and my bubble started to burst’, in this text, ‘bubble’ stands for the rules she was taught by her family when she was a child. Also, it indicates that discrimination is always fragile, which implies that discrimination cannot stand still. With the breakdown of the rules, she has opened her mind and got to know more about gay people and therefore has a better comprehension of the world.

Another similar instance is ‘and even then I knew that sexuality was not as black and white as this dress’. This information vividly visualises Katy Perry’s attitude towards gay people. ‘black and white’ indicates ‘wrong and right’, therefore this sentence expresses the thought that the world is not just about wrong or right, sexuality has nothing to do with wrong or right, but is a matter of choice. Metaphor is a good way to express opinions, and it is generally persuasive and powerful. Since “what is important here is to grasp that metaphor is an everyday part of language and an important way of how we grasp reality” (Machin & Mayr, 2012:164). The accepted metaphors could be of great importance to ideology, they cannot only affect the way we think about and interpret the world, but also influence our behaviors (ibid). This text uses metaphor to display how Katy Perry described her childhood and her interpretation of herself, gay people and the world.

CDA tools: Representational strategies in language, Functionalisation, Functional Honorifics

In terms of representational strategies in language, there are various classifications of social actors. Here is another link from the open page, which is about an important message of a NBA star - Magic Johnson to parents whose kids are LGBT:

“NBA legend Magic Johnson was Ellen’s guest and he opened up about having a gay son. His son, EJ Johnson, came out publicly in 2013. ‘It’s all about you not trying to decide what your daughter or son should be or what you want them to become,’ Johnson says. ‘It’s all about loving them no matter who they are, what they decide to do. And when my son came out, I was so happy for him and happy for us as parents and we love him, and EJ is amaz-
In this text, Magic Johnson is individualised as ‘NBA legend’, which brings readers closer to him, it could draw more attention and then may influence the society to some extent regarding to the issue of LGBT individuals. Instead, if it is ‘a basketball player was Ellen’s guest and…’, a basketball player is simply a form of occupation, it is not particular enough to draw people’s attention and initiate ponder of audiences. ‘It’s all about you not trying to decide what your daughter or son should be or what you want them to become...And when my son came out, I was so happy for him and happy for us as parents and we love him, and EJ is amazing’. This information enables us to feel for Magic Johnson especially for those who have been through the same situation.

As a father, the way he reacted when his kid comes out, and as a LGBT kid, the reaction of his/her parents when he/she comes out. It could resonate with readers who are in a similar situation as well as be an example for those who have experienced the totally opposite situation. This can also be interpreted from the perspective of functionalisation. “... functionalised by being depicted in terms of what they do” (Machin & Mayr, 2012:81). ‘a basketball player’ is partly dehumanised by referring to him with functionalisation, which only emphasises his role. Usage of ‘NBA legend’ sounds more official, whereas ‘A basketball player’ sounds more personal. Also, ‘NBA legend’ as a usage of ‘functional honorifics’ addresses the importance of the specialisation, it makes Magic Johnson and his attitude towards LGBT more important. As being named as ‘NBA legend’, Magic Johnson is further personalised so that audiences would interpret differently.

CDA tool: Functional Honorifics

“Szenja, 21, and Snowflake, 22 lived together for 20 years. They were separated so that Snowflake could mate with male polar bears. But after the separation, Szenja displayed all the symptoms of separation anxiety and depression. Szenja died soon after. PETA Vice President Tracy Remain said: ‘After losing her companion of 20 years when SeaWorld shipped Snowflake to the Pittsburgh Zoo in order to breed more miserable polar bears, Szenja did what anyone would do when they lose all hope, she gave up,’ In a statement, SeaWorld’s vice president of zoological operations, Al Garver said: ‘Szenja not only touched the hearts of those who have cared for her over the last two decades, but also the millions of guests who had a chance to see her in person. ‘We’re proud to have been a part of her life and to know that she inspired people from around the world to want to protect polar bears in the wild,’ he said” (LGBTQ Buzz, 2017d).
This post is quite different from others since it is about a polar bear which died with a broken heart after she was separated from her same-sex partner who has been living with her for 20 years. The text uses functional honorifics to represent the information that the ‘PETA Vice President’ and ‘SeaWorld’s vice president of zoological operations’ have enhanced the importance of the statement about the polar bears, which indicates that we should respect sexuality even if they are animals. Also, homosexuality does exist not only among human beings, but also animals, it is not a sickness but an instinct. Additionally it promotes the awareness of protecting animals. This post does not direct depict a story about LGBT as the previous ones, instead it utilises an example of polar bears. Here, audiences can see the similarity of love between animals and human beings so that this kind of information enables people to think about sexuality and even the environment.

