

**Research Assessment Exercise 2020**  
**Impact Case Study**

**University: The Chinese University of Hong Kong**  
**Unit of Assessment (UoA): 37**

**Title of case study: Capacity Building Support Towards the Realization of LGBT Equality**

**1. Summary of the impact (100 words)**

Gender equality is not well recognized in Chinese speaking societies. Christianity is an influential factor accountable for this, particularly in the context of Hong Kong. Kung's research supports civic engagement by reviewing Christian rights discourse (Taiwan). It also contributes to the emergence of conscientized Christian communities (Amoy CTK Fellowship in China), introduces a narrative ethics as a self-reflective tool for personal transformation and as a skill for counseling, and enhances a spirit of dialogue (Covenant of Rainbow). Kung's impact on gender equality is recognized by the LGBT community, the Government, and is also appreciated by pro-family Christian activists.

**2. Underpinning research (500 words)**

Lap Yan Kung is a leading theologian in Hong Kong who specializes in gender equality issues. He argues that Christianity is committed to promoting human wellbeing and fairness, and should thus embrace the idea of gender equality. Challenging Christianity's conventional thought on sex and gender issues, Kung develops a narrative approach in doing Christian ethics. He re-frames Christian teachings on human sexuality in a more gendered-based context. Interestingly, his gendered-based re-reading of Christian traditions and teachings underscores the cultural and political aspects of the LGBT movement, and promotes a spirituality of dialogue.

Unlike normative ethics, narrative ethics does not start from a deontological and teleological concern. It begins from an attentive listening of personal narrative and its interaction with other narratives, such as the family and social stories. From there it raises an ethical question, "what I want to be" instead of "what I should do". (3.4) In this reading, LGBT voices derived from their embodied experiences should be the primary source for doing Christian ethics, and should not be subjected to "conservative" Christian doctrines. (3.2, 3.6) Kung's approach has been criticized as being too individualistic, liberal and weak in terms of biblical foundation. However, these criticisms are an attempt to maintain so-called orthodoxy at the cost of individual experiences.

Kung introduces the idea of the American religious right as a working concept in the LGBT debate in Hong Kong, and provides a reading and a substantial analysis of it in the context of Hong Kong. In this reading, the LGBT issue is not simply a moral issue, but also a political, social and economic issue. It is multi-faceted, as it is seen as a collaboration between the government and the anti-LGBT churches who wish to defend political conservatism and economic liberalism in Hong Kong. This same collaboration aims to reject cultural pluralism as an additional or alternative narrative. (3.3) Kung challenges this alliance of conservative powers in society which aim to maintain the present Christian and political hegemonies.

Kung utilizes dialogue instead of debate, as dialogue allows for the possibility of listening and understanding. The LGBT issue is not simply about who wins the argument, but about learning to respectfully engage in a rational discourse, and to see apparent rivals in the issue as human beings to be respected and listened to. This is different from a pseudo toleration characterized by an attitude of self-righteousness and the language of condemnation and monologue (3.1). The ethics and spirituality of dialogue cultivates the culture of respect and listening. In their book, *The Cross of Homosexuality* (3.5), Kung and co-author, P. C. Lo, hold two differing views on homosexuality. However, they illustrate how and what an authentic dialogue and co-existence could be like.

Considering the context of the issue and the scarcity of theological materials in Chinese, Kung intentionally utilizes the Chinese language in his publications in order to make his works more accessible to, and understandable by Chinese readers. This would better facilitate discussion within Chinese speaking people and societies respectively.