Images:

Apart from links that are shared on the Facebook page, there are many posts of pictures about LGBT.

CDA tool: Colour

This picture (LGBT News, 2017a) is Obama smiling in front of a rainbow background and on the bottom of the picture there is a quotation from him - “No one in America should ever be afraid to walk down the street holding hands with the person they love”. The quotation is in capital letters and text of ‘with the person they love’ is made bold. And ‘the advocate’ is in the upper left corner.

According to the semiotic theory of Roland Barthes (as cited in Machin & Mayr, 2012:49), on the one hand, images can be used to document, which means they demonstrate specific events, individuals, places and things. In the terminology of semiotic, they denote. So the question of ‘what does an image denote ‘means ‘who and/or what is described’. This image denotes Obama as the advocate for LGBT individuals and his attitude towards LGBT people. Not only the equations but also his smile indicate that he supports and respects LGBT individuals. Other images still describe specific individuals, places, incidents and things, however the ‘denotation’ is not the main purpose. Instead, they use the depiction of specific individuals, places, incidents and things to connote concepts and thoughts. Thus, in this case, question of ‘what an image connotes’ means ‘what values and opinions are conveyed through the representation, and how does it represent’.

This image can also be interpreted from the perspective of salience, according to Machin and Mayr (2012), salience is when particular characteristics in content are emphasised. Colour is one of the ways to achieve salience in images. In this image, without the rainbow background,
the image would look monotonous and even with the quotation from Obama, it would not be eye-catching and impressive enough. Here the use of the rainbow background highlights the values of equality and human rights.

**CDA tools: Tone, Colour, Size**

Similarly, this image uses public figure as well, with a quotation from an America actress and director - Sally Field: “There are so many children who struggle to understand and embrace their sexuality in families who do not welcome them, with parents that somehow find it acceptable to shut them out their hearts and their homes. - and that I find unacceptable”. The last sentence is bold and marked yellow, the picture of Sally is black-and-white and she is smiling. (LGBT News, 2017b)

The tone of this image is not as bright as the last one in general, but with the contrast of the colours (black-and-white versus yellow) makes the image catchy and the bold sentence claims and emphasises Sally’s attitude, that parents should accept who their children really despite of their sexuality. From the perspective of size, according to Machin and Mayr (2012), size can be utilised to rank the importance. In this image, the picture of Sally is relatively bigger than the texts, audiences especially LGBT people would feel support through her smile. We can see that Sally looks at the viewer.

On the one hand, the viewer is acknowledged, on the other hand, it is a ‘demand image’ referring to Kress and van Leeuwen (as cited in Machin & Mayr, 2012:71), which means it requires some sort of response from the viewer. Such as support or share the values to others. On the other hand, if she does not look at the viewer for example, just a profile of Sally without smiling, then the influence would be different, under which circumstances, there is no requirement or reaction from the viewer. Additionally, it may even seem that Sally is angry. It can also be interpreted as she is looking off the frame, and when that happens, the viewer may imagine what she is thinking.

**CDA tool: Poses**

This image uses a comic format to express the advocation for legislation of same-sex marriage. The two parts are quite similar except for the background colour, figures and texts. The poses of the child are different, one with two dads or moms is happier than the other, we can see from the gesture of the kids. According to Barthes (as cited in Machin & Mayr, 2012:74), “poses are one important realm
of connotation in images that are able to signify broader values, ideas and identities”. The producers of image thus can use these generated meanings to frame the way audiences interpret the thoughts, values and conducts of these described objects. (LGBT News, 2017c)

However, this image contains flaws, as it only shows the legislation of gay and lesbian marriage but overlooks other potentials such as transgenders. This may lead to critiques that this image is not comprehensive enough due to its lack of other potential possibilities. In terms of transgenders, the figure of parents could be one person with the body of half-woman half-man. Also, the two sections in this image are a bit contradictory. In the upper image, it says ‘two dads are better than none’, but ‘two moms are better than none’ in the lower one. It would cause the inquiry that whether it is better to have two dads rather than two moms, in this case it may result in gender debates. However, all in all, this comic indicates the values that marriage is not the matter of sex or sexuality, but about love. And for kids, it does not matter if they have a dad and a mom, two dads, two moms or a transgender dad or mom, as long as the two person love each other then it is good for the child.

**CDA tools: Size), Iconographical or Iconological Analysis**

This image is a screenshot of a post posted by Jodie. In the picture, there is a pregnant woman with a sentence in capital letters on her belly - ‘I don’t care if (s)hes gay’ and with a post of ‘This is how i’ve chosen to celebrate gay pride today! I will love my child unconditionally no matter how they identify themselves’, and a smily emoji (LGBT News, 2017d). This picture does not show the sexuality of Jodie, she could be lesbian, bisexual, transgender or even heterosexual. The point is to indicate her attitude toward different sexualities. Compared to the picture of Sally, they are overlapped to some extent since both pictures express the thought that parents should accept their children no matter what is their sexuality. The difference is their perspective. In this picture, it expresses subjectively Jodie as a mom who demonstrates that she will support her child in spite of his or her sexuality.

In the other one, Sally as an outsider expresses her attitudes about sexuality in order to persuade parents to respect their children no matter who they are. Also, this image could be understood from the perspective of size. As I mentioned above, what is important in an image is size. The body of Jodie forms the majority of this image, it is more persuasive than only with text ‘I don’t care if (s)hes gay’, or an image of Jodie with her child. And the pose of judie’s hands not only indicates she advocates equality of sexuality, but also shows her protectiveness as a mother.
The private group

Links:

CDA tools: Quoting verbs, Pronouns

The post is also an article from LGBTQ Buzz as in the open page. It is a piece of news about Youtube does not block LGBT content anymore.

“In a statement released on Friday, YouTube said: ‘[W]e fixed an issue that was incorrectly filtering videos’. ‘We want to clarify that Restricted Mode should not filter out content belonging to individuals or groups based on certain attributes like gender, gender identity, political viewpoints, race, religion or sexual orientation. ‘Now 12 million additional videos of all types — including hundreds of thousands featuring LGBTQ+ content — are available in Restricted Mode,’ the statement clarified. ‘Starting today, we’re providing a form to allow creators and viewers alike to give us feedback about this. ‘We will use this input to help improve our automated system going forward’ ”(LGBTQ Buzz, 2017e).

We can interpret this text by quoting verbs. In the beginning, a neutral structuring verb ‘said’ is being used. As mentioned above, this kind of verb presents a saying without assessing it clearly, it only states the truth and without any specific instructions for the viewers to think about it. However, it is important to note that in this text, ‘clarify’ is used twice. ‘Clarify’ as an assertive metapropositional verb, demonstrates the comprehension of the author of a speaker (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

The first ‘clarify’ demonstrates the positive attitude of Youtube towards LGBTQ and we can thus interpret that they admit their mistake in applying the Restricted Mode to filter out ‘content belonging to individuals or groups based on certain attributes like gender, gender identity, political viewpoints, race, religion or sexual orientation’, and now the problem has been fixed so that there comes the second ‘clarify’. ‘Now 12 million additional videos of all types — including hundreds of thousands featuring LGBTQ+ content — are available in Restricted Mode,’ the statement clarified. The usage of this ‘clarified’ emphasises the result of modification and reinforces the positive and supportive attitude of Youtube towards LGBTQ. This effect cannot be accomplished by using the verb ‘said’.

We can also comprehend this text from the pronoun point of view. As Oktar, Eriksson and Aronsson (as cited in Machin & Mayr, 2012:84) state, “Pronouns like ‘us’, ‘we’ and ‘them’ are used to align us alongside or against particular ideas. Text producers can evoke their own ideas as being our ideas and create a collective ‘other’ that is in opposition to these shared ideas”. In this text, ‘we’ not only refers Youtube as a group (its stuff, company etc), but also aligns Youtube alongside LGBTQ individuals. ‘we fixed the issue’ and ‘we want to clarify’ indicate that Youtube has revised the attitude towards LGBTQ, ‘we’re providing ... We will
The last few sentences in this text can be comprehended that Youtube is willing to be part of LGBTQ community and continually support and share the values of non-discrimination, tolerance, equality and so on.