### 3. References to the research (max. 6 references)

3.1 Kung, L. Y. "Sexual Orientation Legislation and an Ethic of Toleration." K. W. Too ed. *The Challenge of Sexual Orientation Legislation to the Hong Kong Christian Community*. Hong Kong, Cultural and Religious Studies Department, CUHK, 2006. (Chinese)

3.2 Kung, L. Y. *An Abnormal Faith: Body, Politics and Theology*. Hong Kong, FES, 2008. (The runner up of the Christopher Tang Christian Literature Award 2009 (Theology Stream)). (Chinese)

3.3 Kung, L. Y. and W. S. Lo ed. *Religious Right*. Hong Kong, Hong Kong Christian Institute and Dirty Press, 2010. (Chinese)

3.4 Kung, L. Y. *Beyond Ideas of Right and Wrong: Toward a Christian Moral Imagination*. Hong Kong, Logos, 2010. (Chinese)

3.5 Kung, L. Y. and P. C. Lo. *The Cross of the Homosexuals: a Dialogue Between Two Christian Ethicists*. Hong Kong, InPress Books; Hong Kong Christian Institute, 2013. (The runner up of the Christopher Tang Christian Literature Award 2014 (Theology Stream)). (Chinese)

3.6 Kung, L. Y. "Christian Ethics and Homosexual Behaviour." In Y. E. Cheng, ed. *We Should not be Afraid: An Encounter Between Christianity and Homosexuals*. Taipei, Hesed, 2019. Pp. 121-154. (Chinese)

### 4. Details of the impact (750 words)

#### Supporting the Conscientized Formation of LGBT Friendly Churches and Advocacy Groups

Kung's works are influencing LGBT friendly churches in Hong Kong, Mainland China, and Taiwan. Pastor Joseph Yang of the Amoy CTK Fellowship (one of the earliest LGBT Christian Fellowships in China) said, "Kung's works have provided me with a substantial theological foundation of that a gay church is a true church of Christ." (5.1). Other Christian leaders of the LGBT friendly churches in Hong Kong who have made similar remarks about Kung's theological influence during their respective interviews are Rev. Grace Bok of the Church of One Body in Christ, Pastor Anthony Man of Pure Nard Church and Nocus Yung, a young layperson, of 707 New Territories.

Notably, Kung's theological thoughts served as a framework for the shaping and direction of a Christian movement that promotes an inclusive church relative to gender justice, called the Covenant of the Rainbow (CR), which is also one of the founders of PinkDot HK. Kung is an expert advisor for CR. Davy Wong, as one of the initiators, comments, "Kung's works equip us to adopt a non-aggressive attitude to non-inclusive churches and create an inclusive community." (5.2)

### **Personal Transformation and Job Enhancement**

Kung's narrative ethics (NE) is particularly credited with accounting for paradigm and attitudinal shifts of certain church leaders. Pearl Wong, the director of Queer Theology Academy, said, "Kung's NE inspired me to go through a personal transformation, from self-denial to self-acceptance, from dualism to co-existence." (5.3) Eric Sin comments, "NE takes the lived experiences of this people seriously, without passing judgments or being judgmental. This helps my ministry with male and transgender sex workers (Midnight Blue)." (5.4) Anthony Man and Grace Bok, both recognize that NE is useful for their pastoral caring. Jessica Tso admits, "Kung's idea of life as celebration, as articulated in his book, *An Abnormal Faith*, not only inspires me to initiate a project against sexual harassment in church contexts, but also sustains me in facing setbacks of the project." (5.5)

### **Aware and Critical of Religious Right**

Kung's contextual reading of the religious right has stirred up heated debate in Hong Kong. The anti-LGBT camp published a book in response to Kung's position. (5.6) The issue is not simply an academic debate, as it also affects how advocacy for gender equality in Hong Kong is advanced generally.

Wenshan Chan, lecturer of Taiwan Yushan Theological Seminary, highly appreciates Kung's work on the religious right. Kung's works offers them a better understanding of the anti-LGBT movement in Taiwan, and a critical review of 'Faith and Hope League', a Christian political party founded in Taiwan in 2015. Chen acknowledges that she is inspired by Kung's work to launch a movement, namely, A Forum for Defending Democracy. (5.7)