**Images:**

In order to keep the users anonymous, the users who posted these images in the group will be named as Person A and Person B.

**CDA tool: Gaze**

This image (Person A, April, 2017) expresses similar meaning as the comic one in open page. It advocates legislation of same-sex marriage. It visualises the thoughts of ‘same-sex marriage is as happy as general marriage’ through the two women’s smile and a calm sleeping baby. We can interpret from a gaze point of view, in this image, non of these objects look at the viewer. This kind of image is named by Kress and van Leeuwen (as cited in Machin & Mayr, 2012:71) as ‘offer image’, where there is no requirement made on the viewer and no reaction is expected.

In this case, the viewer is provided the image as an accessible message for consideration and examination. The ‘off-frame’ look encourages us to observe them more ‘objectively’ and imagine what they are thinking. We can see that they look just as happy as a ‘normal’ family. Which can also be shown through their poses, a woman is hugging them and another is hugging both the women and the baby. The closeness and relaxation that suggested in the image demonstrate the sense of protection and safe, so that the baby can sleep calmly and peacefully.

However, the sentence in this image ‘Two mommies are better than one’ could cause ambiguity. Although it is for Lesbian Pride, it does not mean two mommies are better than one. There are still many happy kids with one mom and one dad or just one mom, the way of expressing is a bit extreme. As with the comic in the open page, ‘two dads and better than none’ and ‘two moms are better than none’. It overlooks the reasonability of heterosexual marriages and other forms of families, such as two transgender people or one of them is transgender and so on. Therefore, choice of language is of great importance in this situation. As Machin and Mayr (2012) indicate, it is important to use particular types of language in specific social contact due to social pressures, in so doing could avoid criticisms to some extent.
CDA tools: Angle, Distance, Pronouns

This image (Person B, April, 2017) quotes from the US politician Hillary Clinton: “Gay people are born and belong to every society in the world. They are all ages, all races, all faiths. They are doctors and teachers, farmers and bankers, soldiers and athletes. And whether we know it, or whether we acknowledge it, they are our family, our friends, and our neighbours. Being gay is not a western invention, it is a human reality”, also with a smiling close-up and side-on picture of Clinton.

From the perspective of angle, according to Machin and Mayr (2012), this can be interpreted as a position of close alignment and sharedness. So that we are able to align with her thoughts. Apart from angle, we can also analysis from another representational strategy in visual communication - distance. “In images, distance translates as ‘size of frame’ (close, medium or long shot)” (Machin & Mayr, 2012:97). The close shot in this image takes us close to Clinton and to her thoughts and feelings.

Additionally, the foreground of the image is brighter than the background, in order to draw attention to the eye. Although there are pronouns ‘we’ and ‘they’, unlike the text of Youtube, Clinton identifies herself as an outsider to the gay community. The term of ‘we’ means non-gay people and she is part of it. This image displays the positive and supportive attitude of non-gay people towards gay people, and advocates the values of non-discrimination and respectiveness.

Personal Statements:

Besides shared links and images, there is another form of representing the self in the private group, I name it ‘personal statement’ for that these kind of posts are about users as the identity of LGBT, such as their feelings, their personal experiences, live broadcast and even selfies for partner-wanted notice. However, in order to remain users anonymous only the texts are chosen to be analysed, and the users will be named as Person C,D,E,F.

CDA tools: Quoting verbs, Anonymisation

“I hate when people say "aren't you too young to be saying your bisexual you don't even know yet" I know what I am and I hated myself for it at one point, but I’m going to come to accept it” (Person C, April, 2017).

This text shows a strong sense of anger because of the usage of the expressive metapropositional verb ‘hate’. It illustrates some people’s ignorance about sexuality and the user’s con-
firming self-identification. There is also an anonymisation used in this text, ‘people’ does not particularly specify anyone, such representation could avoid specification and thus generating a thorough and consistent debate which enables us to eligibly discuss and dismiss. Similarly there is another post also uses the expressive metapropositional verb ‘hate’:

“Yes I am a lesbian! If you hate that so much why get on my live stream and try to change me or ask why I am a lesbian! That angered me a lot!” (Person D, April, 2017)

We can also see anger in this text through the verb ‘hate’ and ‘angered’, it would be fairly different if ‘hate’ is changed into ‘dislike’, or ‘that angered’ me a lot changed into ‘that pissed me off a lot’.

**CDA tool: Hedging**

“The things we go through as being LGBTQ’S make us one hell of a strong person and nobody can take that away from us. So smile and carry on!” (Person E, April, 2017)

In this text the user uses hedging to generate a vague claim. ‘The things’ means the bad experience of being LGBTQ such as being discriminated, disrespected or treated unequally. Hedging, according to Machin and Mayr (2012), means that an author prevents immediacy or promises to something. Hedging can be utilised to align ourselves against what we say and to seek to reduce the pressure of our declaration and thus decrease the possibility of any unpleasant reactions. The usage of ‘the things’ distances the user and other LGBTQ from the commitment of the fact that they do go through a lot of passive things and that makes them stronger.

**CDA tools: Anonymisation, Pronouns**

“No One is targeted at all when say this....Some Gay people do things that make us Gay people look bad which sucks cause some of us have straight friends that we respect their space and dignity of who they are and I have a lot of straight guys and lots of girls more than I have gay friends shit I’m in a loving relationship with Man that speaks like me in a way when comes to this type of topic. We all have hearts we breathe the same air that is bad and shit we drink get the green live from the pipe and enjoy the life we have has it crumbles around us. Stay strong be brave” (Person, F, April, 2017).

This text does not point out directly who are the ‘some gay people’ and what the ‘things’ are either. And the ‘us’ on one hand aligns the user with gay people, the user identifies himself as part of gay community. On the other hand, it aligns the user against ‘some gay people’, which means those who do things that make gay people look bad.
Summary of the Posts

The posts about Caitlyn and NBA legend Magic Johnson versus polar bears have different objects, one are human beings and another are animals. Jones and Holmes (2011) indicate that for communication procedure model, the nature of identity is comparatively untheorized. When this model segregates information from the way it is carried (human, animal or machine), the position of sender and receiver is largely irrelevant. Here, Magic Johnson is not only identified as a public figure but also a father like ordinary people; the two polar bears are identified as a couple, and particularly, “Szenja did what anyone would do when they lose all hope, she gave up”, Szenja is characterised with human features. The ‘second self’ identity draws more attention of audiences and which also makes the texts more powerful. The power comes from the influence of the representation, that is to increase parents’ awareness of accepting their children for who they really are, understanding and respecting sexuality and protect animals.

Youtube as one of the ‘new media’ platforms, has become increasingly important in media representations and communication. As I stated before, power can be conducted in communication. Youtube as an accessible resource enables people to perform power, their aims and interests could therefore be accomplished efficiently. The unblock of LGBTQ content in Youtube would facilitate LGBTQ movements since media representation is close related to power. The more content about LGBTQ appear in Youtube, the more positive and supportive attitudes towards LGBTQ would be disseminated promoted, therefore LGBTQ movements could be accelerated. “Power relations are encoded in media representations, and media representations in turn produce and reproduce power relations by constructing knowledge, values, conceptions and beliefs” (Orgad, 2012:25). Under which circumstances, the unblocking of LGBTQ content in Youtube would have great impact on individuals and society as whole.