### **Enhancing Mutual Understanding and Dialogue**

In their respective interviews, several church leaders give affirmative testimonies about the pivotal role Kung's work plays in their attempt to engage in the 'spirituality of dialogue' with people who hold negative views on LGBT related issues: Joanne Leung, Nocus Yung, Rev. Sihao Chen (minister of Guting Presbyterian Church, Taiwan) and Yang-en Cheng (professor of Taiwan Theological Seminary). Ka-wo Au-Yeung, program director of the Society for Truth and Light, a very active pro-family Christian group recognizes, "Kung's work is very important for conservative Christians, as it helps us to be more open to explore gender and sexuality issues. Even though I do not fully agree with his works, his works bring us new challenges." (5.8)

### **Being an Expert Advisor**

Kung is one of the very few scholars writing in Chinese on issues of gender equality and theology. He is recognized as an expert in this area. For instance, he was appointed as a member of the government advisory group on eliminating discrimination against sexual minorities between 2013 and 2015. (5.9) He was/is frequently invited to give speeches on gender equality, e.g. for the Domestic Violence Ordinance (2009), gender recognition legislation (2018), and churches' sexual harassment policies (2018).

Rev. Phyllis Wong of Kowloon Union Church admits that Kung's works have provided her church with a sound theological background to make a resolution on offering a blessing ceremony to same-sex couples. Since 2015, she has conducted a few same-sex blessing ceremonies in the church (5.10). Joanne Leung, the Chairperson of Transgender Resource Centre, in an interview on January 26, 2019 states that the first Chinese transgender reading manual, *Gossip Boys and Girls* (2015), published by her Centre is inspired by Kung's *Beyond Ideas of Right and Wrong*.

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (max. 10 references)

5.1 Interviewed on January 23, 2019. See Appendix 1 of the interview record.

5.2 Interviewed on April 6, 2019. See Appendix 2 of the interview record. The work of the Covenant of the Rainbow can be found in the following links:

<http://qtacademy.com/qtj3/index.php/zh/resources/articles/111-collection-second-anniversary-covenant-of-the-rainbow-zh-tw/107-2015-05-18-23-57-25> (accessed on July 1, 2019);

<http://sze.hkci.org.hk/33.html> (accessed on July 1, 2019);

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aBcgSQVOBdg> (accessed on July 1, 2019).

5.3 Interviewed on January 3, 2019. See Appendix 3 of the interview record. The work of Queer Theology Academy can be found in the following link: <http://qtacademy.com/qtj3/index.php/zh/> (accessed on July 1, 2019)

5.4 Eric Sin is the Coordinator of the Midnight Blue. Interviewed on January 15, 2019. See Appendix 4 of the interview record.

5.5 Jessica Tso is the project officer of the Gender Justice Project of the Hong Kong Christian Council. Interviewed on January 15, 2019. See Appendix 5 of the interview record. The work of the project can be found in the following link:

[https://www.hkcc.org.hk/acms/upload/hkcc/2018/Breaking%20the%20Silence\\_summary.pdf](https://www.hkcc.org.hk/acms/upload/hkcc/2018/Breaking%20the%20Silence_summary.pdf) (accessed on July 1, 2019)

5.6 Kwan, Kai Man and Chi Sum Choi eds. *Debate Between Christianity and Modern Society: Morality, Politics and Religious Right*. Hong Kong, Tien Dao, 2012.

5.7 Wenshan Chan is a lecturer of the Yushan Theological Seminary in Taiwan. Interviewed on January 20, 2019. See Appendix 6 of the interview record. Christian right discourse in Taiwan can be found in the following link:

<http://www.hcu.edu.tw/upload/userfiles/37837C6FAB904E548360E98C1217A9BE/files/29-2%20%E9%99%B3%E6%96%87%E7%8F%8A.pdf> (accessed on July 1, 2019)

5.8 Interviewed on February 18, 2019. See Appendix 7 of the interview record. The work of the Society for Truth and Light can be found in the following link: <http://www.truth-light.org.hk/> (accessed on July 1, 2019)

5.9 [https://www.cmab.gov.hk/en/issues/equal\\_advisory\\_group.htm](https://www.cmab.gov.hk/en/issues/equal_advisory_group.htm) (accessed on July 1, 2019)

5.10 Rev. Phyllis Wong is the minister of the Kowloon Union Church. Interviewed on January 17, 2019. See Appendix 8 of the interview record.