Images are indispensable among all of the posts. The analysis of images - iconographical or iconological analysis means we examine how do the individual components in images (objects, settings etc) represent discourses that may not be noticeable from the beginning. Importantly, in visual communication, semiotic resources such as images are utilised to represent things that might be more difficult to communicate through language, since images are not likely to have fixed meaning or the producer at least can proclaim that it is more evocative and open to different comprehensions. Since visual communication is more open to comprehension, it enables the author to apply some practice that cannot be conducted through usage of language. (Machin & Mayr, 2012). The expression of images is more intuitive and implicit. For those which use public figures as objects, images can generally be more powerful since all representations are essentially and inseparably connected to power (Orgad, 2012).
This kind of power referred to by Thompson (1995) is cultural or symbolic power, which originates from the conduct of producing, transferring and receiving significant symbolic modus. Individuals are always involved in the conduct of representing themselves in symbolic modes and in comprehending the representation of others. They are always engaged in interacting with others and exchanging ideas and symbolic content. The reason why symbolic power is important is that it is the main way in which the conduct of others can be framed through shift of beliefs, values and thoughts. Hall (as cited in Thompson, 1995:6) states that as liberal-pluralist society mould, power was initially the capability of ‘A to affect B to make decision X’ and therefore, it focused on the influence of media upon change of behaviors. Hall also argued that it eventually facilitated a functionalist mould of society that

“The media were held to be largely reflective or expressive of an achieved consensus. The finding that, after all, the media were not very influential was predicated upon the belief that, in its wider cultural sense, the media largely reinforced those values and norms which had already received a wider consensual foundation”.

Users utilise images to represent themselves, as Orgad (2012) states, self-representation enables previously unseen and unheard individuals to be visible and claim a voice. Users claim their voice of equality and respect by posting images and texts and through which LGBT social movements could be boosted. Additionally, personal statements in the private group have also spread values of equality and non-discrimination by sharing personal experiences and feelings with one another. Through all the representations on Facebook, the values of acceptance and tolerance would be reinforced and promoted.

Results of Analysis

Analysis of the private group addresses the first research question of this study - How do LGBT individuals represent themselves as part of sexual minority in the private group on Facebook? Analysis of the open page is the answer of the second question - What kinds of content are shared on the open page on Facebook? According to what I have analysed above, we can see that there are similarities of LGBT representations between the open page and the private group. Both of them contain links and images, and the content is about spreading values of non-discrimination, equality and respect. Additionally, most of the images involve quotations of public figures for that the influence of what they say are more powerful and authoritative. However, compared to the open page, an additional form of self-representations - “personal statement” is contained in the private group, which is about their personal life including their personal experience, opinions and so on. Last but not least, the open page appears to be a relatively neutral platform to spread information about LGBT while the private group tends to involve more personal negative emotions.
7. Conclusion

As the final chapter, the conclusion of this study will be presented. Including answers of all the three research questions and findings that are connected to theoretical frame and concept (mainly include media representations and power, self-representations in social media and identity). In the end, suggestions for future research will be briefly demonstrated.

Answers to Research Questions:

According to the analysis and results, answers to the three research questions are presented as below:

1. How do LGBT individuals represent themselves as part of sexual minority in the private group on Facebook?

In the private group, posts about personal life of LGBT individuals were presented including personal experiences, opinions and feelings. Some even used selfies and live-broadcasting to interact with each other. Additionally, images which advocate LGBT rights as well as news about LGBT (such as the post about Youtube) were also shared in the group. Thus, the representations of the LGBT individuals is highly personalised while at the same time being connected to the broader political issues of LGBT rights.

2. What kinds of content are shared on the open page on Facebook?

On the open page, it is mostly the page creator who shared information about LGBT rights. The posts were mainly from a website called ‘LGBT Buzz’. Those posts were basically news about LGBT rights, and most of them contained public figures (such as Obama and Katy Perry).

3. What are the similarities and differences of the representations in the private group and the open page on Facebook?

There are similarities of the representations between the private group and the open page. First of all, both of them contain links and images and most of the posts involved public figures. Secondly, the posts all advocated LGBT rights and spread values of non-discrimination, equality and respect. It is important to note that among the images shared on Facebook, some of them seem to be too extreme for instance the “two mommies are better than one” over emphasises same-sex marriages but neglects other forms marriages.

Several differences could be seen. Firstly, compared to the open page, there is an additional form of representation - personal statement showed in the private group, which is about their personal life (personal experience, feelings and so on). Moreover, compared to the open page,
users tend to expose more personal emotions in the private group even some of them were
negative. Whereas the open page seems to be relatively neutral, posts on the page appears to
neutrally describe a phenomenon or news without much personal emotions involved.

**Findings of Analysis**

The analysis shows that media representation and discourse affect the construction of peo-
ple’s imaginations, self-identities, self-depictions and subjectivities as well as non-mediated
symbolic resources such as the stories of family and friends or even themselves. The stories
and images on the Internet contains significant symbolic materials that people rely on to in-
terpret their lives and the world (Orgad, 2012). The reason why public figures were used in
the posts and images to advocate LGBT rights is because of the close relation between media
representation and power (Orgad, 2012). According to Castells (as cited in Fuchs, 2014:73),
power is “the relational capacity that enables a social actor to influence asymmetrically the
decisions of other social actor(s) in ways that favor the empowered actor’s will, interests, and
values”.

Giddens (as cited in Fuchs, 2014:73) views power differently. He claims that power is not al-
ways associated with oppression, violence and asymmetry. It is possible to imagine and an-
alyse conditions and social systems where power can be more symmetrically expressed.
Thompson (1995) identifies media power as symbolic power or cultural power, Fuchs (2014)
defines it as “definition of moral values and meaning that shape what is considered as impor-
tant, reputable and worthy in society” (Fuchs, 2014:79). Fuchs (2014) also claims that the
power of cultural media concentrates on content about corporations with high prestige,
celebrities and others who are highly reputed. People tend to pay more attention to what
celebrities say and do. The words and conducts of them would therefore be more powerful
and authoritative. Thus, LGBT rights and movements could be facilitated and promoted by
participation of public figures.

The self-representations of LGBT on Facebook can be understood as a process of identity
formation. Fuchs (2014) describes Facebook as the most prevalent social networking site
(SNS). SNSs are platforms that are based on the web that synthesise various media,
information and communication techniques. Van Dijk (2013) indicates that social media are
not a neutral stage of self-representation, but are spaces for identity formation. Platforms like
Facebook have facilitated the art and knowledge of ‘mass self-communication’ to a new
standard. Its interface tempts users to publish information about themselves intentionally
and unintentionally. And it is generally acknowledged that people expose their daily lives as
performance by purposely using the diversity of both private and public discursive conducts
to construct their identity. Every formation of self suggests a particular strategy to conduct a
social behavior or to accomplish a specific social aim. Values of equality, non-discrimination and respect are promoted through LGBT representations on Facebook.

However, there are researchers that have raised critical remarks regarding the users’ privacy on Facebook (Fuchs, 2014:162). They claim that privacy threatened by Facebook due to its over exposure of personal information and that can become the object of harassment and criminal activity. This I argue, can be seen as one reason why the representations of LGBT are different in the open page and the private group. Compared to the open page, the private group is an easier setting to construct identity since LGBT individuals are more likely to present their personal life to claim their identities as LGBT due to the similar experiences and values of the group members. Apart from that, roles against non-discrimination and disrespect in it makes LGBT individuals feel more comfortable and safer so that they are able to share more of their personal emotions. On the open page, the information posted by users aims to achieve the purpose of spreading positive attitudes towards LGBT. Compared to the previous one, content on the open page is more general and without particular personal emotions, which makes the open page a natural platform of circulation of LGBT information.

To conclude, this study explores representations of LGBT individuals in a relatively non-anonymous online setting - Facebook, including self-representations, content sharing on Facebook and the similarities as well as differences of the representations in different settings (private group and open page). These self-representations can also be interpreted as identity construction practices in a non-anonymous online environment. The purpose is to fill the gap of knowledge about self-representations of sexual minorities in non-anonymous online environments and how people perform differently within and out of private settings. Furthermore, the analysis may vary due to the selection of criterias especially in the private group, since not all of the posts meaningful enough to be analysed from an academic perspective.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

Regarding the topic of LGBT, issues about equality, respect or non-discrimination may not only concern LGBT, but can also be seen as a boarder issue concerning other minority groups. For example, some LGBT individuals may discriminate people from other aspects such as culture, religion, nationality and so on. In this case, instead of only focusing on attitudes of LGBT people towards their rights. More studies about the ethics of LGBT individuals could be taken into consideration in future research, for instance the way LGBT individuals consider refugees.
References

Primary Sources:


LGBT News (2017b, April 21). She is so right. [Facebook update]. Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/NEWSLGBT/?fref=ts


Secondary Sources:


