Parenting in an Uncertain Future: the experiences of parents in the “PFLAG China” community

SHI, Junpeng

A thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D.

Department of Sociology

University of Essex

January 2021

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Coming to the end of a PhD journey often reminds me of Professor. Qu Jingdong's argument that "a PhD viva is the ceremony of adulthood on knowledge." When I look back, I must say that I have too many people to say "thank you" to at the end of this four-year academic journey.

First, I would like to give my endless gratitude to all my interviewees and all my friends I met in the fieldwork. Without your trust, I would have had no chance to know your feelings, thoughts, experiences and practices and finish this study. I wish that all of you find your happiness.

I am also grateful to The China Scholarship Council and The University of Essex for sponsoring my PhD program.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Róisín Ryan-Flood, who provided not only academic support but also emotional support. I still remember when in my first year, after auditing some academic activities, I got quite sad and angry towards the "Western" academia taking a decontextualized and normative standpoint when viewing the third world. I expressed my feelings to Róisín at that time. Near the end of my PhD research, I surprisingly found that she still remembered this, which touched me deeply. I also want to say "thank you" to my board chair Dr.

Isabel Crowhurst, who kindly provided comments on my work during every board meeting.

The PhD colloquiums led by Professor. Ewa Morawska, Professor. Linsey McGoey and Professor. Yasemin Soysal also supported me during these years. Yasemin, giving a draft of my article to be discussed in one of the sessions during the colloquium led by you was really challenging but exciting and rewarding journey.

Professor. Wei Wei has always encouraged me, a junior researcher, ever since I developed an academic interest in this area. Dr. Zhao Bin was my Master supervisor. Her passion and her instinct on righteousness encouraged me a great deal during my academic journey. Many other scholars have supported and inspired me during my research. They kindly spared their time discussing with me my research and my ideas, and/or provided some reading material for me. I want to say thank you to all of them. They are: Dr. Chen Jin, Dr. Wu Qiao, Dr. Zhang Fan, Dr. Huang Yingying, Professor. Pan Suiming, Dr. Pei Yuxin, Dr. Zhang Chao, Professor. Ken Plummer, Dr. Travis Shiu Ki Kong, Professor. Pun Ngai, Professor. Chiara Bertone, Dr. Elisabeth Engebretsen, Dr. Alan Msosa, Dr. Thomas Strong, Dr. Apostolos Papadoupolos, Professor. Airi-Alina Allaste, Dr. Liu Jieyu, Dr. Suen Yiu Tung, Professor. Stevi Jackson, Dr. Derek Hird, Dr. Hu Yang, Dr. Katy Wheeler and Dr. Bethany Morgan Brett. I would also like to say thank you to Marina Benjamin and Heather Dyer who tutored the CHASE 3rd Year Writing Retreat in the December of 2019. This retreat

really encouraged and inspired me, a guy in his 4th year PhD struggling to write up his thesis.

I am grateful for the efforts made by the examiners of my PhD Viva, Dr. Travis Shiu Ki Kong and Dr. Laurie James-Hawkins.

Friends also provided academic support to me. Siham Rouabah read the Introduction and Conclusion of this thesis. Zhang Ruobing read the Introduction and Conclusion as well. Sha Xinlei read the Introduction. Li Qi read my Introduction, Chapter 1 and Conclusion. Aysun Oner read my draft of Chapter 4 and acted as the discussant for my presentation during the 2019 ESA PhD Summer School. Evelyn Browne read my Chapter 5. They kindly shared their thoughts with me. In the winter of 2018, I attended a PhD workshop tutored by Dr. Antu Sorainen, Dr. Elisabeth Engebretsen and Dr. Tomas Strong, where all the participants read one another's writings and gave comments and had discussion, which was really inspiring. The piece I submitted was part of my Chapter 5. I want to say thank you to all the tutors and participants. They read and commented seriously. The participants were: Anna Heinonen, Evelyn Browne, Vilja Alanko, Tarna Kannisto, Anna Avdeeva, Eliza Garwood, Oliver Gilman, Alisa Zhabenko, Ella Alin.

I want to give my special gratitude to Agnes Skamballis and Ola Abdalkafor, the proofreaders who helped me with improving my English writing in this thesis. Your efforts provide strong support to me!

These years, I met and got to know many new friends in and beyond Colchester: Alice Rizzuti, Daniel Marciniak, Selin Sivis, Ayse Sargin, Thitirat Kittiwiwat, Punjapha Pitigraisorn, Ekaterina Tarnovskaya, Lauren O'Connell, Ali Keleş, Jana Kujundzic, Sal Barbie, EJ-Francis Caris-Hamer, Eliza Sheik-Garwood, Amanda Cole, Gulcimen Krkci, Snjaya Aryal, Amy Stevens, Karin Ohno, Alexandra Neag, David Perrin, Helen Tucker, John Collett, Manda O'Connell, Michael and Caroline White, Peter and Margaret Beard, Joan Davies, Pinceau Wong, Zhu Zuyuan, Yan Lili, Liu Wentong, Sun Mingchen, Zhang Kai, Auntie Fong, Xu Geleite, Hu Jiejun, Lu Yufan, Cai Bingxin, Song Lijie, Guo Feifan, Liu Xiaofang, Li Shengnan, Sun Yamei, Zhang Xiaoyang, Zuo Can, Pei Tong, Shen Yu-Ju, Tang Ling, Liu Chong, Gong Shulin, Zhou Tianyang, Lee Po-Han, Li Maizi, Liao Yen-Chieh, Tang Li, Ge Liang, Sha Xinlei, Zhenru Jacqueline Lin, Wei Yuan, Li Yunjun, Zhang Chi, Song Changhui. I want to tell all of you that meeting you is one of the most pleasant experiences during these years, no matter whether our conversation was academic or not. Siham, I still remember your encouraging words that "We are from other contexts. We need to take more efforts… Finally, we finish it…We must be proud of ourselves!"

I also wish to express my thanks to my good friends: Zhang Ruobing, Wang Zijun, Zhang Yaomin, Fu Huahao, Chelegeer, Chen Mian, Fu Zheng, Liu Chuncheng, Wang Suisui, Luo Muyuan, Li Qi, Zhu Jingshu, Qian Linliang, Gong Bowei, Zhou Bowen, Wu Chao, Shao Make, Zhang Siqi, Zhou Hang, Wang Zhidan, Su Wanlin, Wu Taotao,

Luo Xiaodan. Sharing our thoughts, experiences and feelings with each other was really encouraging for me. I sincerely cherish our friendships no matter where we are.

Yaomin, I will always remember the day in the summer of 2017 when we visited the Natural History Museum (London) together. You said in front of the dinosaur fossils: "Look at the major works of others. You just need to interview some dozens of people." But then, you immediately added: "Oh. Living persons are the biggest trouble in the world." Your words empower me every time I doubt the meaning of my scholarship.

Finally, I want to say thank you to my families. You have always supported my academic pursuit. In 2016, my *laolao (姥姥)* (maternal grandmother) passed away, and I soon went abroad to start my PhD study. That was a time when all of us were facing a new stage of life. Wishing all my families enjoyment in their life.

Abstract

Based on fieldwork in the "PFLAG China" community where parents accept their children's lifestyle of practising same-sex love and rejecting conventional marriage, this thesis analyses these parents' family practices and further, discusses the experiences of dealing with intergenerational ambivalence.

The changing kinship norms viewing marriage based on male-female love, has facilitated the competitive relationship between same-sex love and marriage. Thus, children in the "PFLAG China" community are inclined to reject marriage because of same-sex love. Parents negotiate their understanding of their children's life, their selves as parents, parent-child relationships and family happiness during the process of acceptance and intergenerational negotiation. The "scientific" knowledge normalises children's same-sex attraction, justifies parents' acceptance and helps parents overcome the self-blame caused by early psychiatry, which viewed children's same-sex sexuality as the result of parenting failures. However, children's refusal of marriage makes parents worry about their children's care arrangements, as marriage provides primary care and procreation. Then, parents acknowledge and recognise children's same-sex partnership, viewing it as the substitute for marriage. Due to parents' eagerness for grandparenthood and their children enjoying the happiness of being parents, they actively participate in decision making of having offspring. Regarding family representation, parents usually disclose children's lifestyle of same-sex love to a limited number of people like members of the "extended family"

and good friends, driven by their boundary thinking of viewing it as their family issue and the fear of prejudge and discrimination. This thesis concludes that the ideal same-sex modality from the parents' perspective is a semi-social double bond of sexuality and economy between two same-sex non-consanguineal individuals, a type of cohabitation.

Their experiences of dealing with intergenerational ambivalence accord to the emancipation model characterised by maintaining close parent-child relationships and achieving change to the social norm. Respecting the children's self-defined happiness is important in this process.

Introduction

In 2016, WU Zhihong, a psychological consultant widely known by the public in mainland China, published a book titled *Juyingguo (巨婴国)*, translated as *A Country of Grown-up Babies*. The author's idea comes from Freud's psychoanalytic work arguing that infants cannot distinguish themselves from others. Wu (2016)'s book adopts the metaphor of babies to analyse the mentality of many Chinese adults who do not understand and respect the boundaries in inter-personal relationships and want others to fulfil their hopes. By such logic, parents are metaphorised as grown-up babies in this book because they want their children to fulfil their wishes in the name of filial piety. The publishing and the popularity of this book reflect the stress in parent-child relationships in contemporary mainland China.

In a changing society, the filial generation approaches and adopts new idea, new culture and new lifestyle. It is easy for them to find that their parents' life experiences are more or less inapplicable to them. As argued by Mead (1969: 135), "they see the tasks which their unaccustomed elders are performing as poorly done; they feel that there must be a better way, and that they must find it." While for parents, they are facing a new situation where the filial generation may aspire to a new life that differs from what parents have expected. Mead (1969: 135) also emphasises the following:

> For now, nowhere in the whole world are there any elders who know what the children know, no matter how remote and simple the societies in which the children live. In the past there were always some elders who knew more – in terms of experience, of having grown up within a system – than any children. Today there are none.

A generational gap intensifies the intergenerational ambivalence. On the psychological level, “ambivalence” is used to describe the coexistence of positive and negative feelings in interpersonal relationships, but on the sociological level, “ambivalence” points to the contradiction of social norms and expectation (Gilligan et al., 2015; Connidis and McMullin, 2002). Intergenerational ambivalence is a concept developed by Lüscher and Pillemer (1998) to integrate the academic paradigm of intergenerational solidarity and intergenerational conflict, which links the social structure, individual action and everyday life (Lüscher, 2002; Lüscher and Pillemer, 1998). It points to the coexistence of contradictory norms in an intergenerational site. In this regard, Lüscher (2003: 36) states the following:

> For the purposes of sociological research (on the intergenerational relations), it is useful to speak of ambivalence when polarized simultaneous emotions, thoughts, volitions, actions, social relations, and/or structures that are considered relevant for the constitution of individual or collective identities are (or can be) interpreted as temporarily or even permanently irreconcilable.

Two dimensions of dealing with intergenerational ambivalence are analysed in Lüscher (2002; 2003)’s works: the subjective and the institution-structural dimension. The subjective dimension which focuses on whether the actors keep closeness to one another in dealing with intergenerational ambivalence, is divided into two types: convergence and divergence (Lüscher, 2002; Lüscher, 2003). As for the institution-structural dimension, it includes two types, reproduction and innovation, depending on the actors’ desire to maintain or change norms (Lüscher, 2002; Lüscher, 2003). Based on which dimension the actors choose, solutions of intergenerational ambivalence are divided into four types: solidarity, emancipation, captivation and

atomisation (Lüscher, 2002; Lüscher, 2003). The solidarity model features family members' commitment to traditions and preserve them consensually; the emancipation model is characterised by the coexistence of mutual emotional support between parents and children and their openness toward institutional innovation; in the atomisation model, members separate conflictingly to achieve the change in lifestyle and norms; whereas, in the captivation model, the institution is conserved reluctantly by the authority (Lüscher, 2002; Lüscher, 2003). When concluding these four types of solution, Lüscher (2002) advocates researching the systematic patterns of dealing with intergenerational ambivalence, which are shaped by cultural traditions, historical and situational circumstances and personal agency.

"Filial piety" is a pronounced notion in East Asian contexts, which emphasises children's responsibilities to their parents. According to Confucianism, parents take efforts to give life to and raise their children. In return, children should fulfil the filial piety and reciprocate parents. The ideal and praised role of the filial generation is divided into three levels: first, is to provide material and physical support for parents; second, is to pay attention to and fulfilling the parents' wishes and preferences; third, is to bring honour to the parents (Chow, 2001). Apart from the obligatory duties in terms of supporting parents, the ideal filial piety includes making parents happy and freeing parents from all worries about their children and their own life (Kim et al., 2015).

One important area of the parent-child relationship in contemporary Chinese societies, which has been discussed a great deal in academic studies, is parents' investment in raising and educating children. In the Confucian understanding of the parent-child relationship, parents should promote children's material and moral welfare and then children should reciprocate their parents and bring honour to their parents and family (Zhao and Murdock, 1996). Before the 1970s, non-elite parents who had several children did not pin their hope on all their children succeeding, getting elite status and bringing honour to families; only the talented ones were expected to achieve that (Fong, 2004). However, since the 1980s, this intergenerational contract was sparked and intensified, under the influence of two factors. Firstly, economic reform and development since the 1980s have made parents see the possibility of upward mobility through education; also, parents born in the 1950s and the 1960s wanted their children to enjoy the advantages that they never enjoyed in their childhood (Zhao and Murdock, 1996). Secondly, with the introduction of the one-child policy, it has made these children the "only hope" for their families (Fong, 2004). Therefore, these children are described as the "little emperors" by social discourses (Zhao, 2013; Jing, 2000). However, they have also had to "bear the whole weight of their parents' hopes, expectations and fears" (Zhao and Murdock, 1996: 206). The children's success is not only their own personal achievement, but also the glories of their parents (Zhao and Murdock, 1996). Göransson (2009: 122) compares Chinese parents in Singapore and the overprotective parents in Sweden, arguing that Chinese parents in Singapore actually do expect "something in return, at least that their children be successful in

school and at work". This kind of expectation has placed pressure on the filial generation, who understand their parents' self-sacrifices and do not want to let them down.

Yan (2017a) specifies three components of personhood shared cross-culturally: the desiring individual, the moralist self and the relational person, and compares the pronounced moral reflection in modern Western societies and that in the Chinese context based on these three components. The ethical work in modern Western societies justifies and legitimises individuals' desires in the name of individual rights, while the ethical work in Chinese contexts mobilise the moralist self to control the individual desires and make a proper relational person (Yan, 2017a). However, such a conventional way of doing personhood has been facing more challenges nowadays, where individual desires are getting more recognition (Yan, 2017a). People are getting confused and stressed in maintaining the balance between their desiring individual and the relational self. Zhang (2018; 2020)'s study on the "psy fever" in China shows that many people participating in the training of psychological counselling actually do not aim to become a professional psychological counsellor but take it as a form of self-development and self-help technics to help deal with the entangled "small self", "big self" and relationships with families, friends, colleagues and so forth. It is in such a social context where parents and their children practising same-sex love conduct intergenerational negotiation on their children's lifestyle.

Jun Mama, a typically ordinary woman living in urban mainland China, had a son who went to university with a future as a white-collar worker ahead of him. She was waiting for the moment when her son would marry a woman he loved and when she would become a grandmother. This was exactly her expectation for her elder life. However, under the pressure of her endless inquiries about whether he had a girlfriend and when would he get married, her son disclosed that he was "*tongxinglian*" (same-sex love), with a confirming attitude showing his lifestyle of same-sex love as unchangeable. Jun Mama started to face a new and crucial family moment. Her experience is a typical story often heard in the community of PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) China, a nationwide organisation focusing on the same-sex love issue in mainland China characterised by participation of parents. Many of these parents felt sad, confused and even desperate at the beginning. They eventually gathered in the "PFLAG China" community and discussed their family issues. They helped one another in accepting children's choices of lifestyle: same-sex love and rejecting (male-female) marriage. Some of these parent volunteers even advocate social recognition of gay and lesbian people's lifestyle.

For parents, the children's announcement of their lifestyle, that is practising same-sex love and rejecting marriage, is extreme evidence of the generation gap and of an uncertain future. Thus, their practices are the exploration of how to be parents in such a changing world.

For the purposes of this thesis, the researcher conducted long-term fieldwork in the "PFLAG China" community from the summer of 2017 to the spring of 2018, with the aim of understanding these parents' thinking and practices. Based on analysing the family practices of parents in the "PFLAG China" community, including parents' acceptance of their children's lifestyle, participating in their children's life arrangements and presenting family in their daily life, this thesis further discusses these parents' experiences of dealing with intergenerational ambivalence in a changing world.

The initial reason for choosing the "PFLAG China" community as the site of fieldwork was that the researcher was able to approach many parents who were accepting of their children's *tongxinglian* lifestyle. One important characteristic of the parents in the "PFLAG China" network is that they are exposed to the activist narratives. Approaching PFLAG China equips them with more cultural tools in dealing with their situation: the emergence of a gay and/or lesbian child in their families. They get the chance to communicate with LGBT individuals, other parents, volunteers and professionals such as social scientists and psychological consultants. But does this mean that they will become the parents that activist discourses appreciate? What are their real everyday practices? This thesis believes that discussing their experiences can contribute to understanding how the development of LGBT activism in contemporary mainland China could work in people's (especially the parents') daily life and how people integrate the new idea they receive within their

everyday life. More importantly, these parents are the ones achieving the emancipation (accepting the change of social norm and maintaining close parent-child relationships) when facing the intergenerational ambivalence. This was an important aspect that attracted the researcher to choose the "PFLAG China" community as the site to conduct the fieldwork. It is not the intention of this thesis to generalise what is learned from parents in the "PFLAG China" network to mainland China as whole. It is hoped that this thesis can contribute to understanding a changing society where everyday life of parents with *tongxinglian* children and the ideas from activism and the young generation are entangled, and where parents are exploring the ways to deal with intergenerational ambivalence and successfully achieve the emancipation as their solution. The Introduction will first analyse the context of mainland China and argue that understanding the issue of same-sex sexuality/love in China requires understanding how sexuality, love, marriage and the parent-child relationship work in people's day-to-day life. Then, the theoretical framework and the structure of this thesis will be introduced.

Juridical Equality: A Universal Value?

Western societies have witnessed the development of the homosexual movement since the 1960s, aiming to reshape the social status of homosexuality, also called "sexual citizenship". The concept of "sexual citizenship" is largely developed in the context of Anglophone capitalist liberal democracies (Mackie, 2017). Its development

has a close relationship with the model of identity politics that has been prominent since the 1960s, namely ethnicity, and two other variants, women and homosexuality (Hobsbawm, 1996). In Western contexts, making "equal" political, juridical and social citizenship has been constructed as the articulation of gay and lesbian people's interest. The project that originated from the first world has three characteristics: (1) publicising the issue of homosexuality; (2) the juridification of equal rights; (3) universalising the juridification model in global politics. In order to achieve its success, gay and lesbian identity politics follows the logic of "out, loud, proud" (Kong, 2010). In the Western context, the request for juridification of "equality" is supported by a particular understanding of the relationship between citizens and state/government. The movements identify "unequal" treatment and claim amendment. Such movements call for a formal juridical recognition leading to legislating "same-sex marriage" which would be the last step towards achieving "equal rights".

"The personal is political", is a slogan that was developed by the second wave of feminism in the West. It accords to Mills (2000)'s idea that behind personal troubles public issues lurk. It also implies that issues which were once seen as "private", should now be solved in the "public" governance systems. Hence, the adjective "political" refers to the oppression and harm, which should be tackled by law (Ho, 2017a). In liberalism, the concept of citizenship is related to what is "public" but viewing it as such gives no significant meaning in the "private" sphere (Walby, 1994). This division between "private" and "public" is challenged as women's sufferings in

everyday life are exempted from public governance. MacKinnon (1989: 191) argues that “for women the measure of intimacy has been the measure of the oppression.”

As for same-sex sexuality, it is always a public issue in the European-Christian context. It experienced a huge fluctuation between tolerance and intolerance during the religious period (Boswell, 1980), where it became the scapegoat in the moral panics (Weeks, 2017).The Wolfenden Report in 1957, which stated it as a private issue, actually exempted individuals practising same-sex sexuality from official persecution to a large degree.

Along with the reconceptualisation of citizenship, gay and lesbian identity politics target the political system. Two factors facilitate the emergence of identity politics. The first is the “citizenship” (civil rights) model utilised to improve the life of marginal groups in liberal democracy; the second is the involvement of different identity groups in political parties’ competition for votes and power (Hobsbawm, 1996). Identity is not just about lifestyle, but has been politicised. Hence, as second-class citizens, people practising same-sex sexuality deserve equal rights in political and judicial areas. Such a model does not only affect domestic politics in the West but also eventually influences international politics, where homonationalism has been taking efforts to universalise judicial equality, constructed as the symbol of “advancement” in contrast to “backwardness” and the superiority of the West, the liberalism and capitalism (Puar, 2007; Richardson, 2017; Ho, 2017a), though it was the Western colonialism, “the earlier version of capitalist globalization” (Kang, 2009:

148), that imposed the criminalisation of same-sex sexuality on the rest of the world (Han and O'Mahoney, 2014).

In order to integrate the universal human rights and cultural diversity, Milne (1986) develops the idea of minimum moral standards and expect it to be universally applicable for all cultures and societies. In contrast to this principle, the transnational gay and lesbian movements originally developing in the Western context have already gone far beyond decriminalisation and depathologisation of same-sex sexuality. Further, the transnational movements are taking efforts to disseminate the culture of "sexual orientation" and equality. Ning (2013) describes attitudes held by some social movements and civil societies based on modern progressivism as "New Moralism", which expresses complete confidence, self-identified progressivism and the anger towards "not (being) progressive". However, the universalisation of judicial equality in international politics is problematic. First, it constructs the illusion and fantasy, especially for the third world, that there is no homophobia in the "advanced" Western countries where the juridification of equality has been achieved (Ali, 2017). Second, it ignores the diversity of sexuality in different contexts on the other hand. The struggling for equality actually has a particular assumption of relationship, that the same-sex relationship should not be compatible with (male-female) marriage. However, it is not the cultural model in many cultures and societies. This Introduction is going to discuss this point in the Chinese context then.

Shifting Focus from Identity to Relationship

> After all, we must abandon our love for progressive values, and in many aspects, start from going back to the most fundamental, even very traditional "doing personhood" (*zuoren,做人*). As we cannot rely on the familiar and self-proud universal value, this is a necessary process of painful reflection and of exploration with patience… In the Chinese world, "person" never refers to the individual, but is embedded in family, ethnicity, nation and the world. (Ho, 2017a: 188-189)

> After so many years, the social movements have gradually transferred to technology, the consideration of benefits and struggling for projects. Social movements have started to ignore that: movement is the opportunity for creating new relations between persons and new social organisations. What the interaction between persons must emphasise is actually "doing personhood" (*zuoren,做人*)… The principle of doing personhood is far beyond freedom and equality. The equality which I see in Taiwan has already become a horrible mathematical tool, and at last it becomes haggling over every ounce. I like "justice" more, which means that everyone has the opportunity to use the abilities and things they have. (Ho, 2017b: para 51)

Ho(2017a; 2017b)'s works imply that discussing sexuality issues should be embedded in the understanding of "doing personhood" rather than the normative concepts of equality or freedom. Inspired by the idea of doing personhood, this thesis aims to locate the discussion of same-sex love in the context of mainland China, where family is seen as the moral basis of personhood. The existing academic works (Kam, 2013; Kong, 2010; Fu, 2012; Wei, 2012; Engebretsen, 2013; Zhu, 2018b) have shown that the emphasis on the parent-child relationship is important for people practising same-sex sexuality/love leading their lives in Chinese contexts.

This thesis analysing parents' experiences starts from the question about why their children come out to them. The fieldwork shows the improvisation in children's

experiences of coming out. For example, a young lesbian came out to her mother when she broke up with her girlfriend and was depressed because of the breakup. However, more importantly, many stories share the common structural factor: marriage. Many parents report that it is under the pressure to get married that their children disclose their same-sex love and take it as the justification for rejecting marriage.

> When a society has the custom of arranged marriages, elopements often occur. When a marriage society gives its members the freedom to choose partners, divorce often results. When a society confers preeminence on the desire for multiple partners, this preeminence can also result in the couple running off together. The fire of love can always create problems for a society. As they say, "love is the enemy of society." (Cai, 2001: 447)

When he reached the age of marriage, Xiaocao Mama's son faced the pressure that he should get married, even though he had refused to meet the potential girlfriends introduced by his families. In his families' opinion, marriage was a necessity in people's life course. When he felt that he could not avoid this issue anymore, he decided to write a letter to his elder sister, triggering his family coming out. Xiaocao Mama described this situation to me as the following.

> Xiaocao Mama: At that time, we were thinking of this issue, and urging him to solve it. After ten years, when we questioned him again, it was nearly a requirement that he must solve this problem as soon as possible…We told him that this was a necessary phase in lifetime. Get married, form a family and start the career. At each age, (a person) should do what needs to be done… Under such a situation, he felt that it was not easy to shirk.

The function, characteristics and definition-of marriage, a relationship prevalently existing in most human societies, are the focus of the anthropology of kinship. According to the *Notes and Queries on Anthropology* published in 1951, marriage is defined as "a union between a man and a woman such that children born to the woman are recognized legitimate offspring of both parents" (Gough, 1959: 49; Bell, 1997: 237). The former part that marriage is a union between a man and a woman is prevalently agreed; however, it does not clarify what a union it is. The latter part is about the function of marriage rather than the characteristics of marriage. Leach (1955) outlines ten rights tied to marriage. This thesis outlines five of them, entailing some important characteristics of marriage: "(1) To give the husband a monopoly in the wife's sexuality; (2) To give the wife a monopoly in the husband's sexuality; (3) To give the husband partial or total rights over property belonging or potentially accruing to the wife; (4) To give the wife partial or total rights over property belonging or potentially accruing to the husband; (5) To establish a joint fund of property - a partnership - for the benefit of the children of the marriage" (Leach, 1955: 199). The "monopoly" in sexuality discussed by Leach (1955) has been changed to "sexual privilege" by Cai (2001), because the "monopoly" is not universal for marriage in different societies. Besides, "the benefits of children" should be understood as the function of marriage rather than a part of the definition of marriage. Apart from these disadvantages, these five characteristics have indicated that marriage is both about sexuality and economy. But they are not enough to define marriage. Lévi-Strauss (1985), for his part, emphasises that marriage differs from other unions in that it is a

legal bond approved by society. Lastly, discussing the incest prohibition, Cai (2001; 2008) concludes that the sexuality between consanguineal members is forbidden in all human societies - thus, marriage can only be formed between non-consanguineal individuals.

The Na group is a society where the basic and preeminent modality of sexual life is not marriage but the visit, where the basic organisation of kinship is matrilignée (consisting of brothers, sisters and women's offspring) rather than family (Cai, 2001). Under the visit system in Na society, lovers do not have mutual economic responsibilities. Based on the comparison between the visit society and the marriage society, Cai (2001) defines marriage as follows:

> I give to marriage the same meaning as a double sexual and economic bond between two social, non-consanguineal individuals of the opposite sex, established on the basis of the acceptance of the two parties, and with the consent of their consanguineal groups with prestations. This double bond is recognized and constrained by society. (Cai, 2001: 432-433)

Based on the anthropology of kinship, this thesis adopts Cai (2001)'s definition which views marriage as an opposite-sex, acknowledgeable double sexual and economic bond. In marriage societies like Han (the main ethnic group in China), marriage forms the basic unit for people's life and provides the economic protection, as well as the proper frame within which procreation is usually conducted. Social change has witnessed the deinstitutionalisation of marriage in North America and several European countries (Cherlin, 2004). In these Western contexts, marriage has become the choice of life, and also for many people, cohabitation has even developed beyond

the testing ground for marriage and has become an alternative to it (Cherlin, 2004; Manting, 1996). The prevalence of cohabitation has even led the juridical system of some countries, like some parts of the United States and Canada, to acknowledge cohabitation as marriage ("common-law marriage") under some conditions. Cherlin (2004) explains that in the time of the individualisation of marriage, choosing marriage is mainly pursuing the personal achievement. Marriage is seen as the "natural outcome of loving and sexually charged relationship" in public storytelling in the Western context (Jamieson, 1998: 23). Whereas, based on research of young people (21-38) from a diverse ethnic and socio-economical background in the United States, Kefalas et al. (2011) argue that marriage is still important to people in the United States, but what has changed is the relationship between adulthood and marriage. Marriage mentality is divided into two types: the naturalist marriage and planned marriage (Kefalas et al., 2011). For naturalists, marriage is a prerequisite for reaching adulthood; however, for planners, whose mentality is closer to individualised marriage, economic stability, emotional maturity and a thoroughly tested relationship are the pre-conditions for marriage (Kefalas et al., 2011). In mainland China, marriage is always a social institution and a necessity in a person's life, but increasingly, people are more and more emphasising the factors listed by Kefalas et al. (2011). In marriage societies, "the question is not whether one will marry but whom one will marry" (Cai, 2001: 440). Though revolutions and social changes have witnessed the abolishment of arranged marriage and the development of romantic love, the romantic love per se does not replace marriage, but functions as the pre-stage of marriage. During the

social change, the official control of marriage is decreasing. However, the social change has not eliminated the moral normality of marriage from people's life, especially when it comes to the parent-child relationship. Kam(2015; 2013) discusses the meaning of marriage in mainland China and in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and concludes three characteristics of marriage practices in mainland China: (1) Marriage is an obligation rather than a personal choice, which could fulfil the family's and society's expectation; (2) Marriage makes participants be recognised as adults; (3) The sources of pressure to get married are senior social members like parents, older relatives and senior colleagues. By comparison, in Hong Kong, the social pressure to get married mainly comes from popular media, and the direct intervention from senior social members is less prevalent (Kam, 2015). During the fieldwork of this study, I met a professional social worker in Hong Kong working on the issues of parents with queer children. The social worker told me that in Hong Kong, marriage was not seen as a necessity in daily life now, so many gay and lesbian individuals did not need to come out to their parents. However, in mainland China a large number of gay and lesbian people are facing the marriage imperative and their families' frequent inquiring about and the enthusiasm for introducing a potential wife or husband. Therefore, for children, disclosing their gay and lesbian identity is an option- to respond to the pressure exerted on them to get married. "Coming out" as such is an announcement that they would not enter marriage because of same-sex love, at least at the moment of their family coming out.

However, same-sex sexuality/love and marriage are not always incompatible in many societies, including imperial China and contemporary mainland China. Under the gay and lesbian identity politics in the Western context, same-sex attracted individuals not only deserve the exemption of discrimination in schools and work places, but also should get the right to form "same-sex marriage". The incompatibility between same-sex attraction and marriage is taken-for-granted and essentialised in the narratives of Western homosexual movements and the transnational movements. Altman (1997) believes in the emergence of a global gay identity, including a "new gay life" and a sense of a global gay and lesbian community overriding the race and nationality. For Altman (1997:422), one important aspect of the so-called "new gay life" is the "primary homosexual relationship" rather than extramarital same-sex sexuality. When discussing people's preferences between these two modalities of same-sex sexuality, the understanding of marriage is an important factor. In the public narratives in the Western context (not the whole picture of real life experiences), marriage has shifted from being an institution to being a relationship, which is "the natural outcome of a loving and sexually charged relationship" (Jamieson, 1998: 23). Then, since people in male-female relationships have the right to enter marriage, as equals, people in same-sex relationships should have the right to form "same-sex marriage". From the perspective of identity politics, the heterosexual people should organise the male-female lover-ship and have the right to enter marriage. As equals, the gay and lesbian people should organise the same-sex lover-ship and should have the right to form "same-sex marriage". This is the real moral basis of "same-sex

marriage", defined in this thesis as the acknowledgeable double bond of sexuality and economy between two social non-consanguineal same-sex individuals.

Though the narratives emphasising the binary opposition of same-sex sexuality and heterosexuality are quite dominant now, this does not represent people's real day-to-day life. In mainland China, many people who practise same-sex sexuality enter marriage like others according to social norm (UNDP and USAID, 2014). However, such behaviours are quite easy to be interpreted by scholars, activists and Western gazers as the victim of "heterosexual hegemony" or victims of "heteronormativity". For example, Wei (2010) interviewed middle-class "gay men" in Shanghai and found that parts of the interviewees decided to enter marriage which was their own choice, rather than something imposed on them. However, for Wei (2010), these gay men's understanding of marriage represents the influence of "internalised heteronormativity". In the book *Tongzhi Living: Men Attracted to Men in Postsocialist China*, Zheng (2015) sees the modality of extramarital homoerotic relationship in imperial China as tolerance, but sees the modality of entering marriage and practising extramarital same-sex sexuality in contemporary China as "embracing the heterosexual norm". Kam (2013) even sees traditional China's tolerance as "symbolic violence" and "silent repression" because it keeps same-sex lifestyle "secondary to a visible normative heterosexual relationship" (Kam, 2013: 93). What makes these academic works draw such conclusions is actually the idea produced in

modern activism, but this approach ignores how sexuality and kinship were and are culturally and socially practised in real daily life.

In the analysis of the fieldwork in the Taiwan Province of China, Brainer (2019) compared the narratives used by the midlife generation and the young generation practising same-sex sexuality. The young people used the narratives of "hiding", "pretending", "dishonest" and "fake marriage" to describe the practices of getting married, while the midlife people did not see their marriages as "fake" at all (Brainer, 2019). This gap implies that what really make a difference is how individuals, a culture and a society understand marriage and intimacies. "After all, if few people chose their spouses based on romantic love or sexual orientation, what made one marriage 'fake' and another 'real'? Changes in family relationships and norms make silence and disclosure about sexuality a qualitatively different experience across generations," stated Brainer (2019: 23). The new understanding of marriage and intimacy makes part of people practising same-sex sexuality/love inclined to reject marriage. However, they need to face the pressure from their parents, as marriage is a part of a child's role to fulfil parents' expectations. They need to face two issues concerning the family: their role as good filial children and role in protecting their family's reputation which could be harmed by their lifestyle (Kong, 2010). During her fieldwork in the 1990s, Rofel (2007) visited a salon in a coffee bar in Beijing, where people who identified themselves as gays and lesbians did not want to challenge the government for "rights" but had the keen responsibility in terms of getting married

and raising offspring. Based on this, Rofel (2007) concludes that what matters to gay and lesbian individuals in the Chinese context is “cultural citizenship”, which is about the belonging to their families and Chinese society. In their life, gay and lesbian people face the expectation from parents to get married and have offspring. Unlike the post-Stonewall representation of gay identity in the West as leaving the families of origin and joining an alternative community (Berry, 2001; Weston, 1997), gayness is represented as family problems in East Asian films (Berry, 2001). The reason that it is a family problem in China lies in the conflict between same-sex love, marriage and the parent-child relationship. Such conflict is a new phenomenon emerging in social and cultural change. If individuals did not feel the conflict between forming a marriage and same-sex sexuality, it would not be a family problem at all. Though the activism narratives of PFLAG China emphasise identity, advocating the idea of “being your authentic selves” and the equality between same-sex sexuality and heterosexuality, the truth is that in the “PFLAG China” community, the decision that gay and lesbian individuals make is about intimacy rather than sexual identity. Individuals who practise same-sex sexuality make a different decision on intimacy, which is the rejection of marriage. This decision is expressed through the practices of family coming out. For both gay and lesbian individuals and their parents, coming out is an important family moment. Therefore, their practices should be viewed as a struggle to find intimacy and happiness in a changing society, rather than as the struggle of an oppressed group of people for “human rights” in a backward society. This thesis aims to move beyond the identity politics and the paradigm of victimhood

and resistance, and to organise the topic of same-sex love based on family and intimacy. This is why this thesis relies on the concept of "family practices" to analyse how parents in the "PFLAG China" community explore the ways of parenting gay and lesbian children.

Family Practices

The concept "family practice" provides the theoretical framework for this thesis. The focus of this concept is an individual's practices which affect other family members, including two important components, "family" and "practices". The concept was developed by Morgan (1996)'s academic work in the 1990s. Morgan(1996) states the following:

> ……using the term to refer to sets of practices which deal in some way with the ideas of parenthood, kinship and marriage and the expectations and obligations which are associated with these practices. If we talk about "family practices" we are referring to certain practices which participants tend to think of as being in some way "different" and which may colour other practices which might overlap with them. (Morgan, 1996: 11)
>
> A slight reformulation might bring us closer to understanding the character of family practices. We may say that family practices are to do with those relationships and activities that are constructed as being to do with family matters. (Morgan, 1996: 192)

In this definition, the term "constructed" is emphasised to clarify the idea that it is the actors' interpretation that constructs different matters as family matters. In this respect, for Morgan (1996), "construction" implies: (1) actors' perceptions and interpretative

work; (2) the usage of the word “family”, which is shaped by context. That it is actors who construct certain matters as family practices is a pivotal point in this thesis since both the children practising same-sex love and their parents see the children’s lifestyle as a family issue, especially a parent-child relationship issue. Defining a matter as a family issue means that it is not an individual issue. In addition to the idea that the practices should be defined by actors as family issues, what is rendered as a family practice has effects on family members. Such meaning can be seen in Cheal (2002)’s definition on family practices. “Family practices consist of all the ordinary, everyday actions that people do, insofar as they are intended to have some effect on another family member” (Cheal, 2002: 12).

The reason why the framework of family practices is suitable for this thesis lies in that both the existing literature and the fieldwork conducted for this thesis show that gay and lesbian people and their parents define this issue as a family issue. More importantly, constructing children’s sexual orientation and their lifestyle as a family issue directly influences both the children and parents’ behaviours which also has an effect on each other.

The term “practices” could convey several meanings, including the sense of difference, the sense of active, the sense of everyday, regularity and fluidity, and it constitutes the links between history and biography (Morgan, 2011a; Morgan, 1996; Morgan, 2011b). In sociological theories, practices can be understood as habits on the one hand, and as action on the other hand. The practices as habits are more embedded

in close-knit networks which provide the immediate or unspoken legitimation for the habits, while practices as action are more accountable and more likely to be called to account and, thus, the actors need to justify their action (Morgan, 2011a). The practices as action are more inclined to happen in the circumstances of change or novelty (Morgan, 2011a), which is just the situation of the parents analysed in this thesis, who are facing a rapid changing society. Parents whose children disclose their lifestyles suddenly find themselves in an unsettled and uncertain situation that challenges their imagination of routine life. Immersed in anxiety, parents increase efforts to understand the new situation and do their best for their children, for themselves and for the whole family. Thereupon, they start their explorative action in this changing world since they cannot follow the habits of routine life. The aim of this thesis is explaining the thoughts and family practices of parents in the "PFLAG China" community as well as discussing the family intergenerational relationship during social change.

The Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. This introduction is the first chapter of the thesis, which has outlined the background, research questions and the framework of this study.

Chapter 1 discusses the kinship norms and same-sex sexuality in a changing China. It begins by examining the change of kinship norms and intergenerational relationships across the social and historical process in the Chinese context and then discusses the change in the understanding of same-sex sexuality in Chinese history. These two issues provide important background information before analysing the experiences of parents in the "PFLAG China" community.

Chapter 2 introduces the methodologies employed in this research and clarifies the qualitative methods used in collecting data, mainly the interviews and observation. In some cases, the researcher collected data from media outputs and websites. This chapter also discusses the ethical consideration during data collection and the position of the researcher in the fieldwork.

Chapter 3, 4, 5 and 6 are the empirical chapters of this thesis, mainly based on the fieldwork interviews and observation. In a PFLAG China sharing session, Xingxing Baba, a father who had accepted his son's lifestyle, summarised the difficulties parents face in accepting their children's lifestyle in four points, to enable the audience understand the parents' thinking. First, parents do not have enough "scientific" knowledge on same-sex love. Second, parents' dilemma also stems from their desire to have grandchildren. Third, parents worry about their children's life, especially their care arrangements. Finally, parents become concerned about their reputation; they fear confronting others with the fact that they now have a gay/lesbian child and what others think of them. The fieldwork interviews and observation

confirmed his points. The structure of the four empirical chapters design is based on these four points.

Chapter 3 introduces the history and practices of PFLAG China as the background of discussing parents' family practices. PFLAG China is a community-based organisation in mainland China, which is characterised by the participation of parents. PFLAG China has set two missions for itself: community governance and advocating social recognition symbolically based on family recognition. Chapter 3 focuses on the former mission and discusses the values it advocates among the population involved in same-sex sexuality, including self-identification, self-affirmation and family acceptance. The public goods and services provided for parents include knowledge about sexual orientation and peer support. While for gay and lesbian youth, PFLAG China advocates that they should not enter marriage, because getting married is interpreted as self-sacrifice for the sake of the dominant narratives of identity politics. Meanwhile, parent volunteers not only provide peer support to parents, but also empower the gay and lesbian youth because these young people can foresee the possibility of parents accepting their lifestyle through the parent volunteers of PFLAG China.

Chapter 4 discusses the first point mentioned by Xingxing Baba concerning parents' attitudes, and explains how parents build an understanding of their children's same-sex attraction during the process of family acceptance. Chapter 4 analyses two main kinds of cultural tools which help parents face this unsettled moment in life. The

first is the knowledge that normalises same-sex orientation in the name of science and the second one is the thinking of the "good parent" which helps parents reflect on the parent-child relationship and build supportive parenthood.

Through clarifying parents' worries, Chapter 5 focuses on how parents participate in their children's life arrangements. Parents worry about the care arrangements when their children would not enter marriage, since marriage institution provides the primary care and procreation in mainland China. They also worry that they would not become grandparents, because many parents have just one child which makes this child the only prospect of becoming grandparents. After accepting their children's "sexual orientation" and life choices, many parents acknowledge and recognise their children's same-sex partnership with the hope that it could provide care for their children. Furthermore, Chapter 5 also emphasises that having offspring is an important part in the intergenerational negotiation.

The last point of Xingxing Baba's summary is the parents' fear of letting others know that they have a gay or lesbian child and the potential prejudice and discrimination. Chapter 6 analyses the parents' practices of representing their family and highlights two factors that influence parents' practices: boundary and reputation. In boundary thinking, two narratives are at work. First, the right persons to disclose to usually include members in the "extended families" and some good friends. Second, viewing "our own family", including parents and their children, as the most important makes parents feel that the potential rejection is bearable. In some cases where children's

same-sex partner could openly show up in the kinship network, such practices make children's same-sex partnership semi-social. The fear of being prejudiced against or gossiped about after disclosing their children's lifestyle of same-sex love also affects parents' practices. This thesis has found three ways of family representation conducted by parents: disclosing that they have a gay or lesbian child, representing their children as the ones not interested in marriage and representing their children as married in some cases.

The final part of the thesis is the Conclusion, which summarises the research and offers concluding remarks and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 1 Kinship, Marriage and Love in a Changing China

1.1 Introduction

As clarified in the previous chapter, the analysis in this thesis is organised upon the concept of "family practice", which is closely shaped by the understanding of sexuality, intimacy, marriage and parent-child relationships. In order to clarify why same-sex love is a family issue in contemporary mainland China, this chapter reviews how the kinship norms and the understanding of same-sex sexuality have been changing throughout Chinese history. First, this chapter reviews the kinship system in traditional Han society (the main ethnic group in China), where marriage is a social institution, a key necessity in a person's life and an essential part of engendering offspring for the married couple themselves, the family and ancestors. As for homoeroticism, traditional China does not view same-sex sexuality and heterosexuality as a binary opposition. In traditional China, both pre-nuptial and extra-nuptial male-female sexuality are morally illegitimate, but same-sex practices are tolerated. Though this chapter aims to review both male and female same-sex sexuality across the Chinese history, due to the higher visibility of male same-sex sexuality, the focus, in this chapter is more on male same-sex sexuality. After explaining the kinship system of traditional Han society, this chapter reviews the change of the understanding of same-sex sexuality and concludes that, in the first half of the twentieth century, China gradually accepted the sexology which pathologised same-sex attraction as a whole. Then, after the Reforming and Opening-up (1978-),

Chinese society has acquired the renewed and depathologised scientific knowledge about same-sex sexuality. Simultaneously, the marketisation has made people get more autonomy to practise same-sex sexuality. Then, this chapter discusses how same-sex love becomes a family problem in contemporary mainland China. Even though revolutions and social change have led to the development of romantic love, the abolishment of arranged marriage and the decline of traditional familism, marriage is still important in people's life. The model of practising same-sex sexuality as premarital or extramarital sexuality has continued to exist in contemporary China. However, the belief in romantic love as the basis of marriage and the culture of "sexual orientation" have been making same-sex love competitive with marriage. By such logic, many people, like the youth in the "PFLAG China" community, are inclined to reject marriage because of same-sex love. This chapter shows that the rejection of marriage as a result of same-sex love is facilitated by the changing understanding of kinship and marriage norms, the culture of "sexual orientation" and individuals' increasing autonomy in social change. This makes same-sex love a family problem, since parents expect their children to get married and have offspring just like everyone else.

1.2 Kinship Norms in Traditional Han Society

The importance of the kinship system in traditional Han society lies in that it establishes the meaning of life for everyone. The traditional Han kinship system was

an extremely patrilineal system (Zhang, 2009) in all different aspects: the representation of the human body, the inheritance of surname and property and the arrangement of residence. According to traditional Han's representation of the human body, a person's bone is given by the father and flesh is given by the mother'; thus, an individual only inherits the consanguineal identity from their father (Cai, 2008; Zhang, 2009). Marriage was also organised within the patrilineal system in traditional Han society (Fei, 2010[1939]). It can be understood in terms of the principle of generalised exchange defined by Lévi-Strauss (1969), as different (patrilineal) families exchange women through marriage. When a woman gets married, she becomes the formal member of her husband's family. "One family" is the most basic and indivisible cultural unit in the traditional Han kinship system, consisting of the most senior living man (and/or his wife), all their male offspring and their wives (Zhang, 2009). Accordingly, a family may include several households as the sons may establish independent households rather than live with their parents in the same household after getting married. A "family" is the basic unit eligible to conduct ancestor worship independently, while a household is not eligible to do that independently (Zhang, 2009). In such a system, having sons is quite important, as only sons can inherit the family and worship the ancestors when parents die. Daughters become the formal members of their husbands' families; so, they are not eligible to worship her own parents. This is why the one-child policy (announced in 1979, implemented in 1981 and ended in 2015) faced huge resistance in China's rural areas, which resulted in the implementation of a two-child policy in many rural areas. Under the one-child policy,

many women in rural areas became anxious when they were pregnant due to the fear that they might not give birth to a boy who would inherit the family (Yang, 2012).

Worshipping the ancestors is an important practice in traditional Han society (Baker, 1979). The importance of the posterity is both religious and ethical (Fei, 2010[1939]). On the ethical level, through having children, people pay back the debt to their parents who have raised them and have continued ancestors' lineage (Fei, 2010[1939]). On the religious level, the ancestors with no one worshipping them would become "lonely spirits". The options that a couple with no sons have are either adopting a son or hiring a son-in-law to become a member of their family. In the latter arrangement, the offspring will have to inherit their matrilineal grandfather's family and his family name. Traditional Han culture's emphasis on ancestors and offspring is rooted in the ancestor-ego-descendant culture, which provides the reference of personhood, meaning of life and transcending value for everyone (Wang, 2014a). Every man is the offspring of someone when he is young, but he becomes a member of the ancestors worshipped by his offspring after he dies. For a woman in traditional Han society, marriage is the first time when she obtains a formal social identity in her life (Zhang, 2009). She is a young wife at the beginning, but she becomes a member of the ancestors in her husband's lineage which allows her to get worshipped by the offspring. Hence, apart from conjugal intimacy, marriage has another important layer of meaning: generating offspring for the (patrilineal) family, which is quite vital in the ancestor-ego-descendant culture. In this regard, Fei (2010[1939]: 38-39) writes: "The

legal act of marriage, although preceding the birth of the child, always anticipates the realization of parenthood . The main purpose of marriage, in the village, is to secure the continuity of descent."

Though there are plenty of stories about love in Chinese history, passionate love did not function as the institutional basis of marriage. Arranged marriage was the prevalent marriage practice in late Imperial China. However, arranged marriage cannot be understood as forcing the couple to get married, since it would not work without the partners' consent (Cai, 2001). According to marriage morality, male-female adultery, whether premarital or extramarital, was viewed as morally illegitimate and unacceptable. The only two forms of exception for men were the concubinages and sexual services provided by prostitution. However, when the premarital and extramarital male-female sexuality were under strict control, the society of Imperial China showed tolerance towards same-sex sexuality.

1.3 Homoeroticism in Imperial China

There was no persecution against same-sex practices in Imperial China (Li, 1998) when these practices were facing severe cracking down in European-Christian societies. Unlike modern Western society, traditional China did not view heterosexuality and homosexuality as a binary opposition. In a study on homoerotic and homosocial relationships in late Imperial China, Vitiello (2011) concludes that

senior men at that time were understood to have sexual desire for both male and female and this was considered natural. However, Chou (2000) argues that "bisexual" is not an appropriate term to describe the sexual pattern in traditional China, as the categorisation based on the gender of erotic objects did not exist at all at that time. It was in such a context where the traditional modality of same-sex sexuality occurred. Besides, Chou (2000) concluded three characteristics of male homoeroticism in Imperial China: (1) homoeroticism was seen as a specific social role rather than as an essential personality; (2) homoerotic acts occurred mostly in a social hierarchy of unequal power relationships, which made it unclear whether those with a lower status had genuine erotic interests in their masters; (3) many same-sex sexual encounters in Chinese historical records were merely brief, recreational or frivolous sexual acts.

The records of male homoerotic relationships could be traced back to early records in Chinese history. There are several tales based on the figures in the Spring and Autumn Period (403 BC-256 BC) and the Warring States Period (256BC-221BC). They are the stories of *"yutao"*, Longyang and Lord Anling. The story of "*duanxiu*"(cutting sleeve) in the West Han Dynasty (206BC-9AD) is also very famous. They are all homoerotic stories between leuds or emperors and their male favourites. Longyang and Anling are famous male favourites in the historical records, and their names are the terms for homoeroticism in Imperial China. In the story of "yutao", MI Zixia, a male favourite, ate half of a delicious peach and left the other half to Duke Ling of Wei, who was very touched by this action. In the *duanxiu* story, Emperor Ai of Han

cut off a sleeve in order not to wake his male favourite DONG Xian up. Because their stories were very famous, the terms *longyang*, *duanxiu* and *yutao*, were used to express homoeroticism. Mr. PAN Guangdan (1899-1967), a prominent advocate of eugenics and sexology, investigated the historical records and concluded that nearly all the emperors in the Western Han Dynasty (206BC-9AD) had some homoerotic partners (Li, 1998). Zhang (2001) studied how people at that time evaluated homoerotic relationships and found that people did not see these relationships per se as problematic, but they disapproved of the power these homoerotic partners gained as a result of their homoerotic relationships with the emperors. Before the Western Han Dynasty (206BC-9AD), the relationship with catamites was only a special fetish of emperors and aristocrats, but it eventually became popular among scholar-officials and ordinary people in the Wei Dynasty, Jin Dynasty, Northern and Southern Dynasties (220AD-589AD), which caused one of peaks of male eroticism in imperial China (Li, 1998).

Wu (2012) argues that there were male "homoeroticism sensibilities" in late Imperial China. For Wu (2012:7), the term "sensibility" is utilised to describe "a complex of aesthetic and behavioural preferences that found expression in cultural life and contributed to contemporary taste". During the Ming Dynasty (1368AD-1644AD) and Qing Dynasty (1644AD-1912AD), such sensibilities were presented as the literati-catamite or patron-actor relationship, which was seen as the symbol of social status and taste (Wu, 2012; Kang, 2009; Lu, 2014). Such practices often occurred in

the theatre, which also provided sexual services (Kang, 2009). Whereas male homoeroticism was understood as male beauty, mode, fondness or taste, female homoeroticism was understood under the categories of sisterhood, friendship and emotion (Sang, 2003). Meanwhile, female homoeroticism could also satisfy men's polygamous fantasy (Sang, 2003).

Along with such relationships organised around social hierarchy, equal male homoerotic relationships also existed. The most pronounced one was the modality named as *Qi-xiongdi (契兄弟)* in the Fujian Province during the late Ming Dynasty (1368AD-1644AD) and Qing Dynasty (1644AD-1912AD), literally translated as contract brothers. In contrast to the unequal patron-actor relationship with more characteristics of amusement and prostitution, the *Qi-xiongdi* relationship was organised between ordinary people (Wu, 2000). Such a relationship was shown and recognised in public, and the sexual partner was comparatively stable (Wu, 2000). Like in the case of marriage, the partners needed to save some money and perform rituals to begin this relationship (Wu, 2000). Moreover, such a relationship was given recognition by parents, relatives and friends (Wu, 2012). Thus, Wu (2012:45) sees such relationships as "male homosexual marriages". However, this conclusion is questionable, because such a relationship was conditional, only practised before marriage though the partners might maintain their emotional and sexual relationship after marriage. It needs to be noted that such a relationship did not hinder men involved from entering a marriage. According to *Wanli yehuo bian* recorded by SHEN

Dufu, when the younger participant married a girl, the older participant would pay the expenses (Wu, 2012). However, the social norm of keeping the relationship as a pre-nuptial practice might be disrupted occasionally. SHEN Dufu documented a story in *Wanli yehuo bian* of two participants in the *Qi-xiongdi* relationship who committed suicide by "embracing tightly and throwing themselves into the sea" when they were pressured to relinquish their relationship and get married to women (Wu, 2012: 46).

Attitudes towards same-sex sexuality in traditional China were closely related to the traditional understanding of the human body, gender and kinship. Contrary to Western thought, there was no concept of "unnatural" sexual acts and perversion in traditional China (Zheng, 2014), as classical Chinese medicine did not view the human body in binary terms (Barlow, 1994). Meanwhile, the understanding of gender roles was constructed based on kinship norms. Marriage did not need to be based on passionate love (Chou, 2000; Fei, 1992[1947]), as marriage was understood from the perspective of society rather than sex (Chou, 2000). When comparing same-sex sexuality in traditional society and modern society, Wei (2012) contends that traditional China could equip a "homosexual individual" with a "heterosexual identity". However, in this thesis, Wei's argument is rendered inappropriate because in the traditional mind of a marriage society, without a binary understanding of sexual desire, marriage was not the expression of "heterosexual identity" but a universal necessity for everyone's happiness. Consequently, same-sex sexuality/sentiment never functioned as a competitive counterpart of (male-female) conjugality, regardless how individuals may

have been judged by the culture of "sexual orientation" and the "heterosexual-homosexual continuum" developed in Western modern societies.

1.4 Family Revolution

In the last two sections, this chapter has shown that, in Imperial China, marriage and same-sex sexuality/sentiment were not competitive with each other. However, with time, both the understanding of marriage and same-sex sexuality have undergone changes. This chapter reviews the changes of marriage norms in this section and the changes in the understanding of same-sex sexuality in the following section.

Since the late Qing Dynasty (1644AD-1912AD) and the early Republic period, intellectuals have generally started to reflect on the problems of the traditional kinship norms and to develop the idea of "family revolution". This was entirely expressed in China's May Fourth New Culture Movement during the 1910s and the 1920s, which aimed at replacing "old thought", "old culture" and "old morality" with "new thought", "new culture" and "new morality" towards a modern China. May Fourth intellectuals criticised traditional Han kinship norms as "feudal thoughts". They advocated free choice of spouses, free divorce, small conjugal families, gender equality and the abolishment of concubinage. May Fourth intellectuals believed that a family's function should be about bringing happiness to its individuals (Zhao, 2019). In the intellectuals' narratives, romantic love should be the centre of the new values of

modern China as it implies freedom, energy and sincerity and accords with intellectuals' expectations of the citizens of new China (Lee, 1983).

> For almost a decade, the keynote of this youthful emotional outburst was summarized in the amorphous word, love. For the May Fourth youths "riding on the tempestuous storm of romanticism", love had become the central focus of their lives. The writers themselves were leaders of this trend. It was considered *de rigueur* to produce some confessional love pieces and to evolve a "modern" (or mo-teng, in its chic Chinese transliteration) lifestyle based on love…Love had become an overall symbol of new morality, an easy substitute for the traditional ethos of propriety which was now equated with conformist restraint. In the general wave of emancipation, love was identified with freedom, in the sense that by loving and by releasing one's passions and energies the individual could become truly a full and free man - or woman. To love was also considered an act of defiance and sincerity, of renouncing all the artificial restraints of hypocritical society so as to find one's true self and expose it to one's beloved. (Lee, 1983: 477)

The May Fourth New Culture Movement successfully set the new family values for modern China. In 1931, the Nationalist Party's government (1928-1949) enacted a family code calling for equality between men and women, more equitable property rights for women, easier divorce, the abolishment of concubinage and of bigamy (Diamant, 2000). However, though the "new culture" had a huge influence in the public discourses, its effect was limited in some urban areas (Zhao, 2018), and so was the influence of the 1931 family code. When the Communist Party of China (CPC) took the state power, it acted as the promoter of social change (Yan, 2003). In 1950, the CPC government enacted the new marriage law, which abolished arranged marriage, concubinage, bigamy and "child brides" and enshrined marriage freedom. In terms of the kinship system, the CPC government aimed to transform the Han

patrilineal system into a bilineal kinship system where daughters, just like sons, should share the equal rights of inheriting the family. The model of an exclusive lifelong monogamous marriage, which was formed based on love, functioned as the standard to evaluate premarital behaviours and relationships (Evans, 1997). The mainstream discourses believed that forming a boyfriend-girlfriend relationship was the appropriate way to develop love, which was an essential factor to achieve the new marriage model (Evans, 1997). Love, as the standard model to judge sexuality and marriage could be seen in official discourses' attitudes to extramarital relationships. In the 1950s, the official discourses held a sort of defensive attitudes to extramarital relationships because they were believed to develop due to the prevalence of the arranged marriage, which needed to be abolished (Li, 2014). In the 1980s, however, official discourses viewed extra-marital relationships negatively as there was no reason to defend them anymore and because they often occurred along with corruption (Li, 2014). The CPC did not adopt Engels' and Marx' thoughts that the institution of family would be destructed (Diamant, 2000). In fact, it was the May Fourth agenda that was inherited by the CPC government. Consequently, there was a remarkable effect in rural areas during the 1950s, which was the increasing of match-making meetings as the replacement of the arranged marriage; in match-making meetings, parents or senior people took the initiative in introducing potential wives or husbands to young people and made them meet and decide whether they would want to marry each other (Zhang, 2009; Yan, 2003; Whyte, 2020).

1.5 "Same-sex Love" in Historical Changes

1.5.1 The Contested Meaning of *Tongxinglian*

When the May Fourth intellectuals discussed "love", they not only discussed male-female love, but also debated on the issues of same-sex love (Kang, 2009; Sang, 2003). Sang (2003) argues that intellectuals at that time needed to inspect human affection generally, so that they could define what was (male-female) love. It was in such a context where same-sex sexuality and same-sex love were under inspection as well. In this discussion and debate, the meaning of same-sex sexuality and same-sex love remained quite contested until the 1930s (Kang, 2009; Sang, 2003). Explaining why May Fourth intellectuals needed to examine same-sex love and other human emotions when they were advocating male-female love, Sang (2003: 101) writes:

> Part of the necessity stemmed, actually, from the fact that love between man and woman was being defined, debated, and advocated as young people's right and desire in China during the May Fourth era. Chinese intellectuals' examination of opposite-sex love required an inspection of human affection and attachment in general, for analogy but also for distinction and contrast. The examination extended to, among other things, friendship between man and woman and friendship between persons of the same-sex. In a sense, to establish love between man and woman as the centre of human affection, Chinese intellectuals had to delineate its boundaries and identify relationships that were peripheral to or overlapped with it, including kinship, friendship and "abnormal" forms of love.

What Sang (2003) implies is that same-sex love was seen as the counterpart of male-female love. *Tongxinglian* was a Chinese term translated from homosexuality.

However, literally, the term *tongxinglian* means same-sex love rather than same-sex sexuality. This was a new term in Chinese language; before its occurrence, male homoeroticism was described as "obsession" or "fondness of male beauty" (Sang, 2003; Kang, 2009). In addition, Sang (2003) finds that, on the linguistic level, the Imperial China did not make a clear distinction between friendship and love; both of them were under the category of feelings (*qing,* 情). Sang (2003) suspects that some cultures' obsession of separating love and friendship into two different categories is coextensive with homophobia. In the first half of the twentieth century, Chinese intellectuals used the term *tongxinglian* to express two meanings: "same-sex sexuality" and "same-sex love" (Kang, 2009). "Same-sex love" provided and specified a new understanding and a new relationship model, emphasising mutual emotion, empathy and respect. In this respect, Sang (2003: 104) states the following:

> It was of tremendous import, therefore, when this exalted, magical discursive construct *lian'ai* was combined with the words for "same-sex" to form the concept "romantic love between people of the same-sex." The early Republican intellectuals translated homosexuality, not as *tongxing xingyu* (sames-sex desire) or *tongxing xingjiao* (same-sex sexual intercourse), but as *tongxing lian'ai* (same-sex love). The neologism's difference from traditional Chinese categories of male-male eroticism is apparent, for the latter focused exclusively on the carnal and the sensual.

Emphasising "love" as such is also shared by the modern West world. Ward (2015)'s study conducted in the context of the United States finds that modern Western societies understand "real gayness" as romantic love and tenderness, distinguishing it from the "meaningless" same-sex encounters. When May Fourth intellectuals

expressed their support to the *tongxinglian*, what they were supporting was "same-sex love", rather than homoerotic relationships organised upon the social hierarchy. For the intellectuals who supported same-sex love, like YU Dafu, HU Qiuyuan and GUO Moruo, same-sex love was understood as the natural expression of human feelings (Kang, 2009). HU Qiuyuan, influenced by Edward Carpenter's work, even saw same-sex love as the symbol of human utopia (Kang, 2009; Lu, 2014). Actually, Chinese intellectuals in the early twentieth century did not accept the pathologisation of same-sex attraction without hesitation. Diverse writings on this issue were translated in the early twentieth century, contesting the meaning of male same-sex relations (Sang, 2003). Chinese intellectuals' acceptance of the pathologisation was closely interconnected with the 1930s national crisis (Kang, 2009).

1.5.2 The National Crisis, Sexology and "Rescuing China"

The rest of the world did not hold hostile attitudes towards same-sex sexuality like European-Christian societies did. Western colonialism spread the criminalisation and pathologisation of same-sex sexuality to the rest of the world. Furthermore, the co-constitution of the Western colonialism and homophobia was no coincidence (Nandy, 1989). In *Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*, Nandy (1989) points out that the colonial ideology of British India was built on two types of fundamental institutional discrimination: sex and age. Western patriarchy feminised the men involved in same-sex sexuality (Butler, 1999[1990]). According to

this logic, the practices of male same-sex sexuality were seen as a threat to male dominance. Under the British dominance on India, Indians were viewed by British colonialism as immature people like children and women (Nandy, 1989). India's tolerance for same-sex practices was the evidence of their immaturity as well. This immaturity was used to provide the legitimacy of the British colonisation of India. On the symbolic level, how the West colonised the rest of the world was just like how they governed children and women in their homeland. Nandy (1989: 4) analyses this homology in detail as follows:

> The homology between sexual and political dominance which Western colonialism invariably used-in Asia, Africa and Latin America - was not an accidental by-product of colonial history. It had its correlates in other situations of oppression with which the West was involved, the American experience with slavery being the best documented of them. The homology, drawing support from the denial of psychological bisexuality in men in large areas of Western culture, beautifully legitimized Europe's post-medieval models of dominance, exploitation and cruelty as natural and valid. Colonialism, too, was congruent with the existing Western sexual stereotypes and the philosophy of life which they represented. It produced a cultural consensus in which political and socio-economic dominance symbolized the dominance of men and masculinity over women and femininity.

Then, the traditional meaning of sexuality in India was ruptured. Under such a context, when some Indian groups wanted to fight against British colonialism, they employed dominant masculinity as their weapon (Nandy, 1989). This did not only happen in India. Similar phenomena happened in the Chinese context as well.

As shown in this chapter, during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, when Western sexology pathologising same-sex sexuality was introduced and translated in China, it was not accepted directly without hesitation. During the

beginning of the twentieth century, diverse thoughts on same-sex love were translated in mainland China. However, the national crisis in the 1930s drove the society to accept the idea of dominant masculinity which suppressed same-sex sexuality, as a way to save China.

The crucial social dynamic facilitating the acceptance of pathology thinking was the nationalisation of the body. During the second half of the nineteenth century, China, an old civilisation, was involved in a severe crisis encountering colonialism and global capitalism. Since then, Chinese intellectuals and different regimes started to explore different ways to build a modern China. It was in such a context where the human body became the source for nationalism discourses. Notably, Chinese intellectuals did not choose this strategy at the beginning, but they paid attention to technology and political institutions during the early stage. The failure of several reforming movements, such as introducing advanced technology and reforming the political institutions, made intellectuals shift the focus onto the human body (Huang, 2006). During this process, discourses in Europe, the United States and Japan also provided the reference for Chinese intellectuals to construct a derivative discourse (Huang, 2006). Nationalist thoughts about the human body were quite different from traditional Confucianism thoughts about it. Chinese intellectuals showed their dissatisfaction with the traditional view of the body with its focus on self-cultivation, because it was not effective when China was deep in its national crisis (Huang, 2006). It was in such a context that the body reconstruction movement started in China.

With the aim of building a strong body towards building a strong modern China, the body reconstruction movement developed different attitudes towards the female body and the male body, specifically, liberating the female body and disciplining the male body. Banning foot binding was a typical example of liberating women in the early twentieth century. Banning women's foot binding was first advocated by missionaries in the 1870s; however, it was in the late 1890s when this issue became a social movement supported by both the ruling and opposition powers because, in the intellectuals' discourses, women's foot-binding hindered women from contributing to the country's labourforce, which disadvantaged the nation (Huang, 2006). So, the social dynamic of this movement at that time was neither protecting women's rights nor a reflection on aesthetics, but the survival of the Chinese Nation (Huang, 2006).

The discourses on sexuality during the Republican period (1912-1949) featured evolutionism, nationalism and scientism (Lu, 2014). As for the issue of same-sex sexuality, though there were diverse and contested discourses from the early 1920s to the 1930s, the discourses which viewed same-sex love positively, gave way to the narratives seeking to strengthen the nation through sexology (Kang, 2009). As the threat from Japan in the 1930s intensified the national crisis, writings seeking to strengthen the nation through building masculinity and erasing same-sex sexuality became more dominant (Kang, 2009). Behind the introduction and translation of Western sexology was the strong intension to cultivate new citizens and their bodies, which was part of the intellectuals' blueprint to build a modern nation-state (Chen,

2013). This motivation made the role of sexology in China quite different from its role in the West. In contrast to the West where sexology pathologised same-sex sexuality and saw it as an individual's psychological problem, sexology in mainland China during the Republican period (1912-1949) was understood as "modern" knowledge "used more to diagnose social and national problems" (Kang, 2009: 42). "Male same-sex relations were stigmatized more as a disruptive social deviance than a personal medical condition" (Kang, 2009: 43). The patron-actor or literati-catamite homoerotic relationship, which was once seen as the symbol of status and taste, soon became a shameful practice of an uncivilised world in China in the first half of the twentieth century (Lu, 2014). Based on these historical facts, it can be concluded that in these narratives based on nationalism, same-sex sexuality was not a personal behaviour anymore, but part of the sexual citizenship during such a national crisis. Suppressing male same-sex sexuality became a citizens' duty to rescue China.

Along with relating masculinity and suppressing same-sex sexuality with rescuing China, was the criticism of the unequal male homoerotic relationships. These homoerotic practices were condemned as exploitation, forced prostitution and suffering for those in the lower classes (Zheng, 2014; Zheng, 2015; Kang, 2009). By such logic, it was natural to reform the Peking operas, especially the *dan* male actors, during this period. In late Imperial China, *dan* male actors performed female roles on the one hand and provided sexual services on the other hand. The reforming applied the aesthetic principle to legalise the practices of men playing female roles, and to

make a distinction between an actor's on-stage aesthetic femininity and his "off-stage image as a respectable masculine heterosexual modern citizen" (Kang, 2009: 126). Furthermore, the newspaper narratives started to depict the official-actor relationship as a friendship, rather than a homoerotic relationship (Kang, 2009).

In 1944, Havelock Ellis' book *Psychology of Sex*, translated into Chinese by PAN Guangdan, which viewed same-sex attraction as a sexual perversion, was published. The publication of this book marked the prevalence of pathologisation of same-sex sexuality during the Republican period (Lu, 2014). This book has been functioning as one of the most important scientific resources supporting pathologisation until today, and Ellis' oppositional attitudes towards conversion therapy have been ignored (Lu, 2014). In the 1990s, conversion therapy was introduced to mainland China under the motivation to get modern and advanced technology (Bao, 2018). The history that the same-sex love was once viewed positively in the first half of the twentieth century was forgotten as well (Kang, 2009). Pathologisation gave rise to an extreme attitude towards same-sex sexuality, homoeroticism and same-sex attraction, viewing them as a mental illness, as a whole, regardless of the way they are socially and culturally expressed.

As a matter of course, studies conducted in the 1990s and the 2000s (Chou, 1996; Kong, 2010) found that, influenced by pathologising same-sex attraction and practices, when some people sensed their same-sex attraction, they viewed it as perversion and felt sick about themselves.

1.5.3 Official Discourses after 1949

During the Maoist period (1949-1978), the issues of same-sex sexuality and same-sex love virtually disappeared within public discourses (Sang, 2003; Lu, 2014). From the 1950s to the 1970s, official discourses were silent on the issues of same-sex sexuality (Evans, 1997). Official discourses after 1949 followed the cultural legacy of the Republican period, viewing male-female love as human natural feelings and viewing same-sex sexuality and same-sex love as a mental illness. What was new was that same-sex sexuality was represented as a social disease of Western capitalism, and a contradiction to a now socialist new China. In the official discourses, same-sex sexuality and same-sex love were seen as lust, just like drug use, gambling and prostitution (Li, 2014). Since socialist citizens should have noble pursue, they should not get addicted to materialist desire or sexual lust. Meanwhile, the use of the term "sodomy" also conveyed negative meaning of same-sex love (Lu, 2014). Since the end of 1970s, mainland China eventually shifted the focus from political movements to economy development; the idea that same-sex sexuality as a contradiction to socialism was on the decline. But what was new emerging in the 1980s was that, when same-sex attraction was still seen as a mental illness, the explosion of AIDS also made same-sex sexuality remain connected to the discourse of social diseases (Lu, 2014).

Since the 1990s, as the scholars were translating the thoughts from the West and doing research in the local context, a new type of discourse appeared: liberalism discourse, arguing that *tongxinglian* was a reasonable life that deserved social tolerance (Lu, 2014). In 1997, "hooliganism" as a crime was abolished from criminal law. This event is usually interpreted as the decriminalisation of homosexuality in mainland China. The term "hooliganism" had been a catchy-all and vague provision refer to a variety of anti-social and immoral behaviours like looking for fights, and which could also refer to sexual offences like harassing women (Worth et al., 2019; Dikötter, 1997). Practices of (male) same-sex sexuality found were punished under the concept of "hooliganism" (which became a formal crime listed in Criminal Law in 1979), especially during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and the late 1970s and early 1980s (Worth et al., 2019). However, Guo (2007) finds that in the process of amending the law, the issues of same-sex sexuality did not attract any discussion or debate at all, as the main consideration for amending the law was that the crime of hooliganism conflicted with the principle of law development agenda: "no penalty without a law", which could be seen in the crime "hooliganism" being replaced by six different crimes, including molesting or humiliating women, child molestation, promiscuous activities, gang fights, stealing or insulting corpses and picking quarrels and provoking troubles. Guo (2007) explains that crimes like hooliganism, disappeared naturally when the focus of government shifted away from ideology. Though the amending law was not targeted at same-sex sexuality, the people who practised same-sex sexuality, especially men, were exempted from criminal

punishment (Guo, 2007). In 2001, homosexuality was removed from the Chinese Classification of Mental Disorders-3 (CCMD-3), with the remaining of *ego-dystonic homosexuality*. Despite some shortcomings, the publishing of CCMD-3 is interpreted as the de-pathologisation of homosexuality in China. Lu (2014) contends that both the "decriminalisation" in 1997 and the "depathologisation" in 2001 are the results of strategic interpretation conducted by the media and cultural elites, in a way that facilitated reconstructing the understanding of same-sex sexuality and same-sex love.

1.6 How Same-sex Love Becomes a Family Problem

Even though official and public discourses demonstrate homophobia and pathologise same-sex sexuality during and after the Maoist period, individuals can practise same-sex sexuality in their daily life. Furthermore, unlike the same-sex intimacy and physical proximity which are seen as common in friendship, the premarital male-female boundary is the one that really needs to be kept (Sang, 2003). For many individuals, same-sex attraction still does not function as a counterpart competing with male-female relationships and marriage. Extant academic studies (Wei, 2012; Kong, 2010; Engebretsen, 2013; Fu, 2012) have already concluded factors that provide more autonomy for people to explore and practise same-sex sexuality and empower them, which include marketisation, industrialisation, urbanisation, decollectivisation, the development of the Internet, new communication and information technologies like mobile apps and online chat rooms and the development

of gay consumer markets. However, an increased autonomy of practising same-sex sexuality does not necessarily mean that these individuals would wilfully reject marriage.

During the Republican period, intellectuals, whether supporting or opposing same-sex love, understood it as situational rather than essential and binary (Sang, 2003; Kang, 2009). This is quite different from the knowledge of "sexual orientation" which started to spread widely in mainland China since the 1990s. This new knowledge produces sexual identities largely based on the typology of homosexuality, heterosexuality and bisexuality. The Chinese terms *tongzhi* and *lala* have become become the indigenous self-identities of homosexuality, which are widely adopted by individuals involved in same-sex sexuality. The term *tongzhi* can generally mean gay and lesbian, or specifically points to a gay individual; whereas, *lala* refers to a lesbian individual. Under such a context, several studies (Ho, 2009; Wei, 2012; Engebretsen, 2013; Kam, 2013) on same-sex sexuality and same-sex love in China examine how individuals construct their self-identity as a gay/lesbian/*tongzhi*/*lala* first and take it as the basis to discuss their daily practices and social activism. However, it must be stressed, as mentioned in the Introduction, that this thesis mainly discusses individuals' thinking and practices related to sexuality, love, intimacy and family, without implying that these practices stem from individuals' sexual identity.

Along with the narratives that marriage should be formed on male-female love, the knowledge of "same-sex orientation" stresses the potential conflict between same-sex love and conventional marriage. Two kinds of discourses, the gay and lesbian activism discourses and the feminist discourses of *tongqi* (gay men's wives), have been taking efforts to illegitimatise the practices of a person getting married normally while simultaneously having extramarital same-sex sexuality. In activism discourse, same-sex attracted people who enter marriage are the victims of the "heterosexual hegemony". Feminist discourses, for their part, conduct a moralist trail to those "gay men" who get married to women normally. In feminist discourses, these men are perpetrators conducting a "marriage fraud" (*pianhun,骗婚*) and harming "innocent women", who are the victims of such practices. Zhu (2018b) concludes two kinds of narratives making these women "become" victims: the sex-love-marriage package and the binary understanding of homosexuality/heterosexuality; thus, these women become the identity-based victim. Apart from media discourses, some cases concerning a gay husband even go to court. In 2012, conflict broke out after a wife found out that her husband was gay. At last, the wife jumped to death. The wife's parents sued the husband for compensation, believing that he had been the reason for their daughter's death by hiding his same-sex orientation and entering the marriage by cheating. At last, the court did not accept the claim of "going into marriage by fraud". Facing these cases, the Beijing No.1 Intermediate Court even wrote a report discussing the claims and possible solutions of similar cases, suggesting that a wife of

a gay men could be viewed as a “non-defaulting party”; thus, she could get a reasonable advantage of property division (Luo, 2013).

This chapter has shown that generally speaking, under the influence of “sexual orientation” narratives and the idea of the sex-love-marriage package, the popular narratives see same-sex sexuality as competitive and incompatible with marriage. However, abstract discourses do not map neatly onto real-life experiences. Individuals’ identity formation and understanding of marriage, family and intimacy are more complicated. Research in the 1990s found that when women discovered their husbands’ same-sex relationships, they did not see it as a threat to their marriage and family (Wang and Li, 1992; Li, 1998). Wang and Li (1992) conclude that marriage is the criteria to judge the legitimacy of sexuality, and procreation is the standard to judge the severity of sexuality. Thus, it is extramarital male-female sexuality that is significantly illegitimate and a threat to marriage and family happiness since it may cause illegitimate reproduction (Wang and Li, 1992). Yet, totally different from such understanding, *tongqi* discourses accept the binary understanding of heterosexuality/homosexuality and insist that “gay men’s” wives never receive any love from their husbands (Zhu, 2018b).

The fieldwork in the 2010s also showed the existence and continuation of family-based and or marriage-centred thinking, which had not been replaced by the thinking based on sexual preference. Kong (2010)’s study in Hong Kong and Guangdong Province showed that practising same-sex sexuality did not necessarily

imply rejecting marriage, as a companionate marriage meant security, protection and comfort for individuals. Wei (2010)'s study also found that there were parts of middle-class "gay men" in Shanghai who wanted to get married. Zhu (2018b; 2018c)'s fieldwork also revealed that same-sex attraction could be compatible with marriage, represented in some typical cases: (1) a man with same-sex attraction did not identify himself as gay or straight but a married man supporting family; (2) a wife saw her husband as a responsible person supporting the family even though she knew her husband's same-sex sexuality more or less. This is closely related to how individuals understand marriage. Though the transnational homosexual movements describe their project as "liberation", a new form of control can be found. On the one hand, public narratives of activism want to exempt "gay and lesbian" people from the duty to get married. On the other hand, such activism is also aiming to expel same-sex attracted people from the marriage institution and deprive them of the right of getting married. Confronted with the discourses of gay and lesbian activism, and those of feminism underscoring the idea of "marriage fraud", married "gay men" do not have enough power to defend themselves (Zhu, 2018b). The attitudes of traditional China and contemporary *tongqi* discourses towards relationships between same-sex sexuality and marriage are different. Comparing them leads to the conclusion that, in a society valuing marriage, the binary understanding of same-sex sexuality and heterosexuality could cause a kind of exclusion in public narratives. Consequently, a person (especially a man) eligible for marriage should elude same-sex sexuality.

Though same-sex love and gay/lesbian identity may not necessarily lead to rejecting marriage, discourses of sexual identities and of marriage being based on male-female love consider same-sex love as competing with male-female relationships and getting married. Thus, getting married normally is not so self-evident anymore. For many individuals practising same-sex love, whether to get married becomes an issue that they need to think about. In Wei (2012)'s ethnography study in the city of Chengdu, an interviewee with a life experience in the United States compares the contexts of two places, concluding that while people ask about coming out in the United States, in Chengdu, people ask about marriage.

However, thinking about and making a decision on marriage is not just an issue about personal sexual preference and the personal understanding of marriage, but also about the family's intergenerational relationship. Existing academic literature has already revealed that families, especially parents, function as one of the most significant factors in the everyday practices of Chinese gay and lesbian people. They are facing the expectation and pressure from their parents to get married and have offspring. In her ethnographic fieldwork during the 1990s, Rofel (2007) noticed a salon in a coffee bar in Beijing. People there did not want to challenge the government for "rights", but they considered getting married and raising offspring as their keen responsibility (Rofel, 2007). Based on this observation, Rofel (2007) concludes that "cultural citizenship", referring to the desire for belonging to and keeping harmony with the family and Chinese society, is the real issue for Chinese gays and lesbians. Kong

(2010) highlights two issues concerning family: children's familial role and the face of the family. A filial son generally means a son showing love and respect to his parents and the elderly, of which getting married and fulfilling the obligation to continue the family bloodline is a major part (Kong, 2010). As for the face of the family, it is another important issue because public disgrace has side effects on the family's reputation (Kong, 2010). Under the pressure from parents, many gay and lesbian people enter marriage reluctantly. Therefore, nowadays, the Internet is replete with stories, about gay and lesbian people's pain in marriage and about pain when facing parents' pressure to get married.

When conventional marriage is problematic, a marriage between a gay and a lesbian provides another option for them to keep harmony with parents and their own life. In Mandarin Chinese, this is expressed by the term: *xingshi hunyin*, the literal translation of which is and it is ostensible marriage. In English academic works, several terms are used to describe this kind of marriage, including nominal marriage, fake marriage (Wang, 2017), sham marriage (Zheng, 2015), cooperative marriage (Wang, 2019; Zhu, 2018a; Wang, 2014b), contract marriage (Engebretsen, 2017; Engebretsen, 2013) and marriage of convenience (Kong, 2010). The multi ways of the term's usage show the complexity of such marriages. In some cases, such a marriage is purely nominal as the participants' main responsibility is showing up in each other's social and/or family occasions as husband and wife. In such cases, the participants do not see it as a real-life union. While in some other cases, such marriages may involve more

cooperation such as living together and raising children together. For gay and lesbian individuals, this type of marriage provides protection and an integration between their aspiration to reject a conventional marriage and the traditional responsibility (Wang, 2019; Ho, 2009; Kam, 2013). However, marriages like these are also criticised as escaping and dishonest by the narratives of identity politics which believe in equality. In the context where forming a conventional marriage is condemned as "marriage fraud", such a marriage provides the full legitimacy for extramarital same-sex sexuality and love.

Despite the dilemmas individuals are facing, existing academic research has found an effective tool utilised to deal with their families of origin: tacit practice. Chou (2000) names it as "coming home" based on the research on mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. When parents have already sensed their children's lifestyle of *tongxinglian*, both children and parents avoid the confrontment of coming out and choose a tacit way to maintain the relationship (Chou, 2000; Kong, 2010). Wei (2012) argues that even though gay and lesbian children do not speak it out, they are not entirely invisible. On the one hand, many gay and lesbian people present their lovers at home as good friends like a brother or sister (Wei, 2012; Fu, 2012; Kam, 2013). On the other hand, staying outside marriage is already a piece of vague information which can subtly hint towards their sexual orientation (Wei, 2012). The tacit strategy has also been found in other contexts like Singapore (Tan, 2011), Dominican immigrant

in New York (Decena, 2011), US Latina (Acosta, 2011) and the Caribbean (Valens, 2013).

Chou (2000) believes that "coming home" could be an alternative approach as it conforms to family harmony, a basic principle in Chinese culture. However, Wong (2007) criticises the binary thinking of the West and non-West, and argues that "coming out" could also be a way of "coming home" in the following excerpt:

> Coming home and resolving the tension between sexual identity and family relations will continue to be a major issue for tongzhi who are coming out…Coming out can be a way of coming home; just as much as coming home can be a way of coming out. Coming out as a diffusion item allows the receiving contexts to bring their cultural resources to bear upon the cultural imports. The precise meanings of coming out cannot be predetermined without examining processes of indigenization and cultural adaptation. (Wong, 2007: 612)

In this respect, the "PFLAG China" community's approach is accordance with Wong (2007)'s idea that coming out is a way of coming home, because parents and their children in the "PFLAG China" community are taking efforts to achieve family happiness together, which is the focus of this thesis.

1.7 A Review of Studies on Parents with Gay and Lesbian children

A dearth of academic studies discussing parents with gay and lesbian children have been conducted, mainly in the context of the United States. It needs to be noted that in these works, the gay and lesbian identity/lifestyle has already been understood as separate from heterosexuality, including separate from the (male-female) marriage.

Historian Murry (2010) analyses the backgrounds of the rise of family coming out: (1) the long-term development of the idea of companionate/affectionate family valuing the emotional rather than economic presence; (2) the change of focus of the homophile movement. The gay politics movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s was aligning with other liberation movements, including the counterculture, women's liberation, the New Left, black nationalism, the student and peace movements, and was a part of the wide-reaching critique of American politics and American social life; by the late 1970s, this radicalism was giving way to reformist activism, and the move for family restoration coincided with this change (Murry, 2010). The gay life in the post-Stonewall period goes "beyond the closet" and individuals have the chance to come out and remain integral members within their families (Sediman, 2004).

Among the studies on parents with gay and lesbian children conducted in the Western world, the issues discussed include: (1) parents' reactions to the disclosure of a homosexual son/daughter, the factors influencing their reactions, and the influence on family relationships (Baiocco et al., 2015; Ben-Ari, 1995; Savin-Williams and Dubé, 1998; Savin-Williams, 2001; Beeler and DiProva, 1999; Martin et al., 2010; Gonzalez et al., 2013; Bertone and Franchi, 2014; Grafsky, 2014; Švab and Kuhar, 2014; Goodrich, 2009; Savin-Williams and Ream, 2003; Phillips and Ancis, 2008; Bernstein, 1990; Willoughby et al., 2008; Fields, 2001); (2) the experiences of dealing with stigma and closet (Martin et al., 2010; Bertone and Franchi, 2014; Švab and Kuhar, 2014; Johnson and Benson, 2014); (3) parents' experiences and participation in LGBT

activism (Fields, 2001; Arm et al., 2009; Cappellato and Mangarella, 2014; Broad et al., 2004; Johnson and Best, 2012; Broad, 2002; Broad, 2011).

Since the late 1970s, academic studies focused mainly on parents' reactions and the processes and stages of acceptance that parents go through, many researchers have a psychological background. The background is that the parents' discovery of their children's homosexuality leads to a family crisis or emotional distress (Silverstein, 1977; Martin and Hetrick, 1988; Myers, 1982; Plummer, 1989; Willoughby et al., 2008).

Researchers have established a mourning/loss model to describe the reaction of parents when facing the disclosure of children's gay and lesbian identity; in this model, facing the disclosure of children's identity is metaphorised as the experience of learning of one's own impending death (Savin-Williams, 2001). In Kübler-Ross (1969)'s psychological work, the process that a person knowing and accepting one's own impending death includes: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Savin-Williams and Dubé (1998) review the academic works conducted from the late 1970s to early 1990s, and conclude that the developmental model of parental reactions discussed by these works includes six stages: shock, denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. However, critics (Savin-Williams and Dubé, 1998; Savin-Williams, 2001) argue that this linear model is too simplistic and untrue, and it also lacks support from empirical studies.

In contrast to this linear model, other studies have found and documented parents' diverse reactions. Based on interviewing young adults who reported the reactions of their parents, Ben-Ari (1995) finds the following post discovery variates: shock, denial, anger, rejection, guilt, shame ,acknowledgement and acceptance, and perceived improvement of parent-child relationship. Along with these feelings, other feelings and reactions found include: self-blame, hurt, empathy, fear losing the connection to child, fear the safety of their child, confusion, worrying about the causality, and no response at all (Švab and Kuhar, 2014; Goodrich, 2009; Beeler and DiProva, 1999; Bernstein, 1990). Beeler and DiProva (1999) conclude the twelve themes observed in most subjects' experiences, which are: establishing rules for discussing homosexuality, seeking information about homosexuality and the gay community from gay-positive sources, second-guessing the sexuality of others ("who else?" syndrome), exposure to gays and lesbians living "gay and lesbian lives", making homosexuality less exotic, including gay and lesbian friends in the family, dealing with the heterosexual world's institutions and conventions, working through feelings of sadness, loss, blame, family coming out, developing alternative visions of the future, stigma management, developing narrative coherency. Saltzburg (2004) concludes the common themes that parents whose children are gay and lesbian adolescents face, which are awareness of difference, knowing with certainty after coming out, emotional detachment, fears of estrangement, adjustment and education.

Apart from concluding parents' negative feelings, the positive aspects of parents' experiences have also been discussed. Discussing the parents with LGBTQ children in but not limited to the PFLAG in the United States, Gonzalez et al. (2013) conclude five primary themes as positive aspects of being the parent of an LGBTQ children: personal growth (open mindedness, new perspectives, awareness of discrimination, and compassion), positive emotions (pride and unconditional love), activism, social connection, and closer relationships (closer to child and family closeness). These findings addressed are mainly based on Western contexts, and some are also found in some Chinese societies (Hong Kong and Taiwan), which will be reviewed later in this section.

The existing studies have shown that apart from accepting their children, parents have other fears and issues to deal with. Švab and Kuhar (2014)'s study in Slovenia finds that mothers often act as the mitigator of reactions between the child and other family members. The mother assumes the role of gatekeeper in order for the information to be kept within the family or hidden from some family members, most often the father, and sometimes the parents assume the role of gatekeeper for protective reasons; based on this finding, Švab and Kuhar (2014) suggest the existence of a "transparent closet" and "family closet". Besides, according to Švab and Kuhar (2014), some parents fear that their children may get HIV/AIDS, and potential negative consequences their children might experience (social stigma, social exclusion, violence, and so forth).

Some studies have discussed the cultural tool kits that parents could rely on when facing the disclosure of their children's gay and lesbian identity and lifestyle. Martin et al. (2010) point out that parents are likely to collect a variety of tools from this field for responding to, understanding, and reacting to a child's disclosure of a gay or lesbian identity, including consulting professional counsellors, rejecting stereotypes of gays and lesbians in favour of normalised ideals, and relying on good parenting, and the discussion of the religious issues. Along with the work of Martin et al. (2010), many studies (Goodrich, 2009; Baiocco et al., 2015; Bertone and Franchi, 2014; Phillips and Ancis, 2008) have shown that the Christian religion and belief is a significant issue in the discussion of family acceptance and the parents' experiences in the Western context; parents may struggle when comparing their children's same-sex sexuality with their religious beliefs. The research conducted by Baiocco et al. (2015) in the Italian context shows that strong religious belief is an factor connected with negative parental reactions.

Martin et al. (2010) analyse the narratives and themes of the documents assisting parents with facing the disclosure of children's homosexual identity. Differently, Phillips and Ancis (2008)'s empirical study focuses on the experiences of European American parents, and finds that parents need to deal with three dimensions, which are emotional dimension, cognitive and behavioral dimension and the moral and spiritual dimension. On the spiritual level, parents examine and redefine their value

systems, and even change the parish (Phillips and Ancis, 2008). This is also found in the Italian context (Bertone and Franchi, 2014).

The issue of Christianity not only influence parents' daily experiences, but also the practices of parents' organisations. Broad et al. (2004) discusses the practices of PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) in the United States from its discursive contention with the Chrisitan Religious Right; the study argues that the primary focus of PFLAG is not the sexuality activism but a discourse about families and religious values, which challenges the "family values" held by the Religious Right. PFLAG does morality through church talk and narrating moral leadership, aiming to correct the misinterpretations of the Bible and to connect religious faith with supporting gays and lesbians (Broad et al., 2004). Based on these findings, Broad et al. (2004) conclude that PFLAG disrupts the legitimacy and authority of the Religious Right's family discourse and produces inclusion as new family values and new religious values. Similar with the PFLAG in the United States, Bertone and Franchi (2014) show that in the Italian context, love, simultaneously inspired by a therapeutic understanding and a Christian notion of mercy (towards gay and lesbian people as they are suffering), provides a significant frame for parents; besides redefining the Chrisitan love concept, parents may also change their parishes.

The practices and roles of parents in activism have also attracted the researchers' focus.

Based on the fieldwork in Metro Parents and Allies for Gay Empowerment (Metro PAGE) from December 1993 to March 1995, Fields (2001) analyses parents' identity work in a context influenced by the idea of viewing homosexuality as the arrest in sexual development, the idea linking masculinity and femininity to heterosexuality (both the ideas imply the failure of parents), and the stereotypes of promiscuity. In such a context, parents struggle to simultaneously recover from the loss of themselves-as-normal along with the loss of their-children-as-normal, and thus the parents' identity work emphasises that their children conform to gender norms and that their children participate in a monogamous and romantic relationship (Fields, 2001). Moreover, Fields (2001) argues that parents' identity work also relies on "conventional parenting" (in the American context), as parents empahsise the parenting model of respecting children's autonomy and unconditional love, which could minimise the importance of sexual identity. Fields (2001) sees this as "conventional parenting" (in the American middle-class context), and from a liberationist standpoint, argues that the gender, sexual and familial conceptions that these parents rely on limit the challenge that the Metro PAGE poses on the normalcy. Some similar findings are also concluded from the Italian context. Bertone and Franchi (2014) identify several conditions of parents' acceptance in Catholic Italy: (1) suffering gay and lesbian people should be loved and get a happier life; (2) the essential understanding of homosexuality (compared with a suspicious attitude towards bisexuality); (3) parents are willing to struggle for a legal and social recognition for an authentic love belonging to the private sphere of the couple, but are

also keen to police the behaviours of gay and lesbian people like the public expressions of sexuality and the mockery towards the Church.

Organisations like PFLAG (in the United States) not only support parents but also take efforts to participate in advocacy, have also been discussed in academic studies. Broad (2011) discusses the meaning-making work of PFLAG and its individuals in the 1990s, and argues that love is the emotion central to its framing work. In the 1990s, parents experienced grief when facing the disclosure of children's LGBT identity, and PFLAG were bringing parents to "true acceptance"; however, its discourses did not see acceptance as the end of the journey, but saw "coming out" and advocacy as the next step, motivated by love and supporting children; thus, Broad (2011) concludes that the love-as-advocacy motivates an identity logic focusing on individual psychological health, but less so for an interest-group logic fighting for LGBT equality.

Except the work conducted by parents' organisations, parents' experiences and their particular moral role in activism has also been discussed. Based on the fieldwork in PFLAG in the United States from January 2009 to June 2010, Johnson and Best (2012) use the concept of "moral career" to analyse parents coming out as parents with gay and lesbian children, PFLAG meetings which build the moral solidarity among parents, and parents' participating in pride parades. Johnson and Best (2012) find that a line is drawn between good parents loving and supporting their children and the parents who reject their children. Thus, these parents' moral careers are as "radical

normals" and "reluctant activists" because they are motivated to become advocates by "conventional" and "traditional" (in American context) family concerns of loving, supporting a child, inclusion and happiness (Johnson and Best, 2012). Broad (2002) discusses what selves of parents are produced in the network of PFLAG in the United States. The article finds that PFLAG parents in the United States do not talk as "gay activists" but the heterosexual parents who are helping their children; thus, these parents are constructed as the "bridge" and "window" between gay and lesbian community and mainstream society.

Except for the research conducted within Western contexts, mainly in the United States, a small amount of research has discussed the experiences in some Chinese societies (Hong Kong and Taiwan).

In Hong Kong, the decriminalisation of same-sex behaviour between consenting adults in 1991 changed the local context, which witnessed that increasing numbers of gay men requested help from counselling and school social workers (Ho, 1999). In this context, Ho (1999) published an article exploring the use of a social constructionist approach and discussing the relationship between a mother who had difficulties accepting that her son was gay. Here, the mother was a widow whose husband died due to an illness, and saw bringing her son up according to the expectation of family and society as her responsibility, especially after her husband's death, felt guilty due to failing to teach her son the right way and wondered whether her son being gay was her fault whilst bringing up her son. Both the mother and the

son saw themselves as the victim of each other. The counselling, which used a social constructionist approach, helped the mother and the son reconstruct the narratives of their relationship. The mother was encouraged to examine her conception of homosexuality, rethink her role as a mother and the relationship with her son, and think about the possibility of valuing herself as someone besides a good mother.

Other research has also discussed the experiences of parents in Taiwan. In an article published in 2003, through interviewing gay men aged between 16 and 42, Bih (2003) discusses parents' diverse reactions: (1) denial (eg. believing that children will change after having girlfriends); (2) feeling guilty or doubt whether there is any problem in childbearing; (3) attributing it to the environmental issues like suspecting that their children are influenced by bad friends, which may cause restricting children's freedom or sources of information; (4) not discussing this issue with their children anymore after the disclosure; (5) arguing that their children should change the sexual orientation (eg.get psychotherapy); (6) worrying that their children would be discriminated, be lonely, get AIDS or lose masculinity; in this study, few parents who are open and have intimate relationships with their children try to understand their children's situation and provide support.

Based on interviews with one father and two mothers with gay children, Chang (2004) discusses the stressors of these parents, which include traditional culture, the understanding of parents, and the worries regarding children's life. In this study, the "traditional culture" refers to the idea of having the next generation to continue the

family line and raising children to prepare for old age. The other stressors concluded by this study include the negative information towards homosexuality, and parents' worries regarding their children, especially the safe sex. This study divides parents' stressors concerning parenthood into two layers: (1) the conception of unselfish and great parents' love implying that good parents should accept their children, prevents parents from dealing with their own conflictive emotions; (2) good parenthood relating to whether they raise a child who meets the social expectation, and the stigma of homosexuality viewing it as the result of childrearing problems. Thus, Chang (2004) finds that the idea of seeing sexual orientation as inborn can relieve parents' feelings of guilty.

Chen (2008) focuses on the experiences of three mothers with a gay son, two mothers with a lesbian daughter and a father with a lesbian daughter in the network of Taiwan Tongzhi Hotline Association, who have the experiences of "coming out" to others; the subtopics of this study includes the change of the parent-child relationship, parents' interaction with young gay/lesbian volunteers and other parents, parents' "coming out" in their daily life, and their experiences of participating in activism. This study finds that all parent interviewees confirm the value of children coming out as they see the possibility of a new parent-child relationship; parents gradually start to reflect on the "control" in parents designing the future for children and filial piety in Taiwan. In the Taiwan Tongzhi Hotline Association, with the help from doctors, psychologists and counsellors, parents confirm that gays and lesbians are deemed normal, and overcome

the stigma connecting gays/lesbians with AIDS (Chen, 2008). This study also finds that these young (gay/lesbian) volunteers' characteristics like a good educational background and a stable job encourage parents to accept their children and lessen parents' worries; besides, the talking between parents and volunteers is quite like "a talk between parents and children", implying that the group work provides a chance for parents and volunteers to practise the communication that could not be conducted in their own parent-child relationships. In the discussion of parents "coming out", this study finds that the parent interviewees are cautious about it; parents find that their attitudes towards whether they accept their children are significant in others responding to parents "coming out". The last subtopic of this study is the parents' motivation of participating in activism, including fighting against prejudice and fighting for their children's rights; this research finds and highlights that the parents see their own change and the possibility of changing the society.

Different from the works above focusing on all feelings and reactions of parents, Brainer (2017) discusses in particular, the gendered experiences of parents with LGBT and queer children, based on the fieldwork between August 2011 and January 2013 in Taiwan. Two kinds of gender experiences are identified by Brainer (2017). The first is the different experiences between mothers and fathers. Due to mothers having greater accountability for bringing up their children as correctly gendered and heterosexual members of society, mothers are more inclined to doubt whether their childbearing is problematic and demonstrate more sensitivity to wider public opinion

concerning this issue, while fathers are inclined to understand homosexuality and gender variance with scientific and social concepts and are not sensitive to social judgement which relates parenting to children's gay and lesbian identity. According to Brainer (2017), mothers could experience a lonely journey, as many of them face their children's coming out, provide emotional support to their children, hide the secret from fathers and try to find a way to correct the children. This is quite similar with the findings in Slovenia (Švab and Kuhar, 2014). The second one is the difference between mothers with lesbian daughters and mothers with gay sons; some mothers with lesbian daughters do not see that male-female marriage necessarily bring happiness as they experience the "unequal" distribution of family labour and mistreatment from the in-laws under the patrilineal system and patriarchy, while mothers with gays seek the idea that a gay son will find his happiness (Brainer, 2019; Brainer, 2017).

This section has reviewed the existing works discussing the parents' experiences and concluded the subtopics in these works. In the next five chapters, this thesis will demonstrate the methodologies of this research and the findings from the fieldwork in the "PFLAG China" community.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the change of kinship norms and the understanding of same-sex sexuality and homoeroticism throughout Chinese history. As such, this chapter serves as the background of the discussion of parents' family practices when face the disclosure of the lifestyles their children aspire to, which are same-sex love and rejecting marriage.

This chapter concludes several important characteristics of the traditional Han kinship system. First, the kinship system of traditional Han society is patrilineal. Second, the ancestor-ego-descendant culture provides the meaning of life for everyone. Third, Han society is a marriage society. In such a culture, a person's self-identity is kinship-based. Marriage has several implications: life cooperation between a husband and a wife, raising children, engendering offspring and carrying on the lineage. In such a situation, extramarital or premarital same-sex sexuality does not threaten marriage, while male-female adultery is significantly illegitimate. As such, same-sex sexuality or the homoeroticism never functions as a counterpart competing with male-female conjugality. In contemporary mainland China, though the traditional familism has been challenged, marriage is still important. The non-competitive relationship between marriage and practices of same-sex love maintains in many cases.

This chapter has argued that many people's inclination to reject marriage because of same-sex love, rather than the presence of extra-nuptial same-sex relationships, is a

new phenomenon in China. Such an attitude is closely related to the understanding of both marriage and same-sex love. Historical changes posed serious challenges to traditional familism. The culture which worshipped ancestors was under serious ideological attack. The free choice in spouse selection was advocated. With the decline of traditional familism, marriage started to be seen as the expression of male-female love in public narratives. Similarly, the understanding of same-sex sexuality and same-sex love underwent substantial changes throughout history. The term *tongxinglian* (same-sex love) first emerged in the first half of the twentieth century, intensively underlining mutual empathy and respect. However, Chinese intellectuals accepted the sexology pathologising same-sex sexuality as a whole during that historical period. After the economic reform, the culture of "sexual orientation" based on the typology of homosexuality/heterosexuality/bisexuality started to spread, which provided a new life imagination. Under the influence of these two trends, same-sex love has started to be in competition with marriage in many cases. As a matter of course, getting married ceased to be so self-evident. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, children in the "PFLAG China" community use same-sex love as justification for rejecting marriage. However, this rejection is not such an easy option. The most significant dilemma in these children's life is their parents' expectation and pressure on them to get married. This pressure is intensified when these children reach the marital age. Thus, this thesis takes the stance that same-sex love should be understood as a family problem in contemporary mainland China, which has been shaped by huge historical changes.

So far, this chapter has highlighted the change of kinship norms and the understanding of same-sex love throughout Chinese history. They serve as useful social, cultural and historical backgrounds for this thesis to discuss the development of PFLAG China and parents' family practices. The existing academic literature has already discussed the parents' pressure on their *tongxinglian* children, but parents' thoughts and experiences are still underexplored. This study has come about 10 years after PFLAG China was established in 2008. It is against such a background that this thesis shifts attention to parents' thoughts and experiences, which distinguishes from previous research.

Chapter 2 Methodologies

2.1 Approach of This Study: Person-centred Ethnography

The previous chapters have clarified that the focus of this thesis was the experiences of parents in the "PFLAG China" community. Aimed at achieving this goal, the researcher found qualitative methods applicable for this study, because unlike quantitative methods aimed at achieving statistical generalisation of the population through sampling, qualitative methods focused on the psychological process of action. Specifically speaking, during the data collection, the researcher adopted the person-centred ethnography. In terms of the stress of person-centred ethnography, Hollan (1997:219) concludes that "a primary focus of person-centered ethnographies is on the individual and on how the individual's psychology and subjective experience both shape, and are shaped by, social and cultural processes."

Based on this focus, person-centred ethnographers' data collection is divided into three subthemes, which are: (1) what do people say about their subjective experiences; (2) people's behaviours which actually reveal their subjective experiences; and (3) how do people embody their subjective experiences (Hollan, 1997). When collecting data, the researcher paid particular attention to the first two spheres, as this thesis wanted to discuss parents' psychological process and family practices effectively guided by thinking. These two focuses are fundamentally rooted in sociology's emphasis on social action. According to Weber (1993: 29)'s definition of sociology, it is a "science which aims at the interpretative understanding of social behavior in order

to gain an explanation of its causes, its course, and its effects". This definition stresses the connection between the actors' subjective experiences and their behaviours. Weber views the human being as an animal suspended in "webs of significance", which is adopted by Geertz (1973:5) as the definition of culture. In order to understand the actors' thoughts, I adopted the emic perspective during the data collection and interpretation, rather than an etic perspective. Geertz (1983) argues that the emic perspective is an "experience-near" approach, and it requires that the researcher should understand the actors' behaviours and their culture "from the native's point of view" (Geertz, 1983: 55).

> An experience-near concept is, roughly, one that someone- a patient, a subject, in our case an informant- might himself naturally and effortlessly use to define what he or his fellows see, feel, think, imagine, and so on, and which he would readily understand when similarly applied by others. (Geertz, 1983: 57)

Guided by these thoughts, the researcher conducted the fieldwork for this study. Two themes were included in the process of data collection. The first was parents' thinking and behaviours in their family practices. The second was the practices of PFLAG China. Therefore, participants of this research included mainly parents, LGB individuals in the "PFLAG China" community and the staff and volunteers of PFLAG China. There were overall sixty-nine participants. Of the sixty-nine participants, twenty-nine were mothers; nine were fathers; they participated in the formal interviews, which consisted of both semi-structured interviews and a focus-group interview. Eighteen were staff members and/or volunteers of PFLAG China; five gay and lesbian youths I met during the fieldwork also became interviewees of this study.

Eight further participants who were either activists, volunteers and/or staff from other organisations working on gender and sexuality were included and eight further interviews were conducted. Seven of them were working in mainland China, and one was a professional social worker based in Hong Kong. The interviews and informal chats with parents focused on their family practices and experiences in the "PFLAG China" community. The interviews and informal chats with young LGB people whom I met in the activities mainly concentrated on how they dealt with the parent-child relationship. The interviews with staff and volunteers of PFLAG China were mainly organised around two topics: their personal experiences and the history and strategies of PFLAG China.

2.2 Methods of Collecting Data

2.2.1 Pilot Study

This study was conducted over a timespan of five years. It included two periods of investigation, the pilot study in 2014 and 2015 and the long-term fieldwork between June 2017 and March 2018. Two methods were mainly used for the data collection, ethnography and interviews; the interviews were conducted in two forms, semi-structured interviews and focus-group interviews.

My pilot study was conducted in 2014 and in 2015. In September 2014, I went to audit the seventh National Conference of PFLAG China held in Guangzhou. In the summer of 2015, I also went to audit a PFLAG Sharing Session in Shanghai during

the Shanghai Pride. Before I audited these conferences, I had no idea what I would hear, so I just listened and took notes from the participants' narratives during these events. It was a process to get to know what these parents care and worry about. In 2014, I met and got to know Dong Mama, the Chapter Representative of PFLAG China (Shenzhen Branch). Then, I got in touch with some volunteers from PFLAG China. Based on my experiences of auditing the sharing session, I eventually developed the topics for the semi-structured interviews, including family acceptance, parents' worries and thoughts on their children's life, parents' consideration and action regarding whether they should and how to tell children's lifestyle to others and their experiences in PFLAG China and even in the broader LGBT activism.

After auditing the national conference in 2014, I started to conduct semi-structured interviews with some parents. During the pilot study I adopted the method of convenience sample, which was among the three types of qualitative sampling concluded by Marshall (1996); the other two types were judgement sampling and theoretical sampling. Since it was not easy to find many parents at that time, I hoped to recruit the parents whom I could meet to be interviewees. Dong Mama and some young volunteers of PFLAG China also introduced some interviewees to me. The majority of them were active parents in their branches. For example, Dong Mama introduced several parents in the Shenzhen branch to me. In the summer of 2015, a young volunteer of the Shanghai branch introduced the mother of his partner to me, who was a parent volunteer at the Shanghai branch as well. In addition, I invited some

interviewees whom I met in the activities of PFLAG China to participate in interviews. Ten interviews were conducted during my pilot study. Eight mothers and two fathers were involved, and there were no couples among them.

2.2.2 Ethnography

2.2.2.1 Entry

In June 2017, my long-term fieldwork started with conducting observation in a training program provided for parent volunteers, which was organised by the headquarters of PFLAG China. The participants of this programme were parents with an interest in volunteering or who just wanted to know more about LGBT issues. I knew this programme from the social media of PFLAG China. In order to enter the field successfully, I sought help from Professor WEI Wei[1], who introduced me to the staff responsible for this programme. Professor WEI Wei was working in the Department of Sociology at East China Normal University in Shanghai. He is the author of the book *Going Public: The Production and Transformation of Queer Spaces in Contemporary Chengdu, China*, published in Chinese in 2012. Besides being a scholar discussing LGBT issues, he was also a member of the Supervisory Board in PFLAG China.

[1] WEI Wei's website page at: https://faculty.ecnu.edu.cn/s/1386/main.jspy

In such a situation, Professor Wei's introduction helped me get to know the staff of PFLAG China. More importantly, it was an endorsement of a student's reliability. The staff of PFLAG China were the gatekeepers of the field. I gained the trust from them and started my fieldwork successfully.

When I was in the training programme, I just wanted to audit and observe the course and wanted to take the chance to know more volunteers and parents. However, as a PhD student studying in the UK, sometimes the staff did not let me keep being invisible. Once, the staff and the parents were talking about the ideas of queer theory, like the fluidity of sexual orientation. These ideas made parents there very confused. Then, the staff introduced me to the parents as a PhD student studying sociology in the UK and invited me to explain the queer theory.

2.2.2.2 Researcher's Position in PFLAG China

In October 2017, I arrived in Guangzhou city in southern China, where PFLAG China had been headquartered. It was a Tuesday when I first went to the headquarter office, and I met most of the staff. On that day, I found that I was seen as a student supervised by Professor Wei among the staff and then I explained my actual status in detail that I was a PhD student from the Department of Sociology at the University of Essex. The headquarter office of PFLAG China did usually recruit some university students as their interns. After I audited their meeting, I was asked whether I was willing to be an intern of the headquarter. I was delighted and accepted this invitation without hesitation. PFLAG China normally made some remuneration to its interns. In

my discussion with the staff, I argued that PFLAG China helped me with my research, and thus I should not take any payment. However, I still received some financial support from PFLAG China during my internship. When PFLAG China organised a regional conference and the annual meeting in other cities, headquarters organised a group to provide support there. I was a member of the group, and headquarters provided some financial support on transportation and accommodation to us. As I also undertook some work during the events, such as note taking of the speeches in the activities and writing articles to be published on social media, I accepted the offer of payment here.

Staff of PFLAG China headquarters was working from Tuesday to Saturday, rather than from Monday to Friday. The opening times of headquarters were designed like this because many activities in local branches were organised on Saturdays. These branches in different cities may have needed to contact headquarters to get some assistance. As an intern, I was mainly responsible for updating the social media of PFLAG China. Sometimes I also took some translation work for the organisation. Such an arrangement made me a neutral observer in PFLAG China. I did not intervene in its policymaking process. Headquarters held weekly meetings every Tuesday to discuss their work. As an intern, I also attended these weekly meetings and discussed my work with them. I was mainly a listener, so I learned much about the process of policymaking and thoughts of the staff through attending these meetings.

The advantage of taking the internship was undeniable. I got the role of insider of PFLAG China. I gained natural access to volunteers' meetings and PFLAG China's activities during the fieldwork. For example, in the autumn of 2017, there was a tea time event consisting of local parents and some other young volunteers in Guangzhou. Usually, the tea time meeting was an activity only for parents, where they had tea and food together and chatted. As an intern at headquarters, I contacted the Representative of the Guangzhou Branch and went there with several active volunteers. During their gathering, I introduced myself as an intern of headquarters and a student studying sociology. I then mainly listened to their conversations. Some volunteers knew that I was a researcher doing fieldwork. My role as an intern made my presence there very natural. With the internship, I could do observation in the meetings of PFLAG China consisting of volunteers and staff, and many online and offline training programmes as a matter of course. Where there were many people taking part in activities and meetings, people did not notice me and where I did not take part in any public speaking at those meetings, it was not necessary to announce at them that I was a researcher. Having the internship also helped me gain other interviewees as I was deemed a trustworthy person. To some degree, my reliability was endorsed by the internship, since many interviewees trusted PFLAG China. The internship facilitated me approaching many people naturally in the first place. When I wanted to invite them to be my interviewees, I introduced myself as a PhD student in sociology, who was doing social research in the "PFLAG China" community.

However, this internship also labelled me with some characteristics of activism, which sometimes hindered me from approaching people who were not interested in activism. For example, a volunteer refused to introduce a friend to be my interviewee because the friend valued a peaceful life and did not want to be involved in the activism.

I shared a similar background with a lot of the parents' children, as I was a young Chinese male born in an urban family and had a higher-education background. Thus, it seemed quite easy for me to start the conversation with many parents. But my age may have influenced what these parents talked about with me. For example, a mother interviewee was reluctant to talk about politics and some historical events like the Cultural Revolution, because she feared that I would not understand the complicated situations of history and politics. She was more willing to talk about the issue of parent-child relationships.

As I was a PhD student studying in the UK, parents and volunteers often liked asking me about the situations of LGBT in the West. When meeting these questions, I tried to give a more balanced view by explaining that gays and lesbians faced different problems in different contexts rather than intensify the myth of "progressive" Western societies.

Gender issues seemed to be a significant factor during my data collection. As I am a man, it was quite easy for me to approach and talk with male volunteers, participants of activities and parents with gay children. In PFLAG China, there were some activities particularly provided for *lalas* (lesbians and female bisexuals). As a man, I

was not eligible to attend these activities, and I did not pay much attention to the particular situations that lesbians face. Thus, this thesis mainly discusses the commonality that gays and lesbians face.

2.2.3 Interviews

2.2.3.1 Recruiting interviewees

During the pilot study, I just wanted to recruit as many interviewees as possible. During my long-term fieldwork from June 2017 to March 2018, I adopted new ways to recruit interviewees, which were maximum variation sampling and emergent sampling. They were methods of purposive samplings. The maximum variation sampling values the heterogeneity of the data and aims at capturing the variation of the central themes (Patton, 2002). I paid particular attention to people with some unique experiences in order to expand the diversity of my data. This strategy was facilitated by my internship in the headquarters office and the observation in activities, because I came to know many parents' information naturally during the time I undertook the ethnography. I used the emergent sampling method in situations where people with new experiences appeared. The advantage here of emergent sampling is adding to a sample to utilise unforeseen opportunities after the beginning of fieldwork (Patton, 2002). With these two purposive sampling methods, I could choose and invite people with particular experiences to be my interviewees based on the information I gained during the ethnography. Examples of variation sampling and emergent

sampling are evident in the following four interviewees I recruited. Once during a meal, a mother shared her way of representing her family status to others. She said that her family organised a wedding in her hometown, where the bridegroom was her gay son, but the bride was an actress hired to play the role. In this way, they expressed that their son got married to all their friends and relatives; they would no longer ask about the son's marriage. I was very impressed by her strategy which I had never heard of before. At last, I went to her hometown to conduct an interview. Meanwhile, because PFLAG China had advocated increasing the visibility of gay and lesbian people, her story which did not add to the visibility as PFLAG had wished, her story was never shown in PFLAG China's public narratives. So, such practices facilitated getting to know the experiences which were not covered by the public narratives of PFLAG China. Unlike her, another mother invited all her siblings to have dinner together and announced that her son was gay. This mother's action impressed me so much that I went to her hometown to interview her. The stories of these two mothers are analysed in Chapter 6 which discusses parents' strategies of representing families. An interesting feature of the third parent was that she had two gay sons. In the "PFLAG China" community, most parents were born in the 1950s and the 1960s, and the majority of their children were born in the 1980s and the 1990s. Therefore, most parents had only one child because of the one-child policy. However, I still met some parents who had more than one child. Usually, only one of their children was gay or lesbian. Remarkably, when I was in the headquarter office in 2017, I heard of a mother whose two sons were both gay. In the spring of 2018, this mother attended the

training programme provided for parent volunteers. I got to know her during this program and then I invited her to participate in the interview after the training program was over. The main reason that I wanted to invite her was that she was a mother of two gay sons, and I hoped to know whether her experiences were different from others'. Her experiences are highlighted in Chapter 5. The speciality of the fourth parent presented here lurked in the economic status. In a sharing session, a mother expressed her worries about her gay son's financial ability. Her son did not go to university and did not get a middle-class job. Unlike her, most parents I met in the "PFLAG China" community were the ones whose children were white-collar workers with a higher-education background. Such a mother was rare in PFLAG China. Thus, I asked a volunteer to introduce this mother to me. I interviewed her and her story is analysed in Chapter 4 and 5. During my fieldwork in 2017 and 2018, my interviewees included many parents with specific experiences such as logic.

Such methods of recruiting interviewees meant that the parent interviewees were living in different areas. I did not limit my fieldwork to one or two cities. Some of the parent interviewees lived in big cities in developed areas like Shanghai, Guangzhou and Beijing. Some of them lived in third-tier cities, small towns and rural areas.

2.2.3.2 Semi-structured Interviews and Focus-group Interviews

Two types of interviews were adopted to collect data, semi-structured interviews and focus-group interviews.

Three were interviews of couples, and all the others were one-on-one interviews. I did not initially plan to conduct couple interviews. However, these couple interviews just occurred due to different situations. A young volunteer of PFLAG China introduced me to his parents during the 2017 National Conference of PFLAG China, so I interviewed his mother and father. In the second case, I contacted the mother, but I found that her husband was also present when I arrived. Under this situation, I interviewed both together. However, the husband did not talk as much as his wife. He left earlier when his wife was talking with me. In the third case, the mother I interviewed during the pilot study introduced me to her husband. Though I was more interested in this father's thoughts, we conducted a couple interview in the end as they wanted to meet me together. This father was very talkative, so I got to know his thoughts quite well.

I used the method of semi-structured interviews in both the pilot study and long-term fieldwork. The reason I chose the semi-structured interview method was its advantage in keeping the balance between the researcher's focus and what the interviewees cared about in their life. In some cases of academic research, the residents in the community where the research is conducted may feel alienated because they have little say on research's focus and topics (Sukarieh and Tannock, 2013). To overcome this, I adopted the semi-structured interview process. This study believes that what really matters is not what the researcher cares about, but what the interviewees care about in their own life which guides their choices of behaviours. The advantage of a

semi-structured interview falls in being a “joint production” produced by the interviewer and interviewee (Wengraf, 2001). I wanted to give the most abundant space to interviewees to talk about their life. Regarding the questions for the interview, Wengraf (2001) argues that the prepared questions for semi-structured interviews should be designed to be sufficiently open, so that interviews leave space for improvisation. The researcher followed this idea. The topics for interviews were largely developed based on the observation during the pilot study, so that the topics discussed were not alienated from the interviewees’ life. In addition to this, in the interviews, I specifically asked them if there were any important questions that we had not discussed and was there anything that they would like to add. Through these two questions, I gained further data from the interviews. However, even though this study emphasised what interviewees cared about in their life, I did not thoroughly adopt the grounded-theory approach as I had some issues in mind that interested me. For example, I asked carefully about the parents’ knowledge and understanding of same-sex sexuality before their children came out. Based on the answers given by parents during interviews, I was able to analyse how the parents’ understanding of same-sex love changed during the process of accepting their children’s lifestyle. Usually, most of them did not talk about this issue themselves. Thus, I needed to ask them about this. The topics in the semi-structured interviews were initially developed based on my observation during the sharing sessions. As mentioned above, the interviews with the parents focused on these topics: (1) parents accepting their children’s lifestyle; (2) parents’ thoughts and worries on children’s life; (3)

intergenerational negotiation between parents and children (such as offspring issue); (4) parents' practices of telling or not telling others about their children's lifestyles of same-sex love; (5) parents' experiences in PFLAG China and broader LGBT activism.

In addition to the topics designed for everyone, I also designed specific questions for particular interviewees. This method was practised based on the information I knew about these interviewees before I interviewed them. For example, before the interview with a particular parent volunteer, I already knew that she once expressed: "doing (LGBT) public benefits is my own business." Such a statement was quite different from the prevalent narratives that I often heard in the "PFLAG China" community, which viewed parents volunteering as a struggle for the children's benefits. In the interview, I directly told her that I had heard her argument viewing her volunteering as her own business and then, I particularly asked her about her thoughts on what volunteering meant to her.

Besides the strategies mentioned above, I conducted return visits to some interviewees who had talked with me in the pilot study. I did not do this with all of them, because not all interviewees were easy to approach as they also could have lived far away from me. I only conducted the return visit interview with the interviewees whom it was convenient for me to approach. I hoped to check whether there was any change on issues of concern in their lives and thoughts since they talked to me in the pilot study.

The issue of over-research was quite prominent. During informal chats in the fieldwork and semi-structured interviews, I found that some interviewees, especially the experienced parent volunteers, were tired of talking about their acceptance experiences. Unlike them, parents who had not been asked much about this issue were willing to talk about it. While for parents who had been volunteering for a long time, this question really made them feel tired. The reason was that talking about their experiences of acceptance was an essential part of volunteering. When they communicated with other parents and gay and lesbian youth, telling their stories of acceptance was the way to help other parents with acceptance and to make gay and lesbian youth know parents' perspectives. When journalists approached them, what journalists were most interested in was how they accepted their children's lifestyle. From time to time, they also participated in the interviews conducted by university students, who carried out research for coursework. These students were also interested in the parents' process of acceptance. Some parents developed modelized narratives to respond to others' inquiries. Research fatigue occurred in these experiences.

Some parent volunteers told me in the one-on-one interviews that they had talked about this topic many times. Xinran Mama and Mei Mama talked about their feelings of endless storytelling.

> I: Do (the activities of PFLAG China) let you talk about your stories every time?
>
> Xinran Mama: No talking that anymore... I said that it was better to raise questions… My those issues. In the beginning, when I talked, I could have some feelings. Afterward, I felt it was like reciting a book. Annoying. I feel annoying. I would not like to talk about that.

Mei Mama remembered the first time she talked about her story of acceptance twelve years ago. It was a sharing activity organised by a local gay and lesbian group.

> Mei Mama: My first time standing out. That day more than two hundred people came. Many were sitting on the ground and some even sat by me. I just told the story of how I accepted my child. That was the first time telling these issues to the audience. However, after twelve years, I already do not want to speak. I have already cannot feel anything from it (我都觉得没滋没味了).

Therefore, some interviews conducted with parents who had been volunteering for many years, just skipped this topic directly. These interviewees agreed with this. "I also think that we ought to skip (discussing the topic of acceptance experiences). I think it is enough to talk that (*我觉得已经讲臭了*)," said Mei Mama at the very beginning of our interview. Even though we skipped this topic, parent interviewees still mentioned some aspects of their acceptance experiences in interviews. For example, when Xinran Mama talked about other people's stories, she mentioned some parts of her acceptance experiences as well.

The discussion on over-research has noticed the phenomena that different researchers ask the same type of questions to the same interviewees, or do studies in the same community. Over-research would cause research fatigue that the individuals or groups get tired of engaging in research (Clark, 2008). Research fatigue usually happens in two kinds of situations. The first is that projects need participation over-time, and the second is that requests for participation are quite common (Clark, 2008). The second one was the situation the parents in the "PFLAG China" community had been experiencing, since PFLAG China was nearly the only way for researchers and

journalists to connect with parents accepting their children's lifestyle of same-sex love. Unlike the circumstances where the interviewees lose the motivation to participate in academic studies as a whole, what happened among my interviewees was that some interviewees felt tired to discuss the particular issues mentioned above. They were still interested in talking about other topics with me.

Changing the order of questions also helped. When they were talking about other issues, it was natural for them to also talk about the over-researched issues as in many cases they were all connected. Meanwhile, it was also very effective to ask the interviewees who had not talked about these issues too often because they had the motivation to provide much more information.

Another aspect of the over-research and research fatigue is the feeling of disappointment that their participation would not bring any outcome or social change (Afshar et al., 2002; Sukarieh and Tannock, 2013; Clark, 2008). In discussing the case of Shatila Palestinian Refugee Camp which was an over-researched community, Sukarieh and Tannock (2013) conclude that the idea of linking research to social and economic improvement not only comes from the residents expectations but also the promises made by researchers and the NGOs, who are the gatekeepers. However, since social change is not easy, the interviewees would feel eventually frustrated.

Usually, many interviewees in this study believed that telling their stories would increase the benefits of gay and lesbian people. Only one interviewee expressed her frustration on participating in the academic studies, WU Youjian, the first chairperson

of PFLAG China. When I contacted WU Youjian for the first time, she told me her feeling after accepting numerous interviews with university students. She felt that many students only wanted to finish their coursework but did not care about the *tongzhi* population from their hearts. Besides, she felt that these interviews did not make any impact on society after the interviews. She proposed videoing the interview. Then, she could edit it and make videos herself. I was quite concerned because I feared the potential confusion between media interviews and sociological interviews. I did not want her to understand this interview as an opportunity to make a formal statement like a media interview. In our negotiation, I underlined this difference and she understood my argument. She proposed that she would only record herself in the video and then she would utilise the recording as material for editing. In this way, we met each other's expectations. Finally, we had an interview and she was the one recorded by her camera.

Besides the one-on-one interviews and couple interviews, I also organised a focus-group interview consisting of parents to collect data. This happened in the winter of 2017, during a training programme consisting of parent volunteers, which was organised by the headquarters of PFLAG China. During this training programme, the parent volunteers, some staff and I were all living in the same hotel. I found that there was a night when no training was arranged. It suddenly occurred to me that I could use this opportunity to conduct a focus-group interview, as all of them were here. My idea got the support from the staff of PFLAG China and these parents. They

agreed to participate. In such a situation, I did not use purposive sampling but invited all the parents of the training program to join this focus-group interview.

In this focus-group interview, I adopted the outline designed for semi-structured interviews. The outline started with how parents accepted their children's lifestyle, but I decided to skip this question for two reasons. First, at that time, I had already gathered much data on parents' experiences of acceptance during my fieldwork. Second, as stated previously, this issue was an over-researched question. The parent volunteers in this training program might feel jaded about this. Since the time for this focus group interview was limited, I decided to skip the topic of their acceptance experience so that I could get information about other issues. I started by asking how they communicated with their husbands or wives regarding their children's lifestyle. We discussed this issue mostly in the interview until it came to an end.

2.2.3.3 The Use of Digital Technologies in Fieldwork

Social media is prevalently used in contemporary society. In the "PFLAG China" community, a few parents I met during my fieldwork started to use smartphones and social media for the first time in their lives. By using smartphones and social media, parents could contact other parents and fulfil their responsibilities as parent volunteers.

Digital technologies helped me with conducting interviews as well. During the fieldwork, I stayed mainly in Guangzhou city where PFLAG China headquarters was,

while parents were living in different cities. In some rare cases, I made appointments with parents and used the voice call or video call to do interviews. Once, I became acquainted with a parent volunteer in a training programme organised for parents. I hoped to interview her. However, she had to leave Guangzhou immediately after the training programme. In order to know more about her experiences, I finish the interviewing with an online video call. As we had known each other before the interview, both of us did not feel alienated during the interview.

After the long-term fieldwork of this study, I can still update the information on the events of PFLAG China, because headquarters, many city branches and parents are using *wechat*, a prevalent social media platform in mainland China.

2.2.3.4 Data Collected from Interviews

Overall, thirty-eight parents with LGT children were involved in formal interviews, including the semi-structured interviews and the focus-group interview. Only one father had a transgender child, but most people, including his wife, thought that the child was a lesbian. Three mothers identified themselves as mothers with a lesbian daughter, and the rest of the mothers stated that they had gay sons. Twenty-nine of the parent interviewees were mothers, and nine of them were fathers. Three couples were among them. Most of them were born in the 1950s and the 1960s. The eldest parent was born in the 1940s, and the youngest one was born in the early 1970s. Two mother interviewees were born in the 1940s, and one mother interviewee was born in the 1970s. Only one father identified himself as a gay man whose experiences are not

presented in this thesis, and all the others were supposed to be the heterosexual-identified people. From the paternal interviewees, all, including the father who identified as gay, were married except one father who was divorced. To the best of my knowledge from the fieldwork, four mother interviewees were divorced, and the husbands of two mothers had passed away. As discussed previously, during the fieldwork, I stayed mainly in Guangzhou city, but I met parents from different cities in PFLAG China's activities and training programmes and I travelled to other cities or used digital technologies to conduct interviews. This meant that the parent interviewees participating in this study came from different places, including Hebei Province (one mother, two fathers and a couple), Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region (one mother), Beijing (two mothers), Shandong Province (two fathers and one mother), Jiangsu Province (two mothers), Shanghai (five mothers and one father), Hubei Province (three mothers), Guangdong Province (six mothers and one father), Guangxi Province (one couple), Guizhou Province (one couple and one mother), Chongqing (one mother), Sichuan Province (one mother), Shanxi Province (one mother) and Hunan Province (one mother). The majority of the parent interviewees were urban residents, and only four mothers reported their rural background. The professional and economic backgrounds of parents were quite different, but the majority of their children were white-collar workers with a higher-education background. All their children were working in urban areas when the fieldwork was conducted.

Five gay and lesbian young people I met in activities conducted by PFLAG China were interviewed formally. Besides, eighteen interviews with the staff and volunteers of PFLAG China were also carried out. I mainly discussed two issues with volunteers and staff, including their personal experiences, their work in PFLAG China and the practices of PFLAG China.

Besides, I also visited some other organisations working on LGBT issues and conducted interviews with some activists and volunteers. The initial motivation for doing this was to get a deeper understanding of LGBT activism in mainland China and knowing other activists' opinions on the practices of PFLAG China. Seven of them were working in mainland China. One of them was a professional social worker in Hong Kong, providing services to gay and lesbian youth and their parents. His opinions have been mentioned in the Introduction of this thesis.

During my fieldwork, I had plenty of informal chats with volunteers and people participating in PFLAG China's activities. I made many notes of observation. Some of them were analysed in this thesis as well.

Most interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese, except one interview with a couple. When I talked with the two parents, we had a conversation in Southwest Mandarin. There was no need of translation during interviews. The majority of interviewees were members of the Han group, the main ethnic group in China. One

father participating in the focus group interview was a member of the Hui group[2]. Another interviewee, a staff of PFLAG China, belonged to the Zhuang group[3].

2.2.4 Data from Media

Some data from media outputs was included in this thesis as well. In my initial research design, I did not plan to collect any data from the media. I just searched for videos and news reports concerning PFLAG China in order to get more information about it. During this process, I noticed Langman Mama's experiences. Langman Mama told her story on a TV program[4]. Her experiences were quite dramatic but typical, showing the influence of early psychiatric/psychological knowledge viewing children's same-sex attraction as the result of an unhappy family. Influenced by this belief, Langman Mama proposed remarriage to her ex-husband with an intention to change their son's same-sex orientation. Since her story was helpful for this thesis to discuss a parents' dilemma caused by the early psychiatric knowledge, I decided to include this story in the data. The analysis of her story is represented in Chapter 4. Since the story she told in the TV programme was already very detailed, I did not see

---

[2] In contemporary mainland China, the Hui group is seen as a minority ethnic group sharing the same language with the Han group. Traditionally it was seen and understood to be a Muslim ethnic group, but due to social change, there are more non-Muslim Hui members now.

[3] Zhuang is a Tai-speaking group mainly living in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

[4] Lengnuan rensheng(冷暖人生),2013.07.16, Phoenix Satellite Television http://phtv.ifeng.com/program/lnrs/detail_2013_07/17/27595349_0.shtml

the necessity of interviewing her again. Before citing her story, I contacted Langman Mama online. I told her that I was trying to write her experiences in my thesis and checked whether she had some more information to add. She confirmed the authenticity of the part which I wanted to cite.

During my fieldwork, I read the blogs written by Ah-Qiang and WU Youjian to learn more about the history and practices of PFLAG China. Some parts of Ah-Qiang's writings are analysed in Chapter 3 to demonstrate the development of PFLAG China and the values it emphasises.

2.3 Ethical Issues

Three ethical issues are discussed in this part, which are informed consent, confidentiality and no harm principle.

Usually, when I was doing the observation and having informal chats during the fieldwork, I did not disclose myself intentionally as a researcher. However, when I tried to recruit them to be my interviewees, I disclosed my role as a researcher and introduced the research I was doing. The consent was obtained before the interviews. If the participants agreed to participate in the interview, they signed the consent form after I explained the content of the form, including the introduction of research, the researcher's duties and the participants' rights. The interviews were recorded by my recording pen or my mobile phone with their consent. In some cases where the

interviewees were not willing to be recorded, I wrote down the key points in my notebook.

I did not offer payment for interviews. However, as in many cases, the interviews were conducted in coffee bars or teahouses, I paid for the interviewees' orders to express my gratitude.

In order to protect confidentiality, I use pseudonyms to represent most interviewees in this thesis. Even though the names that interviewees use in the "PFLAG China" community are nicknames already, I did not use them in this thesis. Furthermore, in some cases, in order to protect the parent's confidentiality, I adopt different pseudonyms when representing a parent in different places. However, there are some exceptions to the principle of confidentiality. In this thesis, when I discuss the experiences of the following three persons, who are WU Youjian, Ah-Qiang and Langman Mama, I do not follow this principle. WU Youjian (also called Mother Wu or Aunt Wu) is PFLAG China's first chairperson (2008-2011). Ah-Qiang is the executive director of PFLAG China (2011-). The title "Ah-Qiang" is the nickname used by him. As the founders of PFLAG China, WU Youjian and Ah-Qiang had already conducted media interviews many times and had become public figures as activists before I conducted this study. As mentioned previously, Langman Mama told her story on TV. "Langman Mama" was the nickname she used in the TV programme. Since they had already told their stories publicly, I decided to use their titles without any change. The story of Langman Mama shown in this thesis only came from the

information that was already shown in the public domain, as previously mentioned. Most of the information regarding WU Youjian and Ah-Qiang stated in this thesis came from the interviews. I have respectively told them that I would use the titles of "WU Youjian" and "Ah-Qiang" in my thesis, and they consented to my arrangements. In addition to the usage of the pseudonym, only I have access to the records and transcripts of all interviews.

During the fieldwork, I witnessed parents' sadness who just knew of their children's *tongxinglian* lifestyle. In the fieldwork, I decided to listen to their talks during activities and their conversation with other parents only. To avoid any potential harm caused by talking about this, I only invited the parents who had already accepted their child's *tongxinglian* lifestyle and had largely overcome their sadness to be the interviewees of this study. In some cases, even though some parents had accepted, I did not interview them because telling those stories may have cause severe stress. Once in an activity, a mother was crying when she was recounting the story of her son who threatened suicide when he came out. Though she had accepted his identity and lifestyle to a large degree, I decided not to interview her and decided to only listen to her sharing her experience in order to avoid any possible distress reminding her of the bitter experiences. Having made such an arrangement, I did not need to worry about the potential harm to interviewees. While I did not interview those parents who were still struggling with this issue, I got to know the difficulties that the parents went through. First, I could get some information when I heard the speaking of parents who

were still struggling as mentioned above. Second, the parent interviewees of this study shared their feelings when they faced the disclosure of their children's sexual orientation and lifestyle, and their process of acceptance. At last, all the young interviewees were over eighteen years old when the interviews were conducted.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter clarifies the two themes of data collected for this thesis, the experiences of participants in the "PFLAG China" community and the history and practices of PFLAG China. The latter part of the data is presented in Chapter 3. The former part is presented in Chapter 4, 5 and 6.

This chapter has demonstrated how I began the fieldwork, the methods used in collecting data and the ethical consideration of doing this study. During the fieldwork, I took an internship of PFLAG China, which facilitated me in approaching staff and volunteers' meetings and many activities as a matter of course. At the beginning of the fieldwork, only the staff and several volunteers knew of both my roles as a researcher and an intern. However, when I tried to recruit interviewees to participate in semi-structured interviews, I then disclosed my role as a researcher. Three ways of recruiting parent interviewees were adopted, convenience sampling, emergent sampling and maximum variation sampling. First, I looked to the volunteers to introduce parents to me, and I also invited parents whom I had met in the activities to participate in interviews. In the early stages of this study, I just wanted to recruit more

parents. Second, as I was able to naturally get some basic information of parents in the "PFLAG China" community during the ethnography, I used the maximum variation sampling method to increase the diversity of my data. Besides parents, I interviewed some gay and lesbian young people participating in PFLAG China's activities, and several staff and volunteers of PFLAG China. No bisexual-identified persons were included in my interviews, but I had informal chats with some individuals identifying themselves as bisexuals. Their experiences are highlighted in Chapter 4. Two kinds of interviews were conducted, semi-structured interviews and focus-group interviews.

A little data from media outputs and the Internet was also included. The research ethics of consent informed, confidentiality, and no harm have been followed in this study. This thesis will highlight research findings in the following four chapters after introducing the methodologies of this study.

Chapter 3 PFLAG China

3.1 Introduction

In mainland China, "doing *tongzhi* (LGBT) public benefits" is the term closest to "gay activism" and LGBT activism. The concept and practices of doing *tongzhi* public benefits emerged in the 1990s, with the development of the market economy and the increased connection with LGBT movements in the West. This chapter takes the broadest definition to understand "gay activism" , which includes all different areas: social services, identity formation, consciousness-raising and rights advocacy (Chua and Hildebrandt, 2014). Unlike the social interaction between people involved in same-sex sexuality, "doing *tongzhi* (LGBT) public benefits" or "gay activism" implies social governance. In mainland China, "doing public benefits" is a term distinguished from "doing charity". Although both "doing public benefits" and "doing charity" are led by non-governmental actors, "charity" usually points to social assistance such as donating to the poor population, but "doing public benefits" includes broader and more diverse social services. Moreover, "doing public benefits" is a non-political term that focuses on social, rather than political, issues and people's efforts to make a better society.

The practices of doing LGBT public benefits firstly emerged in the 1990s. The AIDS/HIV crisis was an essential factor in its development. Just like in many other countries, the action to tackle the AIDS crisis in mainland China has brought political legitimacy and economic recourses to homosexuality issues (Chua and Hildebrandt,

2014; Hildebrandt, 2012; Guo, 2018). In 1992, some members of staff from the Research Institute of Health Education organised a salon in Beijing called Men's World and discussed the issue of homosexuality (Wan, 2001). Founded in 1994, the Beijing Aizhixing Institute of Health Education, one of the most influential AIDS organisation, started to sponsor organisations focusing on gay and lesbian issues in the early 2000s (Guo, 2018). ZHANG Beichuan, a medical doctor, started to discuss the AIDS issue and homosexuality issue in the 1990s. Based on his research experiences, he edited and published a magazine: *Friends (1998-2010)* which contained his letters with gay readers. In the 1990s, mainland China started to get international support and funding from WTO and UNICEF to tackle the AIDS issue (Chua and Hildebrandt, 2014). Following that, projects supported by the funding like the China-UK AIDS Project, Global Fund and Gates Foundations started to involve local groups of the MSM (Men having sex with men) population (Chua and Hildebrandt, 2014). Under the cooperation between the Chinese government and these foundations, the Centres for Disease Control (CDC) passed the funds to organisations based on the MSM population (Hildebrandt, 2012). When these projects ended, the Chinese government promised to continue sponsoring the HIV prevention project and related organisations (Wei, 2012). The emergence of the HIV/AIDS funding directly promoted the establishment of new gay volunteering groups and even caused the competition among the different organisations or groups for resources (Hildebrandt, 2012). However, lesbian organisations could not get financial support from AIDS funding (Hildebrandt, 2012). Under such a framework, when concentrating on HIV issues,

many of these organisations work on homosexuality-related issues along with HIV issues. Besides, the activities and organisations focusing just on gay and lesbian issues emerged during the 1990s. These organisations did not work on HIV issues. In 1998, active gay and lesbian individuals from different places gathered in Beijing and discussed what could be done for *tongxinglian* population (Wan, 2001). Another organisation, the Aibai Culture and Education Centre was founded in 1999, acting as an online information platform for gay people and activism (Guo, 2018). The earliest lesbian organisation recorded was the Beijing Sisters (1998-2001), which opened a hotline and published a magazine for the lesbian population (Guo, 2011). Meanwhile, due to local groups getting connected with transnational LGBT activism, the overseas foundations and funding from foreign embassies also started to sponsor LGBT organisations in mainland China.

PFLAG China was established in 2008 in Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong Province. At that time, the founders were inspired by PFLAG National in the United States, which was established in 1973. The founding of PFLAG National was closely related to the experiences of Jeanne Manford, a mother with a gay son in the United States. In 1972, when her gay activist son was attacked physically, Jeanne wrote a letter to the NEW YORK POST which was published (Marcus, 2002). This brought her to the attention of the media and, later she made multiple media appearances (Marcus, 2002). Since then she got involved in social movements and showed up in a parade with the sign: “Parents of Gay: Unite in Support for Our Children” (Marcus,

2002: 173). That was a pivotal moment when she and her son discussed starting a parents' organisation (Marcus, 2002). In 1973, PFLAG National was established as an organisation utilising the "family and ally model"[5]. Afterwards, several organisations adapted this model and conducted work in their own contexts, without any formal affiliation with PFLAG National[6], and this was the case of PFLAG China. Named *tongxinglian qinyouhui(同性恋亲友会)* in Mandarin Chinese, and after more than ten years of development, PFLAG China has become the only nationwide organisation in mainland China focusing on the issue of same-sex love with over fifty branches in different cities.

This chapter discusses the historical development and practices of PFLAG China, and the services it provides to LGB individuals and their parents. The discussion in this chapter will function as the background to analyse the parents' lived experiences and family practices in following chapters. Firstly, this chapter introduces how PFLAG China has been developing since 2008 and then analyses the services it provides and the values it emphasised. This chapter concludes that PFLAG China insists on the value of identity politics and conducts family governance simultaneously. The values of PFLAG China include self-identification, family recognition and social recognition. PFLAG China advocates that gay and lesbian individuals should insist on their life choices and communicate with their parents. Furthermore, PFLAG China advocates

[5] seen in pflag.org/intlfamilygroups
[6] seen in pflag.org/intlfamilygroups

supportive parenthood among parents and takes it as the legitimacy justification for demanding social recognition in its advocacy.

3.2 History and Development of PFLAG China

The story of PFLAG China starts with the experiences of its two co-founders, WU Youjian (also called as Wu Mama or Aunt Wu), a mother born in the 1940s, and Ah-Qiang, a gay man born in the late 1970s. I interviewed them both during my fieldwork.

WU Youjian's parents joined the Communist Party of China and participated in the revolutions during the 1930s. Her father was a politician in the Guangdong Province. When she graduated from high school, the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) started. She went to the countryside and joined in the farming as a member of the "educated (urban) youth". She came back to the city in the late 1970s. Before retirement, she worked as a magazine editor. She had disclosed all these details of her life in her interview on the media before I interviewed her. When I asked her the reason she talked about her own life, her parents and her family to the media along with her experiences of accepting her son's *tongxinglian* lifestyle, she said that she wanted to present herself as a real person in Chinese society.

> WU Youjian: Chinese people feel panicked when facing fake things. The knowledge about *tongxinglian*, which we want to promote, is not understood by most people. Since I could publicly talk about this topic when very few people were talking about it, I should be as real as possible. The "real" is about how I

> come to this point. Suddenly, a fifty-eight-year-old woman, nearly sixty years old (appeared in front of the pubic and talked about the issue of *tongxinglian*). How could she be so open-minded? People may not believe that, so I must start with telling about my parents, family and the background of my growing up. Eventually, people could know that I have come to this step point slowly, instead of having fallen from the sky. I have the same experience and background of growing up with others, rather than that of living overseas for a long time and being influenced by the Western ideology.

The explanation on WU Youjian's part showed her aim of constructing her image as a local mother rather than a Westernised woman. Although she wanted to underline that she was a person the same as others in society of mainland China, her social-economic status actually gave her the opportunity to approach more cultural recourses than others could gain access to. Many parents participating in this study's interviews did not have much academic knowledge about homosexuality before their children came out. However, WU Youjian got to know and understand this issue well whilst working as a magazine editor.

In WU Youjian's opinion, the magazine where she worked before retirement, in mainland China during the 1980s was a leading one and very open-minded. At that time, they were in a passion for creating new columns. When the magazine began exploring work on documentary literature, she approached the issue of homosexuality. In 1998, magazine staff collected a set of documentary literary pieces to read in order to work on a new column. Among their reading materials, they had *Tongxinglian zai Zhongguo (Homosexuality in China)*, a book written by FANG Gang who was a journalist at that time and is a social scientist working in Beijing Forestry University now.

> WU Youjian: This was the first work I read on *tongxinglian*. I got the feeling of freshness that there was such a kind of people, and their lives were like this in China. I knew something after reading this.

In the following year, they added the new column. In 1999, sociologist LI Yinhe published her book entitled *Tongxinglian Yawenhua (Homosexual Subculture)*. Due to her curiosity and the hope of acquiring more knowledge, WU Youjian read this book.

> WU Youjian: At that time, my mind and thought were more open and acquired more knowledge. I knew that their life was not good in China. I thought, (only) if *tongxinglian* people were equal with us *yixinglian* (opposite-sex love) people…but their life was so depressing. If I knew who was *tongxinglian*, I would treat him/her fairly. However, I did not know anyone who was *tongxinglian*.

Soon, her son came out to her in the summer of 1999. When he came out, he did not know that his mother had already understood same-sex sexuality in an academic way. He assumed that she did not have a great deal of knowledge about it. Facing her son's coming out, she just asked some questions, including how her son became certain that he was *tongxinglian* and how he could find a partner, and then she accepted. When he came out, he was a university student and an active volunteer in an organisation focusing on AIDS/HIV issues. Her son introduced her to many other gay people in Guangzhou, and Ah-Qiang was one of them.

Ah-Qiang was born in a village in the Anhui Province in the late 1970s. During that time, as a good student, he got the chance to enter a secondary vocational school. He initially worked in his hometown after graduation. In the 1990s, he resigned and went to work in the provinces with a better economy. Finally, he settled down in Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong Province. He got a job as a salesman in the

logistics industry in the late 1990s and soon he started his own logistics company in 1999. From 1999 to 2011, he was running his company. By 2011, he decided to devote himself to doing *tongzhi* public benefits on a full-time basis. In his view, his experiences in Guangzhou were very simple because he only did one job. As a capable young man, he successfully became a member of the urban middle class through working hard at the early stage of market economy. He first read the term "tongxinglian" (same-sex love) in a magazine. Then he "realised" his sexual identity and identified himself as a member of such people. At that time, Ah-Qiang was not sure how his future would be and felt that he must get married. This attitude changed when he started surfing the Internet. He described this as follows: "I started surfing the Internet in 1998. It was expensive (at that time), but my economic situation was very good." The Internet provided him with plenty of information about issues pertinent to homosexuality.

> Ah-Qiang: I knew LI Yinhe's research and articles and I read them. I got to know that there were fifty million *tongxinglian* people in China, and (I felt) it was not necessary to make myself so scared, right? The reason for leaving my first boyfriend was that it seemed that only we the two of us were (tongxinglian) in this world and I completely did not know who the third one was. I was full of the feeling of fear and self-escape. I suddenly saw this (the estimated homosexual population in China) and felt liberation in my heart.

Ah-Qiang got to know many people online, including an author working for a website focusing on homosexual news. He started to search the related news for the website, and he even once acted as an interviewer for it. For him, this was a process of "self-education", and he felt that he should do something for the gay and lesbian "community". In 2003, when an organisation was hiring a hotline operator, he applied

for the position. He acted as a volunteer from 2003 to 2008 in a foundation focusing on AIDS/HIV issues, which also provided services for MSM people.

Both Ah-Qiang and WU Youjian were famous bloggers at that time. WU Youjian wrote stories and thoughts about family and the issue of sexual orientation. Ah-Qiang wrote stories about his life and his partnership, which attracted many readers. When WU Youjian, Ah-Qiang and some other volunteers got to know one another, they decided to do LGBT public benefits together. Their first step was establishing an email account and a hotline. WU Youjian was responsible for answering people's questions. They heard and obtained some information about PFLAG from a volunteer in a foundation, who had studied in the United States and had obtained some knowledge about PFLAG National. In June 2008, they decided to establish PFLAG China. When they discussed the (Chinese) name of the organisation, some volunteers put forward the term "rainbow" and "tongzhi", but Ah-Qiang and WU Youjian insisted on using the term "tongxinglian" (same-sex love) because it would bring what they are working on to light clearly and would express the idea of "being yourself".

At this stage, PFLAG China did not have a formal structure. WU Youjian acted as the first chairperson and was the only parent volunteer. They organised parties and sharing sessions where WU Youjian and other volunteers communicated with LGB people living in Guangzhou and advocated social acceptance through the media and universities. WU Youjian was constructed as the representative of parents with gay and lesbian children in the new era. In 2009, PFLAG China organised its first national

conference. Nine parents from different places came to participate in this conference. At this stage, the financial support came from CDC (Centres for Disease Control) as PFLAG China was assisting CDC by introducing MSM people to have HIV test. As discussed above, assisting with HIV/AIDS issues among MSM people and getting financial support from CDC has been the framework of many organisations. PFLAG China adopted this framework in its early stage. During the fieldwork, a senior volunteer, Chenguang, informed me of their considerations and practices at that time.

> Chenguang: If we could mobilise a person to have an HIV test, the Centre (for Disease Control) would give some allowance per person. From the perspective of PFLAG China, we made it very clear from the beginning that we were not earning money through this, but we felt that the male *tongzhi* community really needed self-love, self-protection and HIV testing. We encouraged people to have HIV test, and we told everyone that the money came from the Project of China-Gates Foundation and we would not give the money to every individual; rather, we would use the money in organising PFLAG China's activities.

In 2011, Ah-Qiang took an internship in Los Angeles LGBT Centre. When Ah-Qiang reflected on this in 2018 in the interview of this study, he stressed that "it was not about what you learnt, but it was more important to open your eyes, especially when you were at a certain age". He was impressed by the scale and the well-organised activities there. After his internship, Ah-Qiang decided to work for the organisation PFLAG China on a full-time basis. With some donations within the LGB network, PFLAG China rented an office and was able to afford full-time employees. PFLAG China started to build formal institutions, making the financial disclosure accessible to the public and forming a council that consisted of core volunteers.

At the new stage, PFLAG China decided to end the strategy of encouraging MSM people to have HIV tests and getting financial help from the Centre for Disease Control, because this was not the core mission of PFLAG China. Moreover, Ah-Qiang believed that this strategy had consumed too many resources and much energy without bringing any resources to PFLAG China.

> Chenguang: Since 2012, we have not worked on HIV testing anymore. We felt that every organisation must have its focal point. We pay more attention to family acceptance and improving the social environment, to which we pay more attention (than other issues). If people ask us, we can tell them which groups in Guangzhou can do this. We can introduce them to other groups, but PFLAG China itself (does not do this). Otherwise, our work will be too complicated.

In 2011, WU Youjian stepped down as PFLAG China's chairperson and Ah-Qiang took the role of executive director in the new framework. Ah-Qiang replaced the CDC's financial support with support from foundations and fundraising within the LGB population.

PFLAG China became famous since its early years. WU Youjian was constructed and promoted as the representative of parents with gay and lesbian children in contemporary China, which could attract people's attention and the media broadcast. However, the team felt very confused at that time because its fame did not match its work. This is what Ah-Qiang emphasised saying: "I felt that we had wide fame, but we did little true service (for the LGB population)." Having built its name during the last stage, PFLAG China started to explore its new working style and its objects.

In 2012, PFLAG China's fifth National Conference was held. Based on the experiences of organising five national conferences and its publicity on the media, PFLAG China gradually attracted more parents. Though PFLAG China did not have a detailed plan at that time, they decided to build a parent volunteer team to create the "feeling of hundreds of flowers' flourishing". Though there were still not many parents at that time, PFLAG China appointed a parent volunteer as a convener in the province where this parent was living. Though they could not actually provide services for the whole province, such an arrangement created the atmosphere that more and more parents were standing out in more and more provinces. Their contact details, accurately speaking, social media account registered for volunteer work, were announced by PFLAG China. The Internet made it convenient for gay and lesbian people and their parents to contact them. The parent volunteers' role was communicating with the young gay and lesbian individuals seeking help and with parents facing the difficulties of family acceptance. Furthermore, some parent volunteers also told their own stories in the media. At this stage, PFLAG China also started to explore building training programmes for parent volunteers. Ah-Qiang believed that he experienced self-growth from the training he received in the United States as it helped him broaden his horizons. Therefore, PFLAG China started providing training programmes to parent volunteers to "promote the growth of more parents". In 2011, PFLAG China organised its first training programme: How to Use Social Media. The parents in PFLAG China's network were mobilised to create weibo accounts (a social media microblogging website similar to twitter) and express their

voice in support of gay and lesbian people online. This was the practice of mobilising online public opinion and promoting PFLAG China. In this respect, Ah-Qiang said: "Forming huge (online) strength was very helpful for building the organisation's brand." After the training, since 2012, several parents in different provinces were appointed as "conveners". PFLAG China started to form online groups, functioning as the platform for parents from different places to communicate. With the help of the Internet, PFLAG China successfully built a nationwide parent network. Conveners in different provinces also got to know more parents during their volunteering work. Though PFLAG China started from Guangzhou in 2008, where the organisation was headquartered, they did not build a local parent group in Guangzhou first and develop groups in other places second, contrary to my assumption at the beginning of the fieldwork. The reality was that PFLAG China built a national parent network from the beginning, though only a few parents were involved at that time.

The conveners in different provinces could provide services to gay and lesbian individuals and their parents online and offline, but they were not capable of building and managing local teams. However, by 2015, PFLAG China started the reformation: taking each city rather than each province as the basic unit of organisation and governance. At the new stage, a convener became responsible only for a particular city's branch or group. The new management model included two characteristics: taking a single city as the basic unit and recruiting young volunteers at a large scale. In PFLAG China, volunteers are mainly divided into two types, including "parent

volunteers" and "young volunteers" who are usually LGBT individuals. Shifting attention to the young volunteers was inspired by a project by chance. In 2015, PFLAG China organised a three-day training programme on public speaking for twenty young volunteers, who were selected to give one hundred speeches on "Getting to Know LGBT" in schools, companies or other public places. The leaders and staff believed that this project's outcome was very good because the young volunteers showed their enthusiasm and ability to take action. Subsequently, PFLAG China developed a camp for young volunteers named as "PFLAG Volunteer Capacity Building", which was different from the "Growth Camps of PFLAG Rainbow Partners" and "Leadership Camps of PFLAG Supporters" provided for parents. Though "Giving 100 Speeches" was a temporary project only held in 2015, the training programme provided for young volunteers continued to be organised every year since 2016. Many members of the young volunteers' camp became core volunteers in different branches. Nowadays, the branches in different cities have the duty of selecting and recommending suitable volunteers to participate in the youth training camp. In its early years, PFLAG China was more like an organisation of parents with gay and lesbian children. However, after these reforms, it has become an LGB organisation with the participation of parents.

Since many young volunteers have been recruited by PFLAG China, its activities have also undergone some changes. Besides the traditional sharing session focusing

on family acceptance, PFLAG China now organises many leisure activities for young LGBT people.

3.3 PFLAG China: a Community-based Organisation

Two critical factors make PFLAG China the only nationwide organisation focusing on same-sex love issues in contemporary mainland China. The first is that PFLAG China directly responds to the most significant and universal problem for gay and lesbian people in their daily lives, that is how to deal with parents' expectations and pressure. The second is PFLAG China's strategy on organising. As discussed previously, from the beginning, PFLAG China created the parent volunteer team comprising of parents from different provinces, based on which PFLAG China developed even more and became a community-based organisation. PFLAG China sets two missions for its social governance: "community service" and advocacy for social recognition, especially in the media. Aiming to turn more parents into activists, PFLAG China is always encouraging more parents to accept media interviews and tell their stories. In the training programme provided for parent volunteers, one part is about the skills for doing media interviews inter alia. During the fieldwork, I heard a PFLAG China leader repeating the following statement to parent volunteers: "if today the state consults the legislation of same-sex marriage, how could it come true if only few people support it?" I also heard them mention the film *Brokeback Mountain* as an example. The organisation's leader stressed that this film increased the public support

for LGBT in the United States. Emphasising these matters, the PFLAG China staff aimed at convincing parent volunteers of the effect of social advocacy. The parents organisations in the United States (Broad et al., 2004) and Italy (Bertone, 2013) hold supportive attitudes towards same-sex love and develop narratives of "real family values", which challenge the religious right's conservative narratives of "family values". Similarly but without a religious background, PFLAG China has developed the advocacy narratives in the name of parents, hoping that society would accept their children's lifestyle. Its advocacy views family recognition as the moral basis and legitimacy justification for demanding social recognition.

Though in its early years, PFLAG China paid attention mainly to advocacy, it then gradually started to pay more attention to "community services" and undertook efforts to build a community-based organisation, which can be seen in two aspects. Firstly, PFLAG China has been trying to increasingly attract more people to participate in its activities, services and volunteer team in order to eventually expand the "PFLAG China" community. Secondly, PFLAG China pays increasing attention to the "community fundraising" within the population practising same-sex sexuality.

Unlike organisations mainly getting financial support from the Centres for Disease Control of government or overseas foundations, PFLAG China emphasises community-based fundraising. As explained in the Introduction, the practices of homosexual movements in the Western context feature struggling for the juridification of equality. Such aspiration is also demonstrated in overseas (European

and North American) foundations' emphasis on legal advocacy and law reform, but this may not be applicable in the Chinese context. Ana Huang, an activist, analyses the gap between the aspiration for the legal advocacy and the local context.

> Ana HUANG: Even if you are the one with funding to distribute, try not to dictate everything, keeping in mind that global funding structures reside within larger systems of power, and well-intentioned Western foundations wield great power in forcing activists in the global South to execute their wishes. I am often frustrated that European and American funders pressure Chinese activists to prioritize anti-discrimination and legal advocacy work over the less tangible, but deeper changes we can create through cultural mobilization and sustainable movement-building work. There is apparently a hierarchy of activism, where pride parades and law reform count as the bravest, most effective methods, and culture and art activism are looked down upon as a compromise by activists who are not brave enough to go public. This is a very warped idea. China doesn't operate under the same political system. LGBT people in China do not face the same kinds of problems and do not need the same set of solutions, carried out in the same order. (Moreno-Tabarez et al., 2014: 130)

As discussed in the Introduction, the homosexual movements in the Western context aim to achieve the juridical equality, where symbolically, the legislation of same-sex marriage is the last step. Along with the depathologisation of homosexuality, individualism functions as an important legitimacy justification for achieving social recognition in the Western context. Individualism underlines the individual's capacity of self-reflection and self-determination (Giddens, 1992). Fei (1992[1947]: 67) concludes that the concept of equality is embedded in individualism, "since the position of each individual in an organization is the same, one person cannot encroach on the others. It also produces a concept of constitutionality: an organization cannot deny the rights of an individual; it controls individuals merely on the basis of the

partial right they have willingly handed over." In fact, Western individualism is not the actual sociality and social practice but a legal, ethical and disciplinary practice, and what it underlines are individual self-regulation and property rights (Feuchtwang, 2015). In this regard, Feuchtwang (2015: 140) describes the practices of individualism in the West as follows: "It is lived out in relations of power and the ideologies of equality before the law and of public opinion as the source of governmental legitimacy, which in practice is dominated by mass media and the powers and financing of political persuasion through them." Even though, as an idea emphasising individual right and individual capacity, when individualism is applied on the issue of same-sex sexuality, it offers legitimacy justification on two levels: gay and lesbian individuals' rights, and all individual's right to free decisions on sexual and intimate issues. Plummer (2003) concludes that individualism is expressed as the right to choose, including the right to choose partners, choose whether or not to marry or have a child and choose sexual activities. However, the project of juridical equality and individualism should not be seen as a project with universal effectiveness. This can be discussed on three levels: the selfhood construction, the role of state/government and the sexuality construction in different societies. Individual rights are problematic in the contexts where collective rights are valued and in contexts where selfhood is constituted within the social relations of kinship, family and community (Richardson, 2017). In some contexts, rights are conferred through local community or kin relationships rather than through the state (Richardson, 2017). In Western contexts, LGB people are seen as sexual minorities like ethnic minorities in need of equal rights

and social recognition. Yet, this analogy can be problematic. In terms of the ethnic issue, it is largely possible that the members of a family belong to the same ethnic group and share the same social situation. However, every individual who practises same-sex sexuality has their own family issues to deal with, especially in contexts emphasising intergenerational ties like China.

As discussed in the Introduction, the juridical equality requires pressuring the state/government. Hildebrandt (2012) concludes that Western activists' expectations are based on the idea of transnational advocacy networks (TANs) and the boomerang model with their emphasis on the necessity of global civil societies helping one another pressure the closed state. However, the "gay and lesbian rights" defined by the transnational homosexual movements ("global queering") mainly as juridical same-sex marriage, may contrast with local contexts (Tan, 1996). In mainland China, the political atmosphere does not welcome antagonistic politics (Engebretsen, 2015), making LGBT activism features non-confrontational. Simultaneously, the government of mainland China resists the politicalisation of the homosexual issue, though it could abstractly accept the idea that homosexuality is normal. Then, as discussed in the Introduction, many individuals involved in same-sex love do not see antagonistic politics towards the government as the articulation of their interest. In the context of increasing marketisation and de-politicalisation, many people, including queer people in mainland China, see working and consumption as the way to achieve their happiness. The aims and agendas of the LGBT organisations in mainland China are

quite diverse like promoting the depathologisation among psychological counsellors, eliminating discrimination in the workplace and promoting family acceptance. All these make the legal advocacy project disconnected from the day-to-day experiences of a queer person (Moreno-Tabarez et al., 2014).

With the 2016 promulgation of the Law on the Administration of Activities of Overseas Nongovernmental Organizations in Mainland China and with the government setting formal management and more restrictions on receiving overseas funding, many organisations have been facing the necessity of transforming into community-based organisations. PFLAG China is very confident in maintaining independence from foreign foundations. Two factors endorse this confidence. First, PFLAG China is well aware of its objectives and what should be done. Second, it is an organisation based on the domestic LGBT population. I discussed this issue in the interviews with Chenguang and Ah-Qiang. Ah-Qiang argued that PFLAG China was using “their money” (foundations’ funding) to do “our work”. Chenguang believed that organisations should identify their issues to work on, which could help them maintain independence.

> Chenguang: If a group is doing what it wants to do, the control from the foundation is not so huge. If the group’s project designing cannot find out the real demand of the (LGB) community, and the designed project cannot get money, you cannot do what you want to do. To feed yourself, what you can only do is do whatever they (foundations) want you to do. That is your problem, not theirs.

In contrast to the organisations that are unable to determine their work, PFLAG China is confident in its agenda-setting. However, even though its team has a clear agenda,

the question is whether PFLAG China can apply the funding from these foundations successfully? In my interview with Ah-Qiang, we discussed the question how PFLAG China was able to argue with the foreign foundations. Ah-Qiang responded that overseas funding was not that essential for PFLAG China as long as the indigenous community was developed and was able to provide financial support.

> Ah-Qiang: I do not need to argue too much. First, my idea is that we should work on the indigenous community. When the indigenous community is developed, I start the foundation. It is possible that I do not need your (foreign foundations) money at all. Our own growth means that I have been brilliant enough to say that I do not need your money since the project is not what I want to do. You can see that PFLAG China is not project-oriented. While many organisations are project-oriented. Who gives them funds decides what they do.
>
> Ah-Qiang: Only when we can stand firmly and have a firm volunteer system, it is ok to say that we are using their money to do our work. We cannot use a little money of theirs and let our team work for them. This is definitely different, so I insist on this firmly during this process.

Such thoughts make PFLAG China pay much attention to the fundraising within the population practising same-sex sexuality in mainland China and building the "PFLAG China" community. During the fundraising events, many young volunteers and parent volunteers act as the "fundraising ambassadors" to raise the funds.

For PFLAG China, "community fundraising" not only provides sustainable financial recourses but also makes PFLAG China build more connections with the ordinary people in the LGB population and get more recognition among them.

> Ah-Qiang: I am determined to develop more individual donors because this is the value I insist on. You do this, donation, for the community. How can you be unwilling to participate in your own business (since you are a member of

> LGB community)? This is indeed educating the people, so in our training programme later, no matter if he/she is a parent (volunteer or a young volunteer) all should participate in fundraising. At least you should have such thoughts of fundraising. If you do not have this (thought), how can you do public benefits. Where does the money come from? If you are doing charity, there are only a few people who can do charity in all China because they are magnates and can give you money. How much money can you give? Doing public benefits is entirely different. Doing public benefits can be done by us, everyone. Don't you have two Yuans? Right? Then, this thought must be given (to the gay and lesbian community)…The Gay and lesbian group is a group with better empowerment. While in the area of the disabled, there is no empowerment at all.

Ah-Qiang's emphasis on the difference between doing public benefits and doing charity highlights PFLAG China's expectation on the gay and lesbian population in China. PFLAG China expects them to build the collective awareness, support PFLAG China and the broader LGBT activism sustainably.

Advocacy organisations rely on the networking of activists, media staff, lawyers and other related professionals. In contrast, community-based organisation's development depends on attracting many people to participate in its activities and getting recognition among the LGB population. Based on this expectation, the theme of the annual meeting of PFLAG China in 2017 was "Cultivating the Community Deeply". In the keynote speech, Ah-Qiang argued that volunteers should use different ways, like different leisure activities, to approach the LGB "community" more deeply. The focus of the theme was on making more people know and involved in the "PFLAG China" community.

3.4 Family Governance

Taking into account liberalism's emphasis on the society-state division, it is often assumed that LGBT-themed organisations are the spokespersons and "representatives" of LGBT population, especially when it comes to the relationship between government and these organisations. As a researcher, I thought so as well; however, this thought was dismissed when I heard volunteers and staff saying "educating the community". This phrase showed that many people practising same-sex sexuality actually did not follow or were incapable of following the values of PFLAG China and PFLAG China hoped to spread its values. Whilst PFLAG was reflecting the wishes of some of the LGBT population, I also realised that what PFLAG China was actually doing was governance rather than simply reflecting the will of LGBT community. This section focuses on PFLAG China's values in relation to how gay and lesbian individuals and their parents should live their lives.

In the interview, WU Youjian and I discussed the issues of advocacy. She stressed the necessity of advocacy within the gay and lesbian community in relation to marriage and parent-child relationships. She also underscored the importance of promoting knowledge and respectability to the public. However, she believed that advocacy for legislation was not necessary at the moment.

> WU Youjian: Advocacy for coming out, advocacy for self-identification, advocacy for safe sex. All these are needed… Let's take the legislation for example. At a particular stage, you have already known that it cannot cause much influence. You might consume much energy and money for this and it will be

> possible that all efforts will not have much influence. Others would also feel that it is not (the suitable) time. Then, it is not necessary to bright it to light now.
>
> I: Do you think that the focus of the work should be the inside of *tongzhi* people and their families?
>
> WU Youjian: When facing outside (the LGB people), when you have chances, talk about the existence of *tongzhi* people, and the idea that we should understand, respect and accept them, instead of the idea that we should legislate now, because there are few *tongzhi* willing to stand out. Legislate for whom? Who would go to register? When it is very, very far away, there will be no response if you talk about it.

WU Youjian's opinion shows that PFLAG China's contemporary agenda is not the juridification of equality, but conducting governance on the population practising same-sex sexuality. For PFLAG China, the agenda includes encouraging self-identification, self-affirmation and family recognition.

The values of PFLAG China emphasise individuals' autonomy. In *"For Entering Opposite-sex Marriage, Is that All Others' Faults?"*, a blog article written by Ah-Qiang, he emphasised the individuals' autonomy and responsibility. It was an article reflecting on an advocacy event organised by PFLAG China, named as "I am *Tongxinglian*. I will not Marry Opposite-sex People". The narratives of this event caused some disputes. Critics attributed the gay and lesbian people's dilemma mainly to social pressure rather than to their willingness. However, PFLAG China's values underline individuals' agency and autonomy, especially in the contemporary market economy. In this article, Ah-Qiang argues that the strategies of homosexual movements are connected with the contexts.

> In the countries where gay and lesbian people may be condemned to death, no one can argue that they should come out…It may be more important to

> remove the death penalty…Strategies are always connected with the era. (Ah-Qiang, 2016: para 7)

He argues that the environment has changed in mainland China and it is suitable to discuss coming out issues. At the end of this article, Ah-Qiang concludes: "Attributing all the problems to social problems and structural problems. Anyway, not my problem. This is the biggest problem!" (Ah-Qiang, 2016: para 16) According to PFLAG China's value, gay and lesbian individuals should be responsible for their happiness and take action for themselves. One important reason why this strategy could make sense is that the majority of gay and lesbian people in the "PFLAG China" community are white-collar workers with a higher educational background and have the appropriate economic and cultural capital to take action. In the interview conducted with Ah-Qiang during the fieldwork, he talked about the idea of "being the master of your own life".

> Ah-Qiang: When we are with (young) volunteers, we would say that. Can you be the master of your own life (为自己做主)? You would watch many *tongxinglian* individuals, who say: "My dad forces me to marry, and my mum…" Behind this (statement) lies the idea that others are making decisions for you (别人在为你做主). Can you be the master of your own life? Are you a person with independent will? This is a very important issue. Only when activating the idea that I should master my own life and I respect my parents, but I have borders, I will have my own life. All of these are important. In Chinese culture, the border is not clear, and (people) cannot be independent, and then one confuses oneself with one's parents.

Such an idea underscores a sense of individualism. However, it should be noted that values in the "PFLAG China" community not only encourages *tongxinglian* youth to live the life they aspire to, but also promotes the mutual understanding between

tongxinglian youth and their parents. Its values do not simply encourage *tongxinglian* youth to separate from their parents. Zhang (2020) concludes a dual process of "disentangling" and "re-embedding" in the Chinese therapeutic setting; the "disentangling" means detaching one's self from a person's familial and social nexus and entering into a space for contemplation, while the "re-embedding" refers to returning to their daily life and social relationships after the contemplation. The "re-embedding" could also be found in the values of PFLAG China, which are expressed in its activities and practices. Parent volunteers encourage gay and lesbian people to "be brave to be their authentic selves" and do family coming out at a suitable time. They also persuade parents to accept their children's lifestyle ("let the children be their authentic selves").

PFLAG China provides parents with knowledge about sexual orientation, the experiences of dealing with parent-child relationships and peer support. The services are provided by young volunteers, parent volunteers and sometimes the psychological counsellors invited by PFLAG China. Parents get the chance to discuss how to deal with family issues together. Approaching PFLAG China gives them a chance to know more about gay and lesbian people who are the same as their children, and parents sharing similar experiences with them. Parents can understand each other. For example, facing his son's coming out, Jianguo Baba felt panicked and contacted a mother volunteer in his city. In the beginning, he did not realise that she had been a mother with a gay son and thought that she was a teacher who could provide support.

When they met, the mother disclosed her being as a mother of a gay son as well. This greatly impressed Jianguo Baba and he talked with her at length. He believed that parents in the "PFLAG China" community were just like siblings and felt free to talk about everything. When I interviewed him, Jianguo Baba had already been a parent volunteer. He told me how parent volunteers worked with the parents seeking help. He emphasised that listening was more important than giving suggestions. In his opinion, what parent volunteers should do was listening to parents' pain and sharing their experiences of accepting their children. Based on peer support, parent volunteers were able to discuss the knowledge that normalises same-sex attraction and the value of supportive parenthood.

For gay and lesbian people, PFLAG China's governance means the possibility and hope of "being (their) authentic selves" and of parents accepting their lifestyle. This is illustrated in my interviews with some young volunteers, including Xiaoshi, Xiaohei and Xiaohong.

Xiaohei, a young gay man, made the plan of coming out to his parents after he had participated in the sharing session of PFLAG China for the first time. He felt that he was "encouraged" and "poisoned".

> I : What do you mean by "poisoned"?
>
> Xiaohei: A seed has been buried in my heart. At a moment, I need to solve this problem. I do not want to live in the shadow forever.

In earlier years, Xiaoshi was a volunteer in a group focusing on HIV issues in a third-tier city. At that time, that group of volunteers only focused on "health issues" (HIV and AIDS). The idea of "self-identification" was not on their agenda. For a long time, Xiaoshi believed that he would get married in the future. During our discussion on this issue, he mentioned two layers of meaning of marriage. First, getting married is a promise to parents, conducted to fulfil parents' wishes. Second, in his mind at that time, marriage was about economic and life cooperation. At that stage of his life, he did not think about the relationship between romantic love and marriage.

> I: Does this mean that, at that time, you did not think of how you would marry a girl if you did not like her?
>
> Xiaoshi: No. I just felt that I should find a girl I like…and let life go on. It would be fine if I could lead an ordinary life (生活就是普普通通过去就可以了). I did not think of whether I love her. I did not know whether I love her and whether there was any cheating. Who understood? I did not consider these issues.

In Xiaoshi's experiences, it was the parent volunteers of PFLAG China who reminded him of the morality and vitality of viewing romantic love as the basis of marriage. Several years ago, he joined an activity which was online discussion and for the first time, he heard the term "entering marriage by cheating" or "marriage fraud". During that online discussion, a parent volunteer highlighted that "entering marriage by cheating" would harm a girl. Xiaoshi described his feeling when he heard this idea: "Do you know that my whole person woke up totally. Suddenly, I felt that, right, she was right. I just cannot harm a girl." When Xiaoshi first participated in a sharing session run by PFLAG China, he was so touched. Gradually, he changed his fatalism

attitude completely. He started to believe that he had the potential to build a long-term same-sex partnership, rather than enter marriage, and that he had the potential to be accepted by others.

This is not just Xiaoshi's personal story. The story of the local LGB organisations has a similarity with his personal story as well. As mentioned above, in the early years, the group which Xiaoshi volunteered in focused on HIV issues only. The strategy the first local parent volunteer (a mother with a gay son) resorted to was approaching Xiaoshi's group to get to know more gay people. They were surprised and touched by her support for her son. For the local *tongxinglian* community, PFLAG China brought new issues, including self-identification, coming out, family acceptance and even activism. Xiaoshi participated in the activities of PFLAG China and he felt that its activities were very good. Later, the same group in which he volunteered started to pay attention to the issues of self-identification, self-affirmation and coming out, in addition to its original focus on AIDS/HIV issues. Whenever this group organised activities like a dinner party or an outing, they invited PFLAG China's local parent volunteers. During these activities, the volunteers could talk about HIV prevention, this group's traditional topic. Meanwhile, the local parent volunteers would talk about issues of self-identification and family coming out. Xiaoshi told me that, after listening to the new topics, some people interested in these issues applied to be new volunteers in their group. For a long time, this group and PFLAG China were always working together in that city.

When I interviewed Xiaohong, she had taken the position of the volunteer director in the local branch. For her, what PFLAG China could provide was community support and hope for future life.

> I: At the very beginning, what point did attract you to join PFLAG China?
>
> Xiaohong: I am always interested in "doing public benefits". Actually, my life was perplexing… I was not interested in my major and I did not continue pursuing my study after graduating from the technical secondary school. I just did the work that I could do, but I felt confused and fell into depression for a while. However, after approaching PFLAG China, I felt that I suddenly got what I want. I felt that we could have a future like this. We could get married (the same-sex partnership). Many people are standing out, especially parents standing out to speak for us. I should do this as well since I have time and I like this. During the election of the volunteer director, though my educational background (was not good), I wanted to try and then applied.

Xiaoshi, Xiaohei and Xiaohong's stories show what parent volunteers mean for many gay and lesbian people. In a society where their families are the most significant factor for gay and lesbian people leading their lives, PFLAG China and its parent volunteers make them have the hope of "being their authentic selves" and getting family recognition successfully.

However, it is necessary to note that PFLAG China's governance of the queer population analysed in this thesis has limits. During my fieldwork, a young volunteer spoke about one of his gay friends who did not want to participate in PFLAG China's activities. In his friend's opinion, PFLAG China was an organisation "just encouraging people to come out". Because this person did not see PFLAG China's values as the articulation of his life imagination, he was not interested in joining its

activities and the "PFLAG China" community. By mentioning his friend, thus, this volunteer concluded: "PFLAG China can only influence the ones who are willing to be influenced by PFLAG China."

Some activists and scholars, have criticised PFLAG China for producing homonormativity. It is true that in its public narratives, PFLAG China has built an image of the homosexual citizen based on the homonormativity. In this image, the homosexual citizens are middle-class, having a healthy lifestyle and keeping harmony with family and society. However, based on the researcher's empirical data, this chapter argues that the kind of norm and normativity which has been built by PFLAG China still needs further examination.

Joanne, an activist based in Hong Kong, made a typical comment on her weibo. "Many friends and families of gays and lesbians argue that their children are good children, so they accept their child. This is dividing homosexuality into a good one and a bad one in another way. There is no problem if the good ones be gay? Actually, in many people's eyes, homosexuality is bad at all!"[7] It is not difficult to realise that this kind of comments is responding to the narratives held by several parents that "*tongxinglian* children are brilliant". Based on the empirical data, this chapter argues that understanding this narrative as selective acceptance is inappropriate. Chapter 4 of this thesis will show that the narrative of "brilliant" functions as the compensation for parents. A mother volunteer told me that this narrative was a kind of encouragement

[7] seen in site.douban.com/211878/widget/notes/16096623/note/332952671/

for parents when they just knew their children's *tongxinglian* lifestyle. In my interview with her, I expressed my doubt on this method as not everyone was "brilliant" in schooling and career. She replied to me that volunteers would not say anything like "children are brilliant" in that case; she would emphasise the parent-child relationship instead. Moreover, for parents, their children's good performance in morality, in schooling and in career provide a way for their parents to understand their children's practices of same-sex sexuality. Some parents argue that "we know that he/she is a good child/person; thus, it is impossible that he/she *xuehuaile* (learn to be bad)." By this logic, children's good personality makes their practices of same-sex love reasonable; thus, parents would not view homosexuality as something like drug use or committing a crime that "harm the society".

Nevertheless, the values and some practices of PFLAG China do produce some norms, or, normativity. The most pronounced normativity underlined by PFLAG China is the incompatibility between same-sex sexuality/love and marriage. Actually, this point usually is not attacked by the critics, because these commenters also see "gay and lesbian" people getting married as illegitimate. As shown in Chapter 1, married gay and lesbian people are either seen as the victims of heterosexual hegemony or the people (mainly men) conducting "marriage fraud". Thus, many "progressive" organisations are actually excluding the ones entering (male-female) marriage.

PFLAG China also emphasises that coming out is good. As discussed in this chapter, PFLAG China emphasises identity politics and symbolically views coming out and

getting recognition as a further step of self-identification. As mentioned above, this could make people who do not see values advocated by PFLAG China as the articulation of their interest reject PFLAG China.

Regarding the sex issues, whilst conducting the fieldwork, I observed that many young volunteers do not see the sexual practices like casual sex problematic and view them as individuals' decision on his/her own life. Sex issues are treated as a private issue, which is not a part of PFLAG China's public advocacy.

Though I did find some LGB youth who were not middle-class within the "PFLAG China" community, it is still appropriate to argue that PFLAG China is largely a middle-class community excluding the lower classes. This could be constructed by several factors. Firstly, since its establishment, the core volunteers of PFLAG China have been the ones middle-class and with a higher-education background. Secondly, the social, economic and spatial divisions may not make it easy for the migrant workers to participate in the PFLAG China's activities. For example, many activities are organised in city centres, which are far away from the factories. The third probable factor are PFLAG China's attitudes. Some staff and volunteers expressed to me that in their opinion, migrant workers were still struggling for survival (on the economic level), and thus it was unrealistic to recruit them to be volunteers. Further, they believed that the volunteers with a higher-education background had enough time and good capability in "doing *tongzhi* public benefits".

3.5 Conclusion

As the background of analysing parents' experiences, this chapter has discussed the practices of PFLAG China. This chapter has shown that the development of PFLAG China was embedded in the emergence of LGBT activism in mainland China since the 1990s. After years of exploration, PFLAG China has become a community-based organisation and has been making efforts to attract more LGB people and parents to join its activities and build the "PFLAG China" community, which could provide sustainability and maintain the independence of PFLAG China.

Based on the fieldwork, this chapter has analysed the values of PFLAG China, including self-affirmation or self-identification ("Be brave to be your authentic self"), family acceptance and social acceptance. Such values have a sense of identity politics. However, the fieldwork of this thesis shows that what PFLAG China is doing is family governance, not just normalising same-sex love, when providing services for gay and lesbian individuals and their parents. For the gay and lesbian youth, PFLAG China advocates that they should insist on their life choices and respect their parents. Parents' sharing makes them understand parents' thinking better and have hope in the possibility of their parents accepting the lifestyle they aspire to: rejecting marriage and practising same-sex love. For parents, PFLAG China advocates supportive parenthood as an effective tool to deal with parent-child relationships. Moreover, PFLAG China takes supportive parenthood as the legitimacy justification to demand social recognition in its social advocacy.

After analysing the values advocated in PFLAG China's family governance, this thesis will analyse the parents' family practices in the following three chapters.

Chapter 4 "Becoming" Parents with *Tongxinglian* (Gay and Lesbian) Children

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has discussed the development of PFLAG China as the background of this thesis. For its part, this chapter analyses parents' experiences and practices, mainly focusing on how parents accept their gay and lesbian children.

The first point to be stressed in this chapter is that the pre-condition for parents to accept their gay and lesbian children is getting to know their children's identity. Knowing their children's sexual identity or "sexual orientation" is very important because only then, can parents start to perceive themselves as parents with gay and lesbian children ("*tongxinglian* children"). The key point emphasised in this chapter is the parents' subjective understanding. Some parents in the fieldwork did not realise the issue of sexual orientation until their children came out. For instance, Yubing Mama's son and his partner lived together with Yubing Mama in her flat for two years after graduating from university. They told her that they were schoolmates. When she was interviewed for this research, she described herself as a "careless mother" since she did not realise that they were lovers even though they lived with her. Although these two young men maintained their relationship as same-sex lovers, this uninformed mother perceived herself as a mother with a single heterosexual son rather than a mother with a gay son, until the day her son came out. Then, she had to start building her knowledge of her son's gay identity and her own identity as a parent with

a gay son. As discussed in the Introduction and Chapter 1, apart from disclosing their own gay and lesbian identity to reject marriage, many individuals practising same-sex sexuality in mainland China may marry normally, stay unmarried, or enter a marriage between a gay and a lesbian. Parents who fail to realise such an orientation in their children, perceive themselves as parents with children who have not got married, or parents whose married children have not had babes yet. Consequently, knowing the "truth" about their children's gay and lesbian identity, immediately transforms both their understanding of their children, and their self-knowledge.

Individuals' self-concepts originate in social life, and this makes them vary widely across societies and cultures (Neisser, 1988). Symbolic interactionism suggests that individuals learn to understand, interpret and ascribe meaning to different phenomena in social interaction, and self-knowledge is constructed and built during such processes (Blumer, 1986; Mead, 1913; Cooley, 1902; Goffman, 1959). Besides being a part of social interaction, self-knowledge is also cultural, as emphasised by anthropologists. In this study, the term "social" points to the interpersonal interaction, while the term "cultural" points to meaning systems. Such an understanding of "culture" comes from anthropologists' work. Geertz (1973: 5) sees culture as "webs of significance", and D'Andrade (1982: 197) uses the term "cultural meaning systems". As D'Andrade (1982: 232) has already defined culture as "consisting of learned systems of meaning", the term "cultural meaning systems" seems to be synonymous. Therefore, in this thesis, culture is seen as meaning systems. Inspired by

the academic discussion on social and cultural selves, this chapter concentrates on how parents negotiate their understanding of children, family and moreover, their own selves, when facing the disclosure of their children's lifestyle and consequently becoming parents with gay and lesbian children.

Parenting is an "identity work", as it is closely tied up with ideas about ourselves (Faricloth et al., 2013). In raising children, parents engage in the narrative process of self-making (Faircloth, 2009). Based on such definitions, the focus of parents' "identity work" is on "selfhood" (Faricloth et al., 2013). For parents, having a child is "an experience of the self", connected with "a claim to happiness" (Faircloth and Murray, 2015: 1118). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995)'s study of the Western context concludes that for a large number of parents, having children is not a service or obligation any more, but a "way of life" to achieve one's own interests. Because "identity" is a polysemous term, this thesis uses the term "self-work" instead to discuss the process of developing self-knowledge while "becoming" parents with gay and lesbian children. Foucault (1988) names self-work as "technologies of the self", which "permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (Foucault, 1988: 18). Furthermore, the parental selfhood is actually a moral identity "that people invest with

moral significance; our belief in ourselves as good people depends on whether we think our actions and reactions are consistent with that identity" (Kleinman, 1996: 5).

Parents must rely on different cultural recourses when facing such a new situation, the disclosure of children's gay and lesbian identity. Rooted in grounded morality, these different knowledges and narratives are concerned with how parents should understand themselves and their children's selves based on different moral and emotional meanings. They reconstruct the children's status in the parents' eyes and simultaneously transform the parents' self-knowledge and social imagination. These cultural recourses function as cultural tools for the parents who are struggling to understand what is happening. The idea that culture is a "tool kit" comes from Swidler (1986)'s work. Swidler (1986) distinguishes the cultural influences in settled and unsettled cultural periods, and argues that in the unsettled life created by social transformation, culture consisting of symbols, stories rituals and world views, functions as tool kits and provides different tools for people to solve their problems; people need to make a choice instead of acting as they do naturally. Swidler (1986: 284) emphasises that a "culture has enduring effects on those who hold it, not by shaping the ends they pursue, but by providing the characteristic repertoire from which they build lines of action."

Parents are thrown into the unsettled lives by the disclosure of their children's gay and lesbian identity. It is these cultural tools with moral meanings that make parents "become" parents with gay and lesbian children successfully. For them, the journey of

exploring just starts. This chapter investigates the intervention of different cultural tools with a focus on their moral and emotional meanings, and discusses what knowledge of family and self that parents construct. Based on the interviews with parents concerning their acceptance process, this chapter concludes with two main interwoven effective cultural tools. The first is the sociobiological understanding of sexual orientation in the name of science (children are "born this way"), and the second is the narratives of parenthood. These cultural tools play a significant role in constructing a new self-knowledge in the family, the knowledge of the new self both of children and parents.

4.2 Self-knowledge in Name of Science: Resisting the Stigmatised Self-knowledge of Parenting Failure

When I first joined a sharing session of PFLAG China in fieldwork, I was impressed by the scene of parents heatedly discussing the cause of sexual orientation. Many parent volunteers argued that from the perspective of natural science, *tongxinglian* (same-sex love) was born.

Generally speaking, the majority of information that same-sex sexuality is normal or that same-sex sexuality is a mental illness, is all spoken from the perspective of science. In mainland China, there are two layers of meaning when people say something is *kexue de(科学的,scientific)*. First, this means that it is expressed in the name of science. Second, it means that it is correct.

The way how sciences, including sexology, psychology and psychiatry, view same-sex attraction and practice has changed a great deal through history. Though the science usurped the power of religion, how science viewed same-sex attraction was still influenced by the Christian homophobia context and considered this attraction as a sexual inversion and a mental illness. As the founder of psychoanalysis, Freud developed narratives on same-sex attraction that showed the characteristic of complicity. On the one hand, same-sex attraction is seen as the result of fixation in the psychic evolution and repressing Oedipal desires (Robinson, 1999; Ruse, 1981; Murphy, 1984). On the other hand, Freud follows the logic of normalising, and not pathologising this attraction by seeing it as incurable (Robinson, 1999; Ruse, 1981). The former part can be concluded as the origin of the narratives that individuals with same-sex desires are caused by family problems. Though Freud did not support the pathological model, many American psychoanalysts did, and introduced conversion therapy, influenced by homophobia and utopian therapeutic optimism (Robinson, 1999). Gay activism, seeing the pathological model as the contributor to stigma, acted as the most significant power for diagnostic change (Drescher, 2015). In such a background, the depathologisation of same-sex attraction became a milestone of the LGB movement. In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association did not state "homosexuality" as a mental illness.

The normalisation narratives based on science, can be traced back to the work of Havelock Ellis (1859-1939). Ellis' normalising view was supported by his discussion

of animal behaviour and cultural relativism (Robinson, 1973). He argued in his book *Sexual Inversion*, that same-sex desire was a natural expression of instinct and a common biological manifestation in human beings and animals alike (Beccalossi, 2011). Ellis developed the distinction between heterosexuality and homosexuality (Beccalossi, 2011), implying the idea of the sexual minority group which made him depart from Freud's assumption that bisexuality is human nature. This is where the narratives that sexual orientations are born originally came from, which I often heard in the "PFLAG China" community. Paired with the development of the gay and lesbian movement in the Western context, there has been a growing acceptance of sociobiological accounts of sexual orientation (Duggan, 2003; Ward, 2015). This chapter concludes that this essential understanding has two layers of moral meaning, including exempting parents from the secondary stigma, forming a scientific gay and lesbian self of the children in the family and justifying the parents' acceptance.

When parents face the disclosure of their children's gay and lesbian identity, it is easy for them to inspect themselves as parents. This can be attributed to their being influenced by the idea that a person's same-sex desire is the result of a parenting problem, the typical interpretation of dominant mothers and absent fathers (Ruse, 1981; Fields, 2001), originally from early psychology. The scientific suggestion that children's same-sex attraction is the result of a parenting failure resonates with the ideas of "infant determinism", which is conspicuous in parenting culture. According to "infant determinism" (Bruer, 1999), a person's early years determine their

development in life. Closely connected is the idea of "parent causality", implying a direct relationship between parenting and outcomes regarding children's success in various aspects (Lee, 2013). The narratives seeing homosexuality as stemming from family unhappiness and the culture where parents' selfhood relies on their children, lead some parents to self-reflection, self-judgment, self-blaming and to feeling guilty while questioning causality of children's sexual orientation.

Parents, especially the ones who experienced marriage unhappiness or divorce, indulge in self-blaming and feeling guilty, as the children's same-sex desire is not only interpreted as a mental illness but also as a consequence of family unhappiness. Children's same-sex desire denotes that children are the victims of the unhappy family. This interpretation implies the failure of the parenting work. In psychology's primary narratives, the family problem points to the narratives of the "dominant mother" and "rejecting father", causing their son's same-sex desire based on the "Oedipus Complex" (Ruse, 1981). In terms of the parenting problem, the interviewed parents developed narratives that went far beyond the primary narratives, such as the absence of both the father's and mother's love due to their economic status.

As one of the earliest parent volunteers in PFLAG China, Langman Mama told her story on a TV programme which was broadcast in 2013. She said that on the night of her divorce, she talked to her son trying to assure him of their ability to lead a good life even without his father. During their conversation, her son said: "I'd like to tell you one thing as well," and it was then that he disclosed his same-sex orientation with

a splendid smile on this fifteen-year-old boy's face. It seemed that he did not know what that meant to his mother when he was a middle school student. Langman Mama was totally shocked. She added: "I only heard about *tongxinglian*, but it was far away from me. How could it relate to my life?" She continued saying that the feeling of relief after signing the divorce contract totally disappeared. Thereupon, she made a phone call to her ex-husband crying and breaking their son's news to him. The following day, she talked again to her ex-husband and proposed the idea of their reunion, to have a new start and create a warm family atmosphere that could change their son's sexual orientation. The questions that occurred to her were: "Was that due to (the failure of) our marriage? Was it because of disharmony between our personalities? These do harm to the child, and make some change on his mind and become a *tongxinglian*. He is only fifteen, and it is not too late to change him."

Actually, at the beginning her ex-husband did not want divorce and found some lobbyists, such as their common friends, to mediate their dispute but she insisted on their divorce. With the day following their divorce her attempts to reunite with her ex-husband started. In the three years of separate living, her ex-husband was ready to marry another woman. No one understood what happened to make her want to re-marry her ex-husband again. She was speechless when friends persuaded her to give up the remarriage plan. Only she and her ex-husband knew the secret. At last, her ex-husband accepted this proposal and they remained married for another five years.

As the son's same-sex attraction was interpreted as the result of an unhappy family, her plan was to create a warm and harmonious family atmosphere to change her son. She was the only parent I knew who had resorted to this solution- trying to restart the family life for her son to become heterosexual. Other parents indulge in self-doubt and self-blaming, especially single parents since, according to the early psychoanalysis/psychiatry, children's same-sex attraction is caused by family problems (e.g. the dominant mother and lack of father, or the fathers' weakness). Parents, who do not see their family as unhappy may have doubts and wonder what went wrong in their own family and why this happened in such a normal family as theirs.

Another story in this context is that of a single father, Jianguo Baba who was interviewed in the summer of 2015. He talked about his marriage and family stating that after his son's coming out, he sat beside the river and cried for a whole night. He said that his wife had deserted the family many years ago. He thought his son's same-sex attraction was caused by his unhappy marriage which made his son hate his mother.

All the parent interviewees who experienced divorce, the majority of whom were mothers except Jianguo Baba, thought that the root of their children's same-sex orientation was the failure of the parents' marriage.

> Xinlei Mama: After questioning this, the second phase is self-blaming. I could not fall asleep, and it was like playing movies in my mind of her growing up. I would review whether I did not do enough. Did I ignore anything? Or did it

> happen because of my (divorce). You know that I am a single parent and that I got a divorce from her father very early. I thought did that make her (become lesbian) because I had been knowing that, from the perspective of psychology, the lack of a father could bring some impact on mentality. This process of self-blaming was very uncomfortable because it filled me with remorse. However, you absolutely knew that, this was irreparable. It was impossible to make the life start again and correct this error. This was impossible, so you had to face the following issues.

When it comes to the family's happiness, the narratives of class also appear in interviews, which are closely related to the narratives of economic status and "infant determinism". Xiaofu Mama did not experience marriage unhappiness, but she was living in countryside before working in cities, different from the above-mentioned parents who are urban residents.

She is a woman from the countryside and her family has settled down in the city. She had two children, a son and a daughter. When she and her husband started to work in urban areas as migrant workers, they left their son in the countryside to be looked after by his paternal grandparents. Thus, her son is a left-behind child that in mainland China, refers to a countryside child whose parents have migrated to cities seeking work. Such children might meet their parents once a year when their parents come back to their hometowns for the Chinese New Year. The Chinese media discourse has constructed these children as already living in unhappiness and posing a social problem. Jiang (2011) concludes two ways of constructing left-behind children as a social problem, the media representation and social scientists' work. Further, Jiang (2011) argues that the excessive negative conclusion in social research has the

potential of stereotyping, and makes it easier for the public to perceive left-behind children as problematic children.

When Xiaofu Mama faced her son's coming out, she wallowed in self-blame for not providing her son with a happy childhood, which "was", in her opinion, the cause of her son's "sexual orientation". When she participated in the activities of PFLAG China, she even paid particular attention to the family background of the gay and lesbian children.

> Xiaofu Mama: The child arrived at this step. I would blame myself. Even now, I ask myself whether there are more such children in families with left-behind children. Are there more such children in divorced families? In my opinion, there are many such children in divorced families and among left-behind children because they lack the love from parents. It is said that the best education is the company from parents. Now, my daughter comes back home at 4.30pm, I am with her. I would search the information about her homework online, and I explain to her. When she is doing her homework, I am at home. She knows that mum is here.

Currently, Xiaofu Mama and her husband are settled down in an urban area. Their daughter, a primary-school pupil, was born in this urban area where she is growing up and developing, receiving her parents' care. While her elder brother is a left-behind child, the daughter is living in intensive parenthood. This could be seen as the family's upward mobility. However, the narratives of psychology remind Xiaofu Mama of her son's "unhappy" childhood.

Early psychology/psychiatry narratives construct the pathologising self-knowledge for same-sex attracted individuals and as well as for their parents. In other words, people practising same-sex sexuality are rendered as pathologised subjects, while their

parents are viewed as failing parents. The fieldwork of this research has revealed that several parents embrace such narratives in their self-knowledge at the beginning and consequently indulge in self-blaming. The sociobiological narratives provide a new self-knowledge for parents suggesting the following line of thinking: "the children did nothing wrong, and I did nothing wrong, either." Such narratives from the fieldwork express the typical moral meaning of the sociobiological understanding, the de-stigmatisation of parents. They are not parents whose parenting failure has caused their children's "abnormal" sexual orientation any more, a view which frees such parents from the secondary stigma. Apart from transforming parents' self-conception, the sociobiological knowledge also changes parents' understanding of their children.

4.3 Understanding Children Better

4.3.1 Children's Scientific "Authentic Self": Justification of Parents' Acceptance

When facing the disclosure of their children's gay and lesbian identity, parents need more information to understand what is happening. The process of learning "scientific" knowledge is the process of understanding and accepting gay and lesbian children's lifestyle. Two layers of moral meanings are embedded in the new knowledge. The first is normalising the gay and lesbian individuals and their parents. The second is the necessity of parents accepting the inborn and unchangeable fact and freeing gay and

lesbian children from their duty of getting married, in an era when the male-female romantic love is considered as the basis of marriage.

In some cases, the authority of sociobiological knowledge is established by psychiatrists, who are scientific experts. In people's daily life, the psychiatrist is usually called "psychological doctor"[8]. Two factors make seeing a psychiatrist an option for parents. First, psychological/psychiatric treatment could be used as an instrument for achieving family governance. Second, this treatment is entailed by the belief that same-sex attraction is related to mental illness. If parents take their children to see psychiatrists at high-quality hospitals, the psychiatrists will tell the parents that this is not a mental illness at all. Therefore, it is gay and lesbian individuals who may take their parents to see the doctors chosen by them, where the doctors, with the expert authority, can educate such parents about homosexuality. Therefore, the psychiatrist can also function as the instrument of family governance utilised by gay and lesbian children. However, conversion therapy still exists, influenced by the misunderstanding, prejudice and the greed for profit. As discussed in Chapter 1, same-sex sexuality was firstly pathologised in the early 20th century in Chinese context, which was influenced by Western sexology. When conversion therapy was widespread in the West in the 1960s and 1970s, it only occurred in China during the

[8] In mainland China, the psychiatry is a part of medical science. Psychiatrists are working in hospitals, who are usually called as "psychological doctor" by ordinary people. "Psychological counsellors" (*心理咨询师*) can only provide counselling, and they do not have prescription privilege. In mainland China, "psychotherapist" (*心理治疗师*) are the ones working in hospitals, who simultaneously have the prescription privilege and are eligible to provide psychological counselling.

1990s under the modernisation drive and the importation of “advanced” medial science (Bao, 2018). As homosexuality was removed from the Chinese Classification of Mental Disorders-3 in 2001, the depathologisation has already been achieved on the official level. Nonetheless, pathologisation thinking still exists strongly in society. In such a situation, a specific duty of some LGBT organisations in mainland China is to create a whitelist of LGB friendly doctors.

After facing her single son’s coming out, Xiashan Mama and her son went to the hospital to see a psychiatrist together. The doctor firstly talked with the son who asserted that “I am like this, anyway.” Then the doctor replied, “Is your mum here? Let me talk with her.” The doctor explained the case from the perspective of science, but it was still extremely hard for the mother to accept her son’s sexual orientation; so, she asked whether there was any medicine that can converse this orientation. Stressing that he was not a social worker and could not handle and resolve family disputes, the doctor recommended that she should adjust herself, in terms of the typology of homosexuality/heterosexuality. The doctor said: “Auntie, forcing your son to like girls is identical with forcing you to like girls. Do you think that this is ok?” Xiashan was very touched and realised that this was a huge blow for his mother. “It seemed that there was no way for her,” said Xiashan who also said: “I felt that, what the doctor did was beyond his job as a doctor.” The thing that Xiashan thought to be “beyond the (doctor’s) job” is actually the psychiatrist’s function of conducting family governance with the authority of the scientific experts. Just as implied by the doctor, in cases like

this, parents should accept gay and lesbian children's lifestyle as it is normal and their orientation as unchangeable. This is the subtext of "scientific" knowledge endorsed by experts.

Xiaoyang Mama's son gave her the reading material produced by PFLAG China but she refused to read it. However, eventually, she and her husband accepted the reality after they searched online and after the husband met psychological doctors at several hospitals. Then, Xiaoyang Mama read the material and contacted a parent volunteer in her city. A psychiatrist told them that this was congenital and could not be cured. After one week, the son even urged them saying: "Don't you want to take me to see the doctor?" Xiaoyang Mama just thought seeing the doctor was "useless". Yet, the father still took the son to a famous hospital.

> Xiaoyang Mama: He was funny. His aim of going to the hospital was that, "Are you (to the son) *tongxinglian* just because you said so? I would rather find an expert to diagnose(you)." (laughing) His father was funny. He wanted the doctor to write on the medical records and sign the doctor's name. (He addressed the doctor saying that) since I registered to visit this department, you should write all these (details discussed) down.

In Xiaoyang Mama's understanding, the father's action was "funny". Nevertheless, his attitude raises many questions: does his behaviour have any other implication? What does such action mean for him and for the whole family? An answer to this question is that what the father did, marked the end of the family dispute and the transformation of his self-conception with the endorsement from the expert's judgment. If what this father did was not for the sake of acquiring scientific knowledge, it should then be seen as a rite of passage. Rites of passage which involve

three stages; separation, transition and incorporation, enable individuals to pass from one defined position to another (Gennep, 1977). For this father, the son's coming out triggered the separation, but it was not enough to finish the whole process just through learning the scientific knowledge. The diagnosis of the expert was the turning point to mark the achievement of this transition rite. The expert's judgement, especially when it is documented in written medical records acquired by this father, was like a formal announcement of the transition of the child's and father's identities. The expert is not only the provider of professional advice, but the host, witness and announcer of this successful transition rite.

So far, this chapter has shown some parents approaching experts to obtain scientific information about their children's sexual orientation. In some other cases, it is the children, who have cultural capital, that take their parents to the hospital and to help them acquire the scientific knowledge about same-sex orientation directly from experts. During the fieldwork, I met a young man born in the 1990s, who was still an MA student at a top university in Beijing. He was spending several days with his parents before graduation, which was a part of his coming out plan. He chose that timing out of his knowledge that, in the future, he might not have this opportunity again as it would be difficult to book a long leave from work. His plan involved two steps. First, he took his parents who were used to living in the countryside to a sharing session organised by PFLAG China. His parents nearly accepted his lifestyle after the event. Then, he took his parents to a hospital in Beijing to meet a psychiatrist in the

chosen hospital, for which he booked the appointment one week ahead. He described how the doctor told his parents and it was as follows.

> She addressed my parents saying: "I solemnly and sincerely tell you that the reason your son told you this, is not that he has read too many books and that there is something wrong with his mind (i.e. becoming a bookworm). On the contrary, he can handle this issue well and wants you to know this…The parents who come here are all very excited. In my view, you ought to have already known and have nearly recognised your child. It is enough. It is normal, and his sexual orientation is normal."

As a young person born in the 1990s and attending university, this young man had enough cultural capital to work on this issue. He was capable of employing effective cultural tools, including psychiatrists, to conduct family governance. Hence, parents are able to understand their same-sex orientated children better when they are provided with scientific knowledge about this orientation. In this way, the legitimacy of gay selfhood can be established within the family. In contrast to this young man's case, a mother interviewee found out her son's same-sex attraction when he was in middle school, unable, at this stage, to provide his mother with "scientific" expert's knowledge.

Endorsed by normalising, depathologising and essential narratives in the name of science, a scientific selfhood of gay and lesbian children can be constructed in the family by justifying the parents' acceptance of same-sex orientation as inborn and unchangeable. What does this mean for parents? As discussed in the Introduction, gay and lesbian individuals face their parents' expectation and pressure to get married. In an era when public narratives view romantic love between a male and a female as

the moral basis of marriage, the sociobiological knowledge exempts gay and lesbian people from the marriage. This meaning could be seen more obviously in the cases that how bisexual individuals make the decision on coming out.

During my fieldwork, I met two bisexual individuals, a young man coming out to his mother as gay, and a female university student coming out to her mother as a bisexual person. The man, Feng, an office worker with a higher education background, said that many people could not understand him as a bisexual man even though he truly had feelings towards men and women. When asked why he came out as gay despite identifying as a bisexual, he gave two reasons. First, explaining homosexuality is already not easy and therefore it would be even more complicated to explain bisexuality. Second, he estimated that his mother would urge him to marry a woman if she knew that he was bisexual. The second reason, the pressure to marry, was also emphasised by some volunteers and staff in PFLAG China. He wanted his future choices to be open and depend on who he would love and build a relationship with. In order to protect his freedom in choosing his lover and partner, he decided to construct his mother as a parent with a gay son. He believed that this would be helpful in making her ready to accept his potential same-sex relationship. As for the young woman, she adopted a different strategy from the one used by Feng, by disclosing herself to her mother as a bisexual daughter who was in a same-sex relationship. Such a decision was inspired by the daughter's preference to tell the truth. However, her mother could not accept this. In her description, her mother responded saying that

"there is a broad (mainstream) way, but you do not follow it, and you want to follow that (narrowed) way."

The young man's strategy is a kind of "image management" (Goffman, 1959). He is very familiar with his parents' and many other parents' thoughts and the moral meaning of an essential gay self, that is being exempted of marriage. As with bisexuality the possibility of getting married to an opposite-sex individual remains, the bisexual girl's mother thinks that she should follow the mainstream way of life ("the broad way"), forming a male-female relationship and getting married. Compared with her, the young man's strategic self-representation is cleverer. As self-representations are constructed based on selected cultural concepts (Quinn, 2006), representing an essential gay self is helpful in solving some particular cultural dilemma here.

As the essential understanding could justify family acceptance, it is also part of the strategies used by parent volunteers in PFLAG China. Once, when Yubing Mama and some other members of the local branch in her city were discussing with a young man and his parents, the father started quarrelling with others.

> Yubing Mama: Let me ask you a question. (Given that) you planted the rice before, let me ask you a question. In every acre of land, are there one or two seedlings growing high, but are not fruitful? Though they have everything, they have only paddy inside without rice. There are one or two seedlings in every acre.
>
> The dad: Yes.
>
> Yubing Mama: Do you think they were artificially grown or they grew themselves (naturally)? (This father became speechless.) If you have two or

> three sons, it would not be like this. This is probability. You do not want to obey natural phenomena.

Based on such an argument, Yubing Mama shifted the focus to their family relationship saying: “If you feel that your son is not good… We do not know what a kind of person your son is, but you know best, as parents!”

Yubing Mama’s narrative construction was based on her own experiences. During the planned economy period, she worked on a farm for eight years. She was so surprised that although the seedlings were identical and all grew similarly fast and high during the blossom and bearing fruit stages, some of them were fruitless. As this father had worked on a farm as well, he could understand the metaphor used by Yubing Mama to underline that just like the fruitless seedlings, same-sex oriented children were natural and normal. Through this way, Yubing Mama justified children’s same-sex attraction and helped the parents in this case understand their children better.

4.3.2 Gender Narratives: More Intelligible?

Along with developing the sociobiological understanding of sexual orientation, parents are also reflecting on their children’s growth and “discovering” evidence of the special nature of their children. Such evidence is marked, justifying the children’s newly-constructed self. On one hand, this process makes the children’s selfhood more understandable. On the other hand, parents can feel closer to their children and thus understand them better.

In the parents' thoughts, when discovering how different same-sex oriented children are from others, they may mark behaviours that do not conform to the binary gender stereotypes like boys enjoying fashion and girls enjoying men's clothes. Before marking these as the signs of same-sex orientation of their children, parents would have their own interpretation which is not necessarily negative and related to gender. Then, when the children's identity becomes part of their conception, parents may re-interpret their children's behaviour during the process of reflection.

Butler (1999[1990]) argues that in the Western society, there is a compulsory order of sex/gender/desire.

> The univocity of sex, the internal coherence of gender, and the binary framework for both sex and gender are considered throughout as regulatory fictions that consolidate and naturalize the convergent power regimes of masculine and heterosexist oppression. (Butler, 1999[1990]: 44)

Traditional Western discourse matches gender with sexuality. This means that the binary masculinity and femininity were associated with heterosexuality while the expression that does not accord with this binary would be described as homosexuality. However, such an understanding is not universal in human history. The traditional Chinese and Japanese culture did not conceive the connection between gender expression and sexual preference (Lee, 2016). As discussed in Chapter 1, Chinese society was also influenced by the idea of relating gender expression to sexual orientation during the historical change. This has created two attitudes. One attitude enabled society to perceive gay and lesbian people based on stereotypes entailed by the masculinity/femininity binary. The other enabled society to be more tolerant of

gay and lesbian people's non-traditional gender expression and view it as a part of LGB subculture.

When parents realise their children's same-sex attraction, they start to look back and remember the different stages of their children growing up. It is easy for parents to recollect every expression and action that did not correspond to the masculinity/femininity stereotype and mark them as evidence of their children's special nature of difference.

In Ruoyun Mama's reflection, her son was very interested in clothing, dressing up, masks and perfume. Before her son came out, she felt that her son looked after his image and knew how to show respect to others. "Nowadays, you dress up and do light makeup. This shows that you value this meeting. I felt that this child grew up, and knew that he should look after his image and respect others." Ruoyun Mama continued saying: "the idea of *tongxinglian* did not occur to me (when I interpreted his behaviours at that time)." Her previous interpretation does make sense since many men in urban cities pay attention to fashion and makeup, no matter what their sexual orientation is. After hearing her son's truth and engaging in the "PFLAG China" community, in her opinion, she "realised" that "*tongxinglian* children" pay attention to life and dressing up more than heterosexual people do. The interview conducted with Ruoyun Mama showed that, for her, this became the clue for her son's truth. Contemporary gay subculture in urban middle class seems to care much about fashion and dressing up and this encourages her re-interpret in such a way.

Xinlei Mama said that she did not realise her daughter's same-sex attraction even though her daughter liked boys' clothes and toys. For her, her daughter's behaviour stemmed from a "rebellious character". However, she re-interpreted this after her daughter came out and she started to perceive her daughter as a lesbian. Thereupon, such behaviour became signs of her daughter's sexual orientation.

> Xinlei Mama: I told the children asking me that if they do not speak out the word *tongxinglian* clearly, their parents would not know this forever. She dressed up like a boy when she was a child. The toys which she played with and the habits from childhood, actually make it very clear now. However, I would not think in that way (at that time). Every parent would not relate that (habit) to *tongxinglian*.
>
> I: How did you understand her style before, such as her clothing and toys?
>
> Xinlei Mama: I thought it was her character. I saw that there were children in society, who were rebellious and wore gender-neutral clothes. So, I thought that she had rebellious character and it could be better as she grew up, but it did not become better. When she was little and she was not independent, she wore the clothes which I bought for her. However, when she had the self-conscious (and act independently), she refused to wear those feminine clothes. From childhood to adulthood, we were not happy with this issue and quarrelled. Every mother hopes that her daughter can dress up beautifully and wear dresses. When she sits, her legs are opened widely, which is ugly. I taught her from her childhood. Why her behaviour was always opposite of what I taught her since she was a child? I could not understand that seriously at that time.
>
> I: You would connect these two issues after she came out?
>
> Xinlei Mama: Yes, certainly. For a long time after she came out, I experienced insomnia and thought her experience from childhood to adulthood, at every night. Every mother may face such a phase. It was like playing a movie in my mind. I would think about scenes from her childhood to adulthood, repeatedly. I thought that I had many points of dereliction of duty, as a mother. I just saw the phenomenon that she was different from other children, but I did not discuss it deeply with her, on why it was different.

After her daughter came out, Xinlei Mama started connecting her daughter's gender expression with her lesbian identity. She felt that previously she had failed to know her daughter. Such understanding made her daughter's lifestyle intelligible. Then, she felt that she could understand her daughter better than before. However, her daughter claimed that she liked male clothes just because those clothes made her feel very comfortable and did not connect it with being lesbian. Such a contradiction implies that the narratives connecting clothing style with sexual orientation do not necessarily make parents know their children's truth, but they can provide parents with a space to explore and rethink their relationship with their children and family. This can be understood with the concept of cultural toolkits, where the cultural toolkit only provides a repertoire rather than a final ending. Meanwhile, that many gay and lesbian children's gender expression does not contradict the gender norm helps parents overcome the prejudice that gay and lesbian are the ones with problematic gender identification.

4.4 Narratives on Parenthood

4.4.1 "Let Children be Their Authentic Selves": Parents' Responsibility

Along with the sociobiological narrative that justifies children's same-sex attraction, the narrative of "parenthood" is another important cultural tool. The "good parent" idea empowers these parents and corroborates their self-conception as "good parents"

during this process. When Brainer (2018) first conducted fieldwork in the Taiwan Province of China, she was actively looking for ways not to study “coming out.” Eventually, Brainer (2018) realised the prevalence of “coming out” among younger informants, and found out that different generations have different opinions on intimacies and “coming out”. People who grew up in the mid-1920s in mid-life would care for parents and in-laws and had deep ties with them, exceeding the friendship-style intimacy, while younger queers have a growing desire for family members to know and understand (Brainer, 2018). Based on this, Brainer (2018) argues that the identity-based framework is not adequate and it is generational shifts in familial interdependency and intimacy that require new strategies. Unlike traditional Familism requiring the primacy of family interests over the interests of its members, descending familism requires that the family should be a means to individual’s, especially children’s happiness (Yan, 2017b; Yan, 2016; Yan, 2018). In this respect, it is easy to detect the influence of descending familism on the “PFLAG China” community. Discussing the brain development discourse, Wall (2010: 255) concludes that “optimizing” children’s “future chances” is a part of intensive parenting. Such “child-centred” (Hoffman, 2013) narratives pave the way for parents’ acceptance.

A young man said that his mother accepted his same-sex orientation quickly, which he had not expected. His mother, Xiaoyang Mama, told him that her acceptance was out of her love for children. The mother explained the reason, saying: “Maybe it is not

a proper metaphor. I told him that I took it as if my child got a congenital disease, uncured, and I must stand by him at such time."

During the family discussion, Xiaocao Mama's son maintained that he could have a girlfriend and get married, "for you" (meaning for parents' seek); however, he said that he would divorce when his parents passed away. This did not make Xiaocao Mama feel happy, because she hoped that the marriage could make her son happy.

> Xiaocao Mama: It just stuck in my heart. I said, if so, there was no meaning (of this marriage) at all. As parents, we do not want to force you to do this. We arrange this to do good for you, and to make you happy. If you do not feel happy, it is meaningless at all to do this. You will not be living with us in the future.

When this conversation took place, Xiaocao Mama was not really aware what the term *tongxinglian* meant, but she just felt that it was meaningless to force her son to marry. Her final acceptance of her son's lifestyle occurred after approaching PFLAG China. Even though she did not understand this issue very well, she always held the attitude that she wanted her son to be happy rather than get married for her sake only.

Facing her son's coming out and claiming family acceptance, Sinan Mama felt sad as the son said: "do you know what happiness your son really needs?"

> Sinan Mama: Actually, I really did not know. So, I felt very sad when my son asked (me) like this, because I did not know (my) son. He had been over thirty years (old), and I had never known what he had really needed. If I had been able to walk into (my) son's heart and know what he had needed, maybe he could have come out and communicated with me a long time ago. After I accepted this, on the contrary, I asked my son: "why didn't you tell me several years earlier and then you would not have been in such pain?"

By asking that question, her son made Sinan Mama realise that what really mattered was understanding her son and his needs. There is a saying in the "PFLAG China" community which is, "family is not the place to talk about science, but the place to talk about familial affections." The narratives of parenthood and parent-child relationships do make sense, as they remind parents of the importance of understanding their children well, in which they might have failed before. Thus, the narratives are helpful in the parent-child conversation and in justifying parents' acceptance of the lifestyle their children aspire to.

Caicai Mama's narratives demonstrate that the duty of "good parents" entails the duty of acceptance even if "accepting resignedly".

> Caicai Mama: We, as parents, (when) firstly heard children's this issue, no one was very happy. It can be said that, this was a resigned choice, accepting children. This is love. The love between a mother and her children which others cannot experience. Indeed, as the mother, who gave him life and raise him, what can I do? This is his sexual orientation. (I) cannot just because of this, abandon him and curse him.

Yubing Mama could not accept this at the beginning, even though she could accept the idea that same-sex orientation was normal, since her hope of becoming a grandparent seemed to be destroyed. The young man's maternal grandmother witnessed her daughter, Yubing Mama, crying. So, she asked her daughter: "Why are you crying?"

> Yubing Mama: My mother said that, "my grandson never laughed happily, because he had such a huge burden and he was in pain for so many years." My mother said: "the child is pitiful." I felt that my mum's sentence made me think from others' standpoint. Yes, the child was very pitiful.

Her own mother's words made Yubing Mama change her position and think about what her son needed rather than about what she would lose.

The sad stories of family unacceptance also make parents rethink carefully about how to deal with the current situation. Xinran Mama said: "What touched me was not my son's situation, but a story on a blog written by a boy from the countryside. In the cold night of *daniansanshi*(Chinese New Year's Eve), the child stood outside his home and dared not go in. I cried for a whole night." Xinran Mama felt so sad that the child dared not go back home because of his sexual orientation. Such sad stories show the crisis that the parent-child relationship is in and inspire parents to save their families by acceptance.

4.4.2 "We Gave Birth to Children like this": Parents' Responsibility of Acceptance

This chapter has shown that the sociobiological knowledge could free parents from the stigma of parenting failure. Based on the belief that gay and lesbian individuals are born with their orientation, parents eventually develop narratives related to parent-child relatedness. In other words, now it is the parents who engendered such children, who are responsible for accepting them as they as.

When Xingxing Mama was in a sharing session of PFLAG China, she felt that these gay and lesbian children were very pitiful. Then, she went back home and thought: "It

is I who gave birth to him like this. He does not blame me, but begs me pitifully. Why can't I accept him?" When she told her husband about their son's sexual orientation, she also used such narratives emphasising that although they engendered him like this, their son was very filial to them and never blamed them. In her understanding, gay and lesbian children are the ones suffering and facing difficulties in life due to being born with their sexual orientation and thus they can blame their parents for that.

Hence, the narratives of the "children have not blamed you" could justify the family's acceptance further. Once, a young gay man brought his mother to meet Xingxing Mama, but the unhappy mother wanted to leave. The son begged his mother to sit down and communicate with Xingxing Mama. In this case, Xingxing Mama did not explain sexual orientation from the perspective of science, but said to the mother: "Look, how pitiful your son is. It is not the child's fault. You gave birth to him as *tongxinglian*. He does not blame you. (You) brought him to this world (and he has been so) distressed. He does not blame you. Why can't we accept him? If you do not accept him, how could people outside (the family) accept him?" Such narratives did work at last. The mother thanked Xingxing Mama and thought what the latter said was important.

In the opinion of PFLAG China's leaders and staff, the sentence: "you gave birth to your child like this and the child does not blame you," is a "golden sentence" that has become a classic statement deployed to justify family acceptance. When parents develop such narratives, they are not taught by the activists or experts. Rather, they

construct such narratives based on the grounded value and their thoughts about life. For them, such narratives are meaningful for their family and for the volunteering aimed at promoting family acceptance.

This narrative of "blame" was only told by a few interviewees. When those few parents use the narrative of "blame" in their volunteering, they do not really want to "blame" parents for engendering children's sexual orientation. In the analysis of this thesis, the narrative of "blame" is used as an instrument to make parents rethink the appropriate attitudes they should hold. Building the idea that "children do nothing wrong, and parents do nothing wrong" is the goal of volunteers. The statement of "blame" never appears in the public narratives of PFLAG China. Actually, even the narrative that "children are born this way" has caused disputes within the homophile activists in mainland China. During my fieldwork, one day, some staff, parent volunteers and LGB volunteers were having lunch together. They discussed the cause of sexual orientation and some volunteers (not parents) made the following statement. "It is still unclear whether the sexual orientation is born or not, but it is clear that sexual orientation cannot be changed purposely by people." Actually, after several years of volunteering, some parents have formulated an understanding that "it is not important whether it (sexual orientation) is born or not".

4.4.3 Life is Still Valuable: the Strategies of Self-justification

Besides the narratives of supporting children's happiness, the narratives of parents' own self-valuation also exist. When parents face the unchangeable fact of their children's sexual orientation, parents may indulge in self-pity. Self-pity is a solipsistic process in which individuals exaggerate their own problems and feel they are the only ones suffering, forgetting that others have similar problems (Neff, 2003; Neff, 2011). Also, the fieldwork of this research reveals that parents seek compensation as a strategy of self-justification. Compensation is a kind of a defence mechanism, involving the "psychological counterbalancing of perceived weaknesses by emphasising strength in other areas" (Butler and Astbury, 2008: 234). Parents would emphasise the positive aspects of their children to justify accepting the children's lifestyle and that these parents' life is still valuable.

After several years of unacceptance, one day Shulin Mama went to visit a friend who was a mother with a disabled son. They were close friends and their sons were good friends as well. That boy was involved in a car accident and his mother had been looking after him since then. Every year, Shulin Mama visited them. Her friend was very concerned as she was around seventy years old and her ability to provide care for her son herself was deteriorating. She was thinking of who would look after her son in case she died. Her response to the idea of sending him to a care home was negative because she thought he might be abused there. Every time Shulin Mama visited this woman, she saw her crying. Shulin Mama was greatly touched because she

discovered that after all she had not been the unluckiest mother in the world. It was true that her dreams of her son's marriage and having grandchildren might be totally destroyed; however, her friend's life made her thankful that, at least, she had a healthy child. This was a way for her to persuade herself of accepting her son's lifestyle.

> Shulin Mama: At least I have a healthy child. At least he works hard. He can look after me. Even he can look after me. He has done well. Just this, I said, accept. Finally, I said, accepting fate. This is fate.

Even Shulin Mama's own parents persuaded her not to "demand too much." Her father was an old ex-solider, who had experienced war and revolution and had had many wounds. His life taught him that anything can be good "as long as a person is not sick" and that "being joyful is happiness". Her father's words touched her deeply. For her parents, it was enough that their grandson could have a stable job, be self-sufficient and abstain from harming others. What is more, Shulin Mama's father criticised her saying: "You demand too much and toss the life rather than enjoy the life." As for her mother, she used the metaphor of sheep: "All the sheep on the hill could find their grass to eat." This means that children would have their own life, just like the sheep would find their own grass, so the parents should not worry too much.

It is obvious that the same-sex attraction of her son was a negative issue for Shulin Mama and made her, at a certain stage, indulge in self-pity seeing herself as the unluckiest person and forgetting others' suffering. However, when she saw her friend's suffering, she discovered the universality of suffering and suddenly realised the value of what she had. The positive aspects of her family life became a strength

for her, including a heathy, self-sufficient son who could look after her. In contrast to her friend's suffering, these positive aspects functioned as Shulin Mama's compensation. Some aspects of happiness in life are taken for granted as they are too normal for people to notice or value. However, when seeing people who lose the usual happiness, people can realise what they have already had. This visit made Shulin Mama feel that at least she had a healthy son. Such a comparison could give parents a serious shock, make them revalue the family status and understand that it is not so bad. When an ordinary life is others' extravagant hope, is it necessary to demand more in such a life? In fact, when Shulin Mama first knew her son's sexual orientation, she started reading books written by social scientists on this topic. Yet, she found that these books only provided knowledge, not the way out. The knowledge of sexual orientation made her understand this issue scientifically. PFLAG China provided her with peer support and community support, while the shock of her friend's dilemma made her rethink and value her current life and family.

4.5 Conclusion

For parents, accepting their children's gay and lesbian identity and lifestyle is a process of getting to know more about their children, and a self-work renewing their self-knowledge. Based on the idea that selves are social and cultural, this chapter has analysed the cultural tools in the process of the parents' acceptance, which help parents in the new family moment understand their children, their family and then

construct parents' self-knowledge. Two major kinds of narratives are found from the fieldwork as effective cultural tools. The first is the sociobiological understanding of sexual orientation in name of science, depathologising, normalising and essentialising the same-sex attraction. The second one is the narratives of parenthood. With their particular moral meanings, these cultural tools profoundly shape the understanding of parents. The sociobiological narratives construct a scientific and to some degree, an essential self of children for parents and justify both the children's same-sex attraction and the parents' acceptance. Furthermore, the scientific self-knowledge exempts parents from stigmatised self-conception and the subsequent self-blaming, formed by the narratives of early psychoanalysis seeing children's same-sex attraction as a parenting failure. Such a cultural tool normalises both children with same-sex attraction and their parents. Interweaved with the idea that sexual orientation is one's "authentic self", parenthood narratives underline the idea of supporting children to "be (their) authentic self", a duty that is embedded in the conception of good parents. During this process, parents develop narratives of a close parent-child relationship. This includes the responsibility of acceptance as it is the parents who engender their children like this. Parents reflect on their children's growing up over the past years and create the feeling that they understand their children better than before. Besides, parents can use compensation as a means of self-justification. Through emphasising the positive aspects of family and children, they build self-knowledge concluding that their life as parents with gay and lesbian children is not that miserable but can still be positive.

Parents may have the feeling of loss at the beginning. However, these cultural tools help them face the new family moment and make sense of their new identity as parents with *tongxinglian* children. Influenced by pathologising understanding, parents may doubt whether their children's same-sex attraction is a mental illness caused by parenting problems. The normalising knowledge in the name of science makes them understand that there is no problem either in them as parents or in their children as gay and lesbian individuals. During this process, parents also reflect on their role as parents by accepting the descending familism idea emphasising that a family should support its individuals' happiness. Acceptance involves both parents understanding the children and reflecting on their parenting roles.

Analysing the process of becoming parents with gay and lesbian children and family acceptance, this chapter has already revealed that parents see their acceptance as a way to optimise their children's happiness. The next chapter will discuss the intergenerational negotiation of children's life arrangements. What is the connection between optimising children's happiness and intergenerational negotiation? For parents, acceptance and some important parts of intergenerational negotiation are both efforts to optimise the children's life. This implies that family acceptance is not the end of the story but just a new start. Parents' worries about their children and their own life do not come to an end after knowing and accepting the children's "sexual orientation". Parents' different kinds of worries and the intergenerational negotiation based on them will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 "Who will Look after You in the Future?": Intergenerational Negotiation

5.1 Introduction: Parents' Double Standards

The focus of this chapter lies in the parents' worries and the intergenerational negotiation in families with gay and lesbian children. In order to understand these worries, this chapter begins with the analysis of parents' attitudes to same-sex orientation which, based on the fieldwork, revealed double standards. Parents' previous knowledge and conception on same-sex attraction varies a lot, which views it as being "a mental disease", imitating a "superstar" or following "Western fashions". Yet, there is no huge difficulty for them to accept the existence of same-sex attraction and gay and lesbian individuals as normal when facing the disclosure of their children's "sexual orientation". What is problematic for parents is not the existence of gay and lesbian individuals in society, which is understood as "others' business", but the emergence of gay and lesbian children in their own families. When their own children come out, it is not the "others' business" any more. In fact, the conception that *tongxinglian* (same-sex love) is "others' business" appeared often in parents' narratives.

Xinlei Mama told me that she had known a *tongxinglian* individual in her daily life before her daughter came out. He was a fitness coach in her gym, who "was tall and learnt ballet from childhood". She did not have the feeling of antipathy towards him and, more broadly, towards same-sex love. She had some knowledge related to this

issue from literature and films, like *Brokeback Mountain*. Feeling curious, she even once went to a gay bar with her daughter.

> Xinlei Mama: As a social phenomenon, I can understand this. Anyway, it is not my business. I do not feel antipathy, and I feel that all the things existing do make sense, anyway...Generally, Chinese virtues are very moderate and would not be too fierce.

Xiaoyang Mama also held such feelings. When she talked about ZHANG Guorong, a superstar whose news of having a same-sex lover was very famous, she said that everyone knew and everyone could accept because "that was the business of somebody else".

> Xiaoyang Mama: Just like I said, that was others' business. He chose this lifestyle, or his emotion. That is his right. We would not make a comment and would not oppose or feel that was not good. (I) do not have such feelings.

During our interview, Xiaoyang Mama also expressed that, influenced by the mass media, her previous conception was that same-sex sexuality was a mental illness. However, it did not make her have any special attitudes to this issue. The real effective attitude held by her was the acceptance of its existence and viewing it as others' business.

In Yaya Mama's view, same-sex sexuality was also a kind of a mental illness. She said: "*Tongxinglian* children have severe and unbelievable mothers, so they would get mental illnesses." This had been her previous conception and knowledge before her son came out. She also had heard the news of depathologising homosexuality, but she did not pay much attention to it.

> Yaya Mama: Then I vaguely heard that homosexuality was deleted from (the list of) mental illnesses, but because it did not relate to me, I did not care about it.

Xiaohuang Baba always knew of the existence of same-sex sexuality. I tried to figure out how he had viewed same-sex love before his son came out, but I could not obtain a clear answer during our interview. Finally, he gave me the following answer: "this question did not exist."

> Xiaohuang Baba: (I) did not consider whether it should be accepted. Just like what I said, *tongxinglian* for me was like a ghost *(youling,幽灵)*. This issue did not exist.

People may get negative information, but the real effective attitude is "none of my business". Chinese culture's attitude towards same-sex sexuality is vague (Wei, 2012). For these parents, no matter how they used to think about same-sex sexuality, they have no problem accepting the existence of it. However, the disclosure of their own children's gay and lesbian identity as their justification for rejecting marriage totally transforms this issue from "the business of somebody else" to "the business of our family". Meanwhile, for children, the disclosure makes their same-sex attraction not only their personal issues anymore but also a family issue. I find that the parents' thoughts on their own children's aspiration to same-sex love are totally different from their thoughts on same-sex love/sexuality as a general topic and discussing this issue per se, since their children's sexual identity is directly related to how they see their own, the children's and the whole family's life. The real effective thinking is not based on citizenship but on the parenthood. The question that arises here is the

following: What makes the parents' view of their gay and lesbian children different from their view of gay and lesbian people?

Unlike those who once held a variety of negative attitudes towards same-sex attraction, Yubing Mama and Linlin Mama had held positive attitudes to this issue for a long time before they got to know their children's self-identity as *tongxinglian*. Their attitudes had been positive before because they had viewed same-sex love from the perspective of humanity. Yubing Mama, born in 1964 and living in Shanghai, has a very typical story. She described to me her strong feeling when watching the film *Brokeback Mountain*. She even felt pity for the two characters who could not form a partnership at last.

> Yubing Mama: I watched this film before, but that had nothing to do with me. I just watched it. After I watched it, I thought, these two persons were happy when they were together, and then why did they separate and get married to women? I felt that it was a pity.

However, when she faced her son's coming out, she felt very sad. She did not judge same-sex love per se, but drowned in the sadness expressed as "I want to be a grandmother, but I have nothing now".

Born in the early 1970s, Linlin Mama was living in a small city in central China. As one of the youngest parent volunteers in PFLAG China, she had already known something about same-sex love and recognised it before she faced her son coming out. She remembered the moment when she was watching an Internet talk show, which was very popular among young generation. The talk show was discussing whether gay

and lesbian people should come out to their parents and she was watching that discussion. Apart from the talk show, Linlin Mama once particularly did search online for information about homosexuality and that was when her son, a middle-school boy, mentioned for the first time that he might be bisexual. It is then when she started to understand that same-sex orientation was not a mental disease. Finally, her son came out as *tongxinglian* when he was a university student. For her, it was something that she had always wanted to avoid but it finally came true. Since she had known that homosexuality was not a mental disease, it was not helpful for her that her son and the parents in the "PFLAG China" community passed on to her the "scientific" knowledge needed for normalising same-sex attraction. This was because all she was worried about were the issues of procreation and care arrangement. She had the following conversation with her son.

> --Are you sure that you are *tongxinglian*?
>
> --I'm sure that I'm *tongxinglian*.
>
> --Do you think (it) can be cured? Or let's go to see the doctor?

The sentence about going to see the doctor to check whether the sexual orientation could be changed just "slipped out of my mouth" when she talked to her son, even though she did not see it as a mental disease at all.

> Linlin Mama: Although I knew that (homosexuality) was not (a mental disease), I felt that this sentence just slipped out of my mouth, truly speaking, "Or let's go to see the doctor?" What will you do when you are old? What will you do when you are ill? What will you do, after we (your parents) die? Just like all the other parents, actually, I felt that these questions just came out thoughtlessly.

The Introduction of this thesis has discussed the background of gay and lesbian children's coming out, showing that when coming out to their parents, these children were rejecting marriage. In this thesis, marriage is defined as the acknowledgeable double bond of sexuality and economy between two opposite-sex non-consanguineal individuals (Cai, 2001). Practices of same-sex sexuality is not new in Chinese society as it has existed throughout Chinese history. What is entirely new is using same-sex love as an alibi for the rejection of marriage, that should be formed on the love between a man and a woman in contemporary popular narratives. This is the situation that parents are facing. Such a consequence makes parents worried. For individuals, what marriage provides is mutual conjugal care and economic responsibility. In marriage societies, procreation is usually achieved within the marriage. These are the two main factors that make parents feel worried when their children cannot get married. This chapter first investigates parents' worries and then specifies what sort of family intergenerational negotiation is conducted towards achieving a happy life in such a situation. It is found that it is natural for parents to acknowledge and recognise[9] children's same-sex partnership and encourage children to have offspring in their intergenerational negotiation.

[9] In this thesis, "acknowledge" refers to accepting something as true, while the term "recognition" points to positive evaluation.

5.2 Parents' Worries: when Children Cannot Enter Marriage

5.2.1 "I don't have Grandchildren": Worries on the Loss of Elder Life

Several gay and lesbian individuals and parents in the "PFLAG China" community attribute the dilemma they face to the traditional culture called *chuanzong jiedai (传宗接代)*: having sons and continuing the family and lineage[10]. However, the fieldwork of this study revealed that what the majority of parents were concerned about was not *chuanzong* (the continuation the family and linage) but *jiedai* (having the next generation). For them, children mean happiness and the continuity of life, rather than the carrying on the family name or ancestors' lineage. The fieldwork also revealed that the desire for carrying on the family name was not stressed by the interviewees belonging to the urban area, but there was still some evidence of this in some cases, especially when the parents came from a rural background.

Lulu Mama is a mother who comes from the countryside with two sons born in the 1980s and the 1990s. When she and her ex-husband knew that both their sons were gay, her ex-husband wanted to divorce her so that he could have another child. However, the disclosure of the sons' sexual orientation should not be simply understood as the reason for the divorce as she had been unhappy in the marriage for a long time before that. In our interview, she expressed that carrying on the family name and lineage was her ex-husband's consideration, as a man, not hers. The biggest

[10] As discussed in Chapter 1, under the traditional Han patrilineal kinship system, usually sons are the ones eligible to inherit the family and the lineage.

problem, for her as a mother, was related to her sons' care issues. She had already overcome the hard time when the interview with her was conducted.

> I: I feel that what you are considering is not *chuanzong jiedai*, but how the future life be arranged.
>
> Lulu Mama: I do not consider *chuanzong jiedai*, but, as a male, he considers *chuanzong jiedai*.
>
> I: Is he such a conservative person?
>
> Lulu Mama: (A person) in countryside, is just like this. If he can, no matter in what way, if he can have another son, that son is the younger brother of the two children. It is not necessary (for me) to give birth to another child. Give all the issue to them. I am relaxed, aren't I?

When the interview was conducted, she was living in an urban area with her younger son. Her two sons successfully became white-collar workers after graduating from university. Unlike her ex-husband, when she first knew that both her sons were gay, she immersed in the loss of self-worth, the feeling that all her life toil did not get any payback.

> Lulu Mama: I went to work as a babysitter in this big city. Do you guys think that was easy? I took the job as a babysitter. I hoped that I could help you with your marriage. I was doing this, for my sons' future, when they buy flats, cars, form a family and have babies. Though they have decent jobs, and can earn money, I still hope to contribute to them. "I have a piece of strength. I can give you a beam of light." If I had known that you would not get married, why would I have done all the hard work?

For parents in such situations, self-sacrifices and hard work are valuable when their children achieve upward mobility and lead a good life, achieving thereby the happiness of the whole family. Lulu Mama was a hard-working woman from a rural area; so, her sons' coming out directly reminded her of her self-sacrifices for their

sake. She had high hopes for the future and wanted her offspring to benefit from her toil and this would be her value in life. She was dreaming of the moment when her sons would graduate from university, get decent jobs and get married. Thereupon, she would enjoy a happy life in old age where she would be surrounded by her children and grandchildren and would not need to work hard. She told me that her job as a babysitter was also a kind of training that would prepare her for looking after her future grandchildren. That both of her sons were gay made all her life plans and expectations valueless, and she soon fell into depression.

Under the traditional Han patrilineality, males have the duty to carry on the family name. This can explain Lulu Mama's ex-husband's actions. Brainer (2019)'s fieldwork in the queer community in the Taiwan Province reveals that gays, lesbians and their parents all agree that gay men face "more pressure" as men are expected to marry and continue the paternal line, while the women do not have the responsibility to produce posterity for their fathers. This is different from the situation in the "PFLAG China" community, which could be influenced by three factors in mainland China. First, the Han patrilineal system in urban areas has largely been transformed into a bilineal system regarding economy and inheritance (Cai, 2008). The second is the ideological attack on "patriarchy" during the revolutions, social and political movements in the twentieth century in mainland China (Yan, 2003). The third one is the one-child policy implemented from 1981 to 2015, under which the singleton daughters are empowered as they enjoy the unprecedented parental support and do not

need to compete for parental investment (Fong, 2002). The generation of the one-child policy, no matter male or female, becomes the "only hope" (Fong, 2004) of the family.

My interviews with parents in the "PFLAG China" community indicate that, aside from carrying on family name or continuing the lineage, there are two types of narratives regarding life without grandchildren. The first is that their plan for old age is being challenged, and the second is that they will have no successor. When her son came out, Yushan Mama felt very disappointed. Her son, born in the 1980s, is the singleton of the family. When she foresaw her life without offspring as a result of her son's gay identity, she felt that her life was hopeless.

> Yushan Mama: At that time, I felt that I would not have successors. At least, it was impossible that my son could find a wife, and have children, for my sake. At that time, he had already been a kind of people getting married late, and I was yearning for the grandchildren.
>
> Yushan Mama: Since then, I have not wanted to continue my business, and I was not willing to speak to others. I felt that I worked hard all my life, and finally it turned out to be nothing. My life is nothing, and I do not have succession at last.

Here, for Yushan Mama, the point is not about the family name or lineage, but having grandchildren who represent the continuation of the life and blood. Life without continuity into the future is horrible. During the intergenerational communication, her son told Yushan Mama that it was possible to have offspring through surrogacy with the help of money. This idea gave her hope and it soon became the centre of their family's intergenerational negotiation following family acceptance.

A valued elder and immortality through the clan, are two of the dimensions of the meaning of grandparenthood concluded by Kivnick (1982) based on the American context. Lulu Mama stresses the idea of the valued elder which means that people can feel their value in their elder life through grandparenthood. Whereas, Yushan Mama concentrated more on the idea of immortality. According to Kivnick (1982: 61), grandparents' feelings of personal immorality are achieved through the "descendents and through the continuity of the family into the indefinite future". Further, elders' feeling is also influenced by the context. For example, in the European contexts where grandparents' role is socially expected as providers of childcare, not taking such a role would bring negative effect on the elder's subjective well-being (Arpino et al., 2018; Neuberger and Haberkern, 2014).

5.2.2 "Who Will Look after You in the Future": Worries about Children's Care Arrangement

Parents' concern is not only about themselves, but also about their children's care issue. In mainland China, care is largely dependent on the family. First, as the double sexual and economic bond, marriage could bring the economic protection for couples. Second, caring for the elderly is largely dependent on the support from the filial generation. The intergenerational relationship is a kind of "feedback" (Fei, 1983). Comparing the parent-child relationship in China and that in the West (mainly the United States and UK), Fei (1983) names the western model as a relay model and the

Chinese model as a feedback model. In the relay model, parents have the duty to look after children when they are young, while children do not have the same duty towards their parents when parents are old (Fei, 1983). In contrast, in the feedback model, parents have the duty to look after the children when they are young and children have the duty to look after their parents in their elder life (Fei, 1983). There is an old saying in Chinese: "You raise a son to prepare for old age" (*yang'er fanglao,养儿防老*). In the traditional Han patrilineal kinship system, sons have the duties to look after parents when parents are old while daughters do not have such formal duties, as the daughter's life is mainly organised around their husband's family after getting married (Fei, 2010[1939]). As mentioned previously, the Han kinship norm has largely been transformed into a bilineal kinship system economically, especially in urban areas. Consequently, the gender division has been diminished, and all children, male and female, need to take the responsibility of looking after their parents who are getting old. Hence, children, regardless of their gender, provide a guarantee for emotional and economic care for parents in their old age.

In mainland China, the public protection of elder care is transforming from the selective model to the model of temperate universality (Zhao et al., 2017; Hu and Peng, 2012). The focal point of the elder care policy in the selective model is the vulnerable people who lose the protection of their family; that is, the government only intervenes when a family falls into difficulties (Hu and Peng, 2012). This means that the family needs to take the primary responsibility of elder care. Another factor in the

background is society's discussion and anxiety regarding the issue of aging. After nearly thirty years of the one-child policy, the topic of "aging before getting rich" often comes to the surface in the social discussions since mainland China is becoming an aging society while its economy is not developed enough. This would also intensify people's anxiety over elder care issues.

It is easy to identify the worries on care issues in parents' narratives. When Xiaohuang Baba faced his son coming out, he felt that he could not foresee the future of his son if his son would not get married. He said during the interview: "I am over fifty years' old. In my understanding of life, family is the basis of life, happiness and career. My son would not get married whole life. I do not know what will happen." A woman with a *tongxinglian* brother shared the similar feeling with Xiaohuang Baba. Hearing the news of her brother's lifestyle, she burst into tears. She explained to me as follows: "He could not get married and could not have his own children. He would be lonely. I did not know how could he look for his happiness." This made her feel quite sad. For them, the term "family" refers to entering marriage and having offspring. As mentioned above, Linlin Mama had seen *tongxinglian* as normal, but when her son came out, she was worried about her son's care arrangements. Actually, just like her, many parents expressed their worries by "who will look after you in the future" and "who will look after you when you are old".

This section has analysed the parents' worries, and then this chapter will illuminate the parents' efforts to deal with these worries and the intergenerational negotiation conducted.

5.3 Parents' Participation and Intergenerational Negotiation

5.3.1 Recognising Child's Same-sex Partnership

In the "PFLAG China" community, parents' acceptance of their children's gay and lesbian identity means their acceptance of their children abstaining from marriage, and forming same-sex partnership instead. Recognising their children's same-sex partnership is the primary effort that parents could make in optimising their children's happiness.

When Xinran Mama encountered her son's coming out, she eventually started reading the stories of male same-sex couples on the Internet. She needed to know what kind of life her son would have, given that he was *tongxinglian*. She felt better when she read the stories of a gay couple online and made friends with them offline. After acceptance, Xinran Mama encouraged her son to find a same-sex partner soon. In our interview, this mother revealed that she decided to join the activities organised by PFLAG China with the primary purpose of checking whether there could be a potential partner suitable for her son. Besides, she set a standard for her son's partner that he must come out to his families. What she cared about was the possibility of her

son being acknowledged and recognised in his partner's family. Thus, it is clear that in the imagination of parents like Xinran Mama, a same-sex partnership is a substitute for marriage.

> Xinran Mama: I told my son that he should find a partner who would come out to his families, who would not enter marriage. We should not do it, acting as the *xiaosan* (home wrecker).

In Mandarin Chinese, *xiaosan* (小三) means the third person who intrudes in the relationship of a (married) couple and destroy their family. In the understanding that same-sex partnership is incompatible with marriage, it is not acceptable for gay and lesbian people to be married and keep their same-sex relationship as extra-nuptial relationship. For Xinran Mama, her son being acknowledged as the child's partner/boyfriend by his partner's family is extremely essential and important.

> Xinran Mama: When you come to my family, you are our guest and we acknowledge you as my son's partner. When my son visits your family, he is only your friend or your classmate. That is unfair to my son.

Different from Xinran Mama, Yifei Mama supports her son's same-sex partnership but does not require that her son's partner should come out. She knew that many parents in the "PFLAG China" community admired a same-sex partnership recognised by both families, but she believed that whether her son's partner came out to his family or not was "his own business" and she should not pressure him. She told me that when she went to the city where her son and his partner were living, she visited them. She was satisfied as they were happy in their partnership.

In some other cases, parents actively take part in helping their child's partner's come out. When Xingxing Mama firstly went to the National Conference of PFLAG China, the maternal grandparents and parents of her son's partner invited her to have dinner at home, showing that the children's partnership had been acknowledged and recognised by the whole family.

> Xingxing Mama: I really felt embarrassed to go there. Their whole families like my son. The grandparents said to me: "your son is a good boy, and our grandchild is a good boy as well. Since they were like this (same-sex love), we could not do anything but accept it." His *jiujiu* (maternal uncle) and *jiuma* (maternal uncle's wife) said that the children did not *xuehuaile* (learn to be bad), and "we all accepted". The whole family was very polite, and I felt better that night.

After this, Xingxing Mama continued listening to the experiences shared by parents and the gay and lesbian youth on the following day and finally accepted her son's lifestyle and his partnership.

As previously mentioned, gay and lesbian people face pressure from their natal family to enter marriage. Accepting the gay and lesbian identity means that parents would not force their child to get married, but their child's same-sex partner may still be under such pressure. Then, some parents provide assistance to the child's partner on coming out for the sake of protecting their partnership.

Caicai Mama was living with her son and his partner during weekdays and she even cooked for them. She told me that she was the one who told the father of her son's partner about his son's sexual orientation and persuaded the father to accept it.

> I: It was you who persuaded his parents?
>
> Caicai Mama: It was me. He dared not to say that, and he was frightened. When he went back home, his dad often asked him to go for the match-making meeting. He felt bothered but he dared not to say. I could not help telling him.

As a mother who had accepted her son's *tongxinglian* lifestyle and his partnership and as a parent volunteer helping with other parents' acceptance, Caicai Mama had the required confidence to help the couple solve their dilemma. She was even more confident than the two young men themselves. In the interview, she underscored the necessity of coming out, saying: "Their son (her son's partner) is living in the new flat which I prepared for my son's marriage. How could we let him live in it before my son's wife would move in? Even though, they could not think about the possibility of *tongxinglian*." In her opinion, the communication with the father of her son's partner was effective. She also invited another mother volunteer to talk to him and invited him to participate in the activities of PFLAG China. Her strategies were congruent with her role as a parent volunteer. Her confidence came from the belief that parents could accept their *tongxinglian* children. What was different from her volunteering is that, she did not get the consent before doing this. When her son blamed her for being "too talkative", she justified that they imagined that his parents were too horrible but, the reality was that they could accept well. Both this mother and the same-sex couple shared the same value that they supported same-sex partnership acknowledged by the family, which provided legitimacy for her action. For her, doing this was "for your (her son's) good".

When many parents do not accept their children's lifestyle of same-sex love based on the fear that the children could have no one to care for them when they grow old. Thus, such parents believe that their rejection of their children's life choice is also "for your (their children's) good". When they accept the value and happiness defined by their children, the content of "for your good" changes. The acceptance does not mean the parents' exit from children's life but a new space for the parents' participation in constructing their children's life. Parents' support for their children's same-sex partnerships is not only a recognition of their children's sexual identity and partnerships. Parents support their children's partnership in such cases because they want to ensure a mutual economic responsibility and care between their child and his/her same-sex partner. For these parents, since the gay and lesbian identity means exemption from entering marriage, the substitute should be the same-sex partnership which provides mutual care like a marriage offers. The gay and lesbian movement in the Western context aims to make juridical "same-sex marriage" or civil union, an acknowledgeable double sexual and economic bond between two non-consaguineal same-sex individuals. In mainland China, the gay and lesbian community has been positively exploring the guardianship agreement in recent years. The article of guardianship agreements in the General Provisions of the Civil Law in mainland China permits individuals to appoint guardians by mutual agreement. For same-sex couples adopting this agreement, it means a kind of protection in their life.

In my interview with Xingxing Mama and Xingxing Baba, we discussed parents' expectations on their child's same-sex partnership.

> I: Did many parents (with gay children), in the past, ask (children) to bring a girlfriend back home? Now…
>
> Xingxing Baba: Bring a boyfriend back home! Bring a partner back. Yes, yes, yes. Many parents are like this.
>
> Xingxing Mama: At the beginning they do not accept.
>
> Xingxing Baba: The parent, after chatting with me yesterday, just wants to let his son find a partner.
>
> Xingxing Mama: Many parents are like this.
>
> Xingxing Baba: Let the (children) be at ease and not be lonely. This is many parents' (thought).

In the interview, they admitted they feared that their son and his partner could quarrel and end up with breaking up. Regarding this, Xingxing Baba said: "(We) hope they can grow old together and spend this life together. This is protection for everyone, and solace for parents."

During my fieldwork in the "PFLAG China" community, both parents and young people argued that a stable relationship was helpful as it could decrease the parents' worries concerning their children's welfare. Therefore, in an interview, a parent volunteer criticised a young man in her hometown, who failed to express in his coming out that he could have a stable relationship though a same-sex one. Linlin described it as follows:

> Linlin Mama: He took his partner with him back home during Chinese New Year, and came out. He said to his parents: "you see, I am not lonely and I

> have a partner who can look after me." Then his mother asked him: "Will you be with him for the whole life?" He said maybe not and he might have another partner in the future. How could the mother think about this? This child, already thirty-two years old, is irresponsible, indeed.

During our discussion, Linlin Mama acknowledged that what this young man said was the truth. However, telling the truth to his parents was not helpful in comforting them. The young man only told the truth but forgot how he should look after his mother's feeling. Because a parents' main worry is the providence of care for their children in the future, talking of a stable long-term same-sex partnership, as the strategic representation, does make sense in convincing and comforting parents. Discussing the relationship between heterosexual parents and their queer sons and daughters in the Taiwan Province, Brainer (2019: 83) summarises the "strategic normativity" as "meshing queer politics and movement goals with parents' aspirations for their children's lives and futures", which is cooperatively conducted by heterosexual siblings, queer adult children and activists. In other words, the "strategic normativity" is a vehicle, situational, rather than a destination, which is helpful for newcomers to the community (Brainer, 2019). Linlin Mama's strategy is similar. Her focus here is not on same-sex partnership per se but on how to comfort parents and encourage their acceptance.

Apart from those listed above, there are many other ideas that occur in parents' minds concerning their children's life arrangements. For instance, one mother thought about the possibility of forming a marriage between her gay son and a lesbian girl to provide a protection for life. Xiaofu Mama and her husband accepted their son's sexual

orientation. Her husband did not want to intervene much but Xiaofu Mama was still worried. She hoped that her son could have a “normal family same with others”. Their intergenerational negotiation was conducted based on this.

> Xiaofu Mama: About the son. Do not be selfish. And I would not be selfish. Let’s discuss. If you feel it is feasible, and you can accept. It (such an attitude) is best.

Her plan was that her gay son could form a marriage with his lesbian friend and have children together. Her ideal arrangement for their same-sex attraction was that they could form lover relationships outside their marriage. She believed that such an arrangement could benefit all the people involved. She told the lesbian girl that she would treat her as the “normal daughter-in-law” and they could be like a “normal family”. Her son’s initial plan was just organising a wedding to tell parents’ friends and relatives that he was getting married, thereby freeing his parents from others’ questions about their son’s marriage. Then he also thought of cooperative procreation with his lesbian friend. The idea of the son living together with the lesbian girl occurred in his mother’s mind. Eventually, he felt that he could not accept such a life arrangement. We had such a conversation regarding his thoughts of life.

> Xiaofu: When it came to living together, I did not see it as a big issue (at the beginning). When it is approaching, I think, according to my character, I will not live my life like this. Although the future of I and my boyfriend is uncertain, I still want to struggle to let we be together.
>
> I: You want to live together with your boyfriend.
>
> Xiaofu: Yes, instead of that *lala* (lesbian). Although I have a good friendship with that *lala*, and she is nice, she is still not the one with whom I can live together with.

At the time this interview was conducted, Xiaofu had already been living with his boyfriend. It is highly possible that Xiaofu Mama's idea cannot be put into practice. Unlike the parents mentioned above who accepted the idea of their children's being exempted from marriage, Xiaofu Mama tried to find another plan but it seemed not to be successful. In the community of PFLAG China, accepting same-sex partnerships is just the subtext of accepting adult children's self-identity as *tongxinglian*.

5.3.2 Intergenerational Negotiation on Offspring

This chapter has shown that it is not very difficult for parents to accept the idea that same-sex attraction is normal, because Chinese culture is not sensitive on this issue (Wei, 2017) and never sees same-sex attraction as the essential sin (Chou, 2000). However, for parents, the consequence of their children's rejecting marriage because of same-sex love is serious, being childless. In such a situation, some gay and lesbian individuals have offspring first, and then they come out to their parents second. Wei (2016)'s study on the same-sex couples' reproductive practices in mainland China shows that once procreation has been achieved, children's sexual orientation (and staying unmarried) would not bring much trouble for their parents. Wei (2016) presents two interesting cases when the gay men came out to their own parents after their surrogacy. These two cases are very typical, showing the intergenerational negotiation. After living with his partner for eight years, a gay man came out to his parents, with the narratives that combined both sexual orientation and the existence of

grandchildren. His parents “accept well surprisingly”, but just checked whether their son was the birth father of their grandchild. Another gay man let the child call grandma and grandpa directly, and told them that this was the child of him and his partner. This young man said: “The child called grandma and grandpa. I told them to cook for the grandchild, and then they did. I made a phone call to ask my partner to come back” (Wei, 2016: 12). In the former case, as the birth grandparents of the child, they moved to live with their son and his partner and helped with childcare one week after their son’s coming out. In the latter case, despite knowing that their son was only the adoptive father of the baby, the parents proposed to help them with childcare. In these two cases, I cannot draw a clear conclusion whether the core point for the parents is the existence of grandchildren or the happiness and the availability of care for their children who reject marriage and form a same-sex partnership. However, for parents, regardless whether their child is the birth or the adoptive parent, the mere existence of offspring diminishes their concern to some degree.

This is different from the contexts where same-sex relationships per se are problematic for some parents with gay and lesbian children. In Almack (2008)’s research on lesbian mothers in the British context, though many parents provided positive and supportive reactions to their daughters’ (who were in a same-sex relationship) decision of becoming a mother, a significant number of parents responded negatively, because they could no longer ignore their children’s lesbian identity that they still had difficulties in accepting. In an Irish context, this was

different. Becoming parents provided an opportunity for lesbian couples to become closer to their own parents who could provide support in childcare, and provided an opportunity to get recognition from the extended family (Ryan-Flood, 2014). As this research shows, in the Chinese context, the problem is not about the sexual identity/orientation per se. If the problem of offspring can be solved, the children's aspiration to same-sex love and rejecting marriage are not that worrying. As such, following family acceptance, the issue of offspring becomes the centre of the intergenerational negotiation to achieve family happiness. What gay and lesbian individuals face is a shift from an anticipated marriage to an anticipated procreation. Several ways of having offspring have been found in fieldwork, including adoption, surrogacy and cooperative procreation between a gay and a lesbian.

A mother in the "PFLAG China" community told me the story of a young gay man whom she and some other parent volunteers supported as follows:

> Several days later, I asked him: "did your mother accept?" He said: "no." However, his mother became a grandmother through adoption and then became busy with looking after the grandchild, and did not talk with him about sexual orientation anymore.

Tong Mama accepted her daughter's lesbian identity after being informed that the sexual orientation was inborn, rather than children's own will. She is not interested in the equality politics at all which she sees as unnecessary. Instead, she wants a peaceful life. In an activity of PFLAG China, she met a father who had a gay son. This father also hoped that they could have a grandchild as his son was over thirty

years old. At last, the two families decided to cooperate to have a baby together, agreeing that the woman's family would take the main responsibility for raising the child. This made Tong Mama believe that the activity of PFLAG China was "very helpful". When we discussed why she did this, she expressed her attitudes towards children and family.

> Tong Mama: The family needs a child, not to carry on the family name, (which is) not important. The family is not complete without a child. A family means loving and being loved. A child means hopes and spark. You can pay attention to the child's schooling. Without a child, life is like a pool of stagnant water. You would be detached from the society.

Based on such a value emphasising the importance of children, she actively participated in the decision of having a child. Her daughter's happiness is not only her personal issue but also her mother's responsibility. The Chapter 1 of this thesis has discussed the marriage between a gay and a lesbian in contemporary mainland China, as a way for many individuals to fulfil parents' expectations regarding children's marriage. Unlike them, in cases like Tong Mama's daughter, as parents accept children's same-sex orientation and do not insist on marriage, what the gay and lesbian individuals conduct is simply cooperative procreation.

Narratives on children's happiness and care often come to the surface in parents' talking. They underline the fact that the elder care provided by the filial generation is not only physical and economic but also emotional, as seen in Xiaoyang Mama's and Yushan Mama's opinion.

> Xiaoyang Mama: No matter (rely on) pension, or rely on a person's own saving. When getting old, money should not be a problem. The key is emotional dependence, in the heart. A partnership is a kind of relationship, and the child is another kind of emotional dependence…When my parents are ill, I send them to the hospital and look after them. This is different from hiring a care worker, in terms of old people's feeling.
>
> Yushan Mama: Now we do not need his money for elder care…When I am able, I help you (my son) raise the offspring. Then, when I pass away, when I close my eyes, I do not feel that you (my son) are pitiful.

Xiashan, a gay man born in the 1980s, the single child of the family, explained to me the role of his mother in the decision-making process of having a baby. When she first understood that her son's sexual orientation could not be changed, she felt down. Xiashan said: "She felt that, it seemed that there was no way out (of this situation) for her at all." Eventually, she hoped that her son would find a stable boyfriend. Yet, she had another issue: her desire for having a grandchild. This made her son plan to have a baby.

> Xiashan: Most *tongzhi* (gay men) are eager for freedom. Actually, my thought was changed. I thought, "my mum had accepted me and this was her only hope." I felt that, compared with forcing me to marry a woman, it was easier to accept that I should have a baby. She had accepted me. Since that was her only hope, then let me make her happy.

In this case, he started to search for information about how to have a baby as an unmarried man and he ended up having a baby through surrogacy. When we talked about whether his salary was enough to pay for the surrogacy, he told me that it was his mum who had borrowed money for him to do this. He had been paying back the money to his mother by monthly instalments. Believing that she had the responsibility

to support her son to do the surrogacy, the mother even supported this family plan financially. When the interview was conducted, the mother, her son and the baby were living together. When her son went to work on weekdays, she looked after the grandchild at home. This is very similar to how an ordinary family lives in China, where grandparents actively provide childcare.

Lulu Mama, as mentioned above, the mother with two gay sons, accepted the reality after joining the network of PFLAG China. The offspring issue is the important one in their intergenerational negotiation. When I conducted the interview, she was living in a first-tier city with her younger son. At last, they made a family plan. As the elder son liked children while the younger son did not want a baby but had a better financial status, the latter would fund his elder brother's surrogacy. In their relationship, it can be imagined that the mother and the two couples would maintain close relationship in the future.

As discussed above, grandchildren have several meanings for parents, including having company in later life, the continuation of life and the protection for their children. Parents in the "PFLAG China" community have different focal points on these meanings, which are presented in their thoughts on how they should get an offspring. In Xiaoyang Mama's understanding, offspring is important for her son to have emotional company; thus, she would accept adoption, an arrangement of fictive consanguinity. While Yushan Mama simultaneously holds the consanguinity thinking,

which makes surrogacy the conclusion of her intergenerational negotiation. Such a family decision makes her feel that “we are very happy now”.

The research findings related to gay and lesbian people’s making decisions concerning having offspring in the Western contexts revealed that the decision-making process is often a couple-centric process (Bos et al., 2003; Dempsey, 2013; Ryan-Flood, 2009) or an individual decision in the cases of becoming single parents (Lewin, 1993). For some of them, it is their partners who triggers their primary consideration on this (Goldberg et al., 2012), and for some, the motivation for parenthood even becomes the standard for choosing a partner (Goldberg et al., 2012; Murphy, 2013). Besides, peer reference, that is other gay and lesbian people’s (in their network) success in becoming parents, also contributes to activating their motivation for parenthood (Goldberg et al., 2012). In rare cases, the extended families are involved in the decision-making process (Dempsey, 2013). When making the decision, one important task for gay and lesbian individuals is to overcome the assumption that gay and lesbian identities, along with parenthood are mutually exclusive (Murphy, 2013; Chabot and Ames, 2004). While in the Chinese context, procreation only seems to be doubtable due to the increasing rejection of marriage among the population practising same-sex sexuality in the recent years. This research finds that in the “PFLAG China” community, parents are playing an important role in the decision-making process regarding having offspring, whatever the final decision is. While participating in the decision making, parents are under the influence of two

wishes: first, becoming grandparents and, second, ensuring their children would have a filial generation to look after them in the future. In some cases, parents even believe that it is their responsibility to financially support getting a baby.

In the cases discussed above, the parents' desires have been satisfied. However, this is not always the case, as children have their own imagination of and plans for their future life. For some members of the gay and lesbian young generation, whether and when they want to have offspring is dependent on their own life course.

I met Sinan Mama's son in June 2017, we discussed the interaction between him and his mother from his perspective. After she accepted her son's rejection of marriage and his same-sex partnership, having a baby became her main concern. As she had friends who worked in an orphanage, it was convenient for her to get information of children who needed adoption.

> Sinan Mama's son: From time to time, I got a phone call from her. "Do you want to raise this child?" I got angry and I told her: "Who is this child? If this boy is my brother, I will look after him in the future, but if he is my son, I will not for care him."

The message he was trying to convey to his mother was that she should not keep trying to find him a child. In his statement, if the baby's identity is his "brother", the baby is adopted by his mother. In that case, he was willing to take the role of an elder brother caring for a younger sibling. In other words, he refused to become a father under his mother's arrangement. Hearing such a statement, his mother understood his thought and abstained from looking for a grandchild in the orphanage. Dramatically,

years later, he himself decided to have a baby. He explained this change of his opinion by saying: “I believe that whether I need a baby, should be my own choice.”

As reviewed above, for gay and lesbian individuals in several Western contexts, the decision-making process of having a baby is mainly a couple-centric course in many cases. Similarly, the same-sex partnership is also an important part for young gay and lesbian youth in the “PFLAG China” community while planning their lives. However, their parents may not think much about this when they are considering the offspring issue. This was the situation encountered by Xiaoke and Xiaohuang, two young gay men born in the 1980s. When Xiaoke’s parents accepted his lifestyle of same-sex love and rejecting marriage, they started thinking about the offspring issue. However, for Xiaoke, a baby was not a necessity. He emphasised his boyfriend while setting plans for his future, but this was ignored by his parents whose thought only revolved around having an offspring. Xiaohuang’s father worried about the offspring issue and urged his son to think about this. He even went to a lecture organised by companies providing surrogacy services. However, for his son, the priority was forming a partnership rather than becoming a father. Xiaohuang Baba concluded in the interview: “He may hope to negotiate this with his partner, when he has a stable partner. Now he does not have a stable partner and does not have a clear plan.”

In a sharing session of PFLAG China in 2014, Xiaocao Mama heard the sharing from a Chinese same-sex couple living in the United States who had several children through surrogacy. This couple’s sharing made many parents, including Xiaocao

Mama, very excited. Xiaocao Mama believed that offspring would make life complete, as her son “can feel the happiness, especially when he is old and he can feel the warmth of familial emotion”. For her, the life of this Chinese gay couple living in the United Sates mentioned above was a happy ending. In 2014, she said: “If in our lifetime, we could see him have a happy ending, we’ll rest assured.” However, her son thought that it was better not to have babies. When I met Xiaocao Mama in 2018, she still held the opinion that it was good to have offspring, but she also emphasised that parents should respect their children’s choices. Born in the 1940s, she had two children, one heterosexual married daughter and a gay son who would not get married. Her daughter told her husband about her brother’s sexual orientation and her husband expressed his acceptance. Xiaocao Mama was very touched and wrote a letter to her son-in-law to express her gratitude for his tolerance of his brother-in-law. In her letter, she also hoped that her daughter and her son-in-law would look after her gay son in the future. She said to me in the interview: “After we pass away, the sister and the brother-in-law will be the only families (of him) in this world. (I) hope that they could treat him well”. This was her solution she could think of when her son rejected to have children.

Parents believe they have the responsibility to optimise their gay and lesbian children’s future, and this responsibility entails encouraging their children to have a baby, which is extremely crucial. This belief may cause tensions during the negotiation when parents and children have different views concerning life and future.

The conflict happens when children's life plan is different from the parents' expectation, or the children render their parents' action as a form of control. Such children want to achieve their own happiness, instead of simply satisfying their parents' wishes. In the era of rapid social change, parents need to balance their ideas of children's happiness with their children's own life arrangements. During intergenerational negotiation, both conflict and agreement take place.

5.4 Parents' Self-reflection

This chapter has shown many cases where parents tried to do the best for their children. However, in many cases, the parents' will cannot be fulfilled. They also develop narratives to make sense of the situation in their self-reflection and in their interaction with children and other parents. In this regard, two kinds of narratives are identified. First, some parents rely on the idea that children could look after themselves well. Second, some parents think of the issue of elder care and come to the conclusion that elder care cannot be relied completely on children in contemporary society.

As discussed above, that children are exempted from marriage makes parents worry about their children's economic and care issues. For parents whose children are white-collar workers, they can rely on the narratives that children can depend on their income. Xingxing Baba, whose son is a white-collar worker with a higher education

background, believes that his son and the partner have good “working capability”, diminishing his concerns as a parent. However, class differences do not allow all parents to rest assured concerning their children’s future. During the interview, Xingxing Mama and Xingxing Baba admitted that many people could not be like their son as some of them were not hard-working and some were not competent enough to progress in their work and earn promotions or higher wages (“did not have good capability on work”). Unlike Xingxing Mama’s son with a higher education background, Xiaofu Mama’s son had joined the labour market after graduating from high school and was getting the junior college education when I interviewed her. During the interview, she expressed her worries stemming from her belief that her son was not hard-working to the degree that protected him in terms of care and financial status. When discussing surrogacy which some young gay men had undertaken, she said that, financially speaking, this option was not available for her son and this was the source of her concerns.

> Xiaofu Mama: I think this kind of people should be more hard-working. Their income should be better than others, because they are different from others. In my eyes, you (my son) are, different from others. You should think about your life, that is different from others. Then, shouldn’t your consumption be higher than others’?

Aside from this idea, parents also reflect on the filial generation’s role in elder care. In this respect, two perspectives are identified from the fieldwork. The first perspective is thinking of their own elder care. Some parents develop narratives arguing that they cannot rely on the filial generation since their children would be very busy and would

not have enough time to look after them. Second, some parents reflect on their own role as sons and daughters in their own parents' elder care. Eventually, these parents conclude that elder care cannot rely on the filial generation totally and thus, social institutions should undertake this responsibility. Most of these parents were born in the 1950s and the 1960s. They witness their own parents passing away and think about their own elder care, which can be seen in Sinan Mama, Mei Mama and Linlin Mama's reflection.

Though, at the beginning, Sinan Mama adamantly endeavoured to convince and help her son to become a father, she later developed narratives to justify to herself that her son might remain childless. She talked about the elder life of her own parents who had six children but did not receive much care from them.

> Sinan Mama: Then, I asked myself, how much did I contribute to my parents when they were alive? When they passed away, was I by their side? No, (I was not there) when my father passed away and when my mother passed away.

She and her siblings had their own families to look after and could not provide much care for their parents. "I did not see my parents when they passed away, because I was not there. I did not achieve the filial piety," said Sinan Mama. Through reflecting on her relationship with her parents, she felt that children seemed unable to do much on elder care. This logic helped her cope with and accept the fact that her son might remain childless.

Such a process of self-reflection is connected to some parents' consideration on their own elder care. In several interviews, parents mentioned that they did not attribute the

hope of elder care to their children. Instead, they thought they should place more trust in peer support or care homes.

> Mei Mama: Who does not face the issue of elder care? I will be sixty years old soon. If I expect that my child should look after me, the child is so busy with his work. If one day I sleep on the bed, what to do? I hope that he could send me to a care home or a medical institution. I would not trouble him.

Linlin Mama also argued that it would be impossible to rely on her single child in terms of elder care. She compared her situation with her mother-in-law. Her mother-in-law was being looked after by three children. However, she believed that, as a mother with only one child, it was impossible for her to rely on her child. Therefore, she placed her hope concerning her elder care in institutions such as care house as well. As for her thoughts on the elder care that her son would need, on the one hand, she thought that the social arrangements of elder care would develop by the time her son would get old. On the other hand, she thought that her son and his good friends could look after each other. Lulu Mama also developed a similar logic, thinking that the establishment of a care home for aged gay and lesbian people could release parents' worries.

This kind of narrative construction is connected to the social background of the one child policy, the aging of society and the increasing fluidity brought by social change. These parents with gay and lesbian children, mainly born in the 1950s and the 1960s, have been witnessing the social change themselves. They might live in other cities and feel the difficulties of looking after their parents. For the three mothers mentioned

in this part, they realise the challenges encountered by the familial elder care model; hence, they place more expectation in elder care based on institutions and peer support.

Meanwhile, there are also emotional and ethical factors influencing how the parent generation views the filial generation's support in elder care. Utilising Max Weber's definition of "ethics of conviction" and "ethics of responsibility", the sociologist YANG Shanhua argues that for the generation of parents in contemporary mainland China, the core of elder care is the ethic of responsibility (Yang, 2015). Elder people want to maintain self-reliance as much as possible to relieve their children's burden concerning their elder care; thus, the parent generation's ethic of responsibility is exceeding the feedback from the filial generation (Yang, 2015). The interviews conducted in the fieldwork also reveal this kind of ethics. The generation of grandparents do not want to put a great deal of burden on the generation of parents who, in turn, do not want to overburn their children. In other words, their reflection could help with decreasing their anxiety.

Many stories in this chapter are about parents' efforts to take a protective and authoritative role. Meanwhile, many cases have shown that the parents' consideration does not always get the children's agreement and acceptance. In the following story, the mother's protective role is seen as unnecessary by her daughter, which makes the mother eventually starts to reflect on and give up such a role.

After accepting her daughter's lifestyle as an unmarried lesbian and her girlfriend, Congrong Mama went to live with them. Staying with them made her witness her daughter's sadness when her girlfriend decided to break up and get married. She tried to persuade her daughter to find a girlfriend who had come out to her parents. However, her daughter replied: "When I am in different relationships, I am also in the process of growing up." Her daughter wanted to underline that she enjoyed her relationship regardless of the consequences. Congrong Mama accepted this. Reflecting on her communication with her daughter, she wrote an article which was published on PFLAG China's social media. In her article, she reflected on her role as a parent with a lesbian daughter and then, discussed how gay and lesbian people and their families should live.

> I required that my daughter should find a girlfriend who had come out. I feared that my daughter would get hurt. I felt hurt as well when I saw her sadness. My daughter protested to me many times. I realised this when my daughter said: "this was a typical victim mentality." (Congrong Mama, 2018: para 2)
>
> I became a volunteer. I watched my own growth and I felt that my relationship with my daughter was becoming closer day by day. I finally found what was meant by "do not be afraid". We are ordinary people in this world…When we say goodbye to the "victim mentality", we find that we are ordinary people in this world, and then there is nothing to be afraid of. (Congrong Mama, 2018: para 4)

Based on her reflection, Congrong Mama emphasised the value of PFLAG China in her article, saying: "PFLAG China is helping with individual's growth, and only personal growth would bring social progress. Only when we provide service to the

community and increase the family harmony step by step, instead of complaining, we can improve the environment for *tongxinglian* people. (Congrong Mama, 2018: para 5)" Congrong Mama was convinced of her daughter's argument that she enjoyed her relationship and she did not want to be seen as a victim in need of protection. Through reflecting on "victim mentality", Congrong Mama learnt to give up the unnecessary concern and the self-conception as an anxious mother.

5.5 Conclusion

As discussed in the Introduction, the most significant structural factor leading to gay and lesbian children's decision of coming out to parents is the expectation and pressure from parents that they should get married. Across Chinese history, same-sex sexuality is nothing new, but taking same-sex love as the justification for rejecting marriage is a totally new phenomenon. Therefore, as analysed in the Introduction, it is not just about sexual identity but more importantly about how individuals understand intimacy, sexuality, marriage and the relationship among them. In fact, in daily life, many individuals practising same-sex sexuality choose getting married normally or forming a marriage between a gay and a lesbian, rather than coming out to parents. For the gay and lesbian youth in the "PFLAG China" community, their coming out does not just simply mean disclosing their aspiration to same-sex love to their parents, but more significantly, it is the announcement of their refusal of marriage. That is what parents in the "PFLAG China" community are really facing. At the very beginning, this chapter analyses parents' double standards on the issue of same-sex

love. For parents, it is easier to accept the idea that same-sex attraction is normal abstractly, compared with accepting that their own children are gay and lesbian individuals who will not get married. For them, this issue per se is usually understood as “others’ business”. Contrariwise, the occurrence of a gay or lesbian child in their own family would worry them as it is not “others’ business” any more. The real dilemma for parents in this case is that they are forced to face their children’s refusal of marriage. As mainland China (except Na group) is a marriage society where the procreation and social care are primarily arranged within the marriage institution, parents worry about their children’s care arrangements when their children do not get married. Besides, parents feel worried that they cannot become grandparents. Their anxiety is overstated as a majority of their children come from the generation of the one-child policy. As elder care is primarily dependent on the filial generation, parents also worry about the elder care of their gay and lesbian children if they remain childless.

These factors constitute as the most important background for the intergenerational negotiation. Parents see same-sex partnership as the substitute for marriage and hope that it could provide mutual care and support for their children. As such, it is natural for parents to acknowledge and recognise children’s same-sex partnerships. In some cases, parents also provide support for children’s partners when they come out to their families. Besides, offspring is another important part of the intergenerational negotiation. In this case, gay and lesbian individuals still face the expectation from

their parents. Parents' expectation shifts from marriage to procreation. In contrast to the case in Western contexts, in the context of mainland China, parents are playing an important role in the decision-making process, whatever the consequences are. This is understandable in a context where parents feel that they have the responsibility to do the best for their children. Both accepting the children's lifestyle discussed in the previous chapter, and the parents' consideration demonstrated in this chapter, feature the idea of optimising children's happiness. As for recognising same-sex partnership and the efforts to have offspring, illustrated in this chapter, they are not conventional arrangements in a marriage society. They are, rather, solutions for an exceptional situation. Parents in the "PFLAG China" community accept that their children can be exempted from marriage because of same-sex love.

Meanwhile, parents' protective and authoritative role is not always welcomed as their children have their own plans for life. Thus, both the agreement and conflict occur during the intergenerational negotiation. This could also lead parents to reflect on their roles and the contemporary elder care model.

In a society characterised by the prevalence of marriage, besides providing economic protection, marriage is also a part of people's social life. Just like their gay sons and lesbian daughters, parents face others' inquiries about their children's marriage. How will parents deal with this problem? Will they tell others that they are a family with a *tongxignlian* child? Who could they tell? How could they do this? Shifting the

attention to parents' interaction with their friends and other members in the kinship network like siblings, the next chapter will address these questions.

Chapter 6 Boundary, Reputation and Family Representation: Should Parents "Come Out of the Closet"?

6.1 Introduction: "When Children Come out of the Closet, Parents Step into the Closet"

"When children come out of the closet, parents step into the closet" is a statement often heard in the "PFLAG China" community. It implies that once the children disclose their same-sex orientation and life choice to their parents, they actually bestow this secret and pressure to their parents. In the Western context, coming out has significance both at the personal and political levels as it facilitates making the gay and lesbian identity visible. Thus, "coming out" is understood as inescapable, important, healthy, mature and politically responsible, a process with a definitive end (Adams, 2010). The metaphor of "closet" is used to describe the status that gay and lesbian people are living in their secret, whose authentic self is not known to mainstream society.

> Although closet is now the usual word in American English for a cupboard or wardrobe, it originally referred to a small private room, such as one for study or prayer. This idea of privacy led to the sense of hiding a fact or keeping something secret, which goes right back to the beginning of the 17th century. A person who is hiding the fact that they are gay has been described as in the closet, or as a closet homosexual, since the late 1960s. To out someone, meaning to reveal that they are gay, is a shortened way of saying "to force them out of the closet". (Cresswell, 2009: 90)

In the narratives of gay and lesbian movements, the "closet" is understood as a limiting and oppressive space. Therefore, social movements advocate that people

should get out of the "closet" and struggle for social recognition. In contrast to the identity politics-based thinking, this thesis has shown that in the "PFLAG China" community, disclosing to parents has a very realistic reason: tackling parents' expectation and pressure on their children to get married. While for parents, in some cases, the "closet" means that they do not have enough social support when facing the disclosure of their children's sexual identity, as they do not know where to seek help. In most cases, "closet" means the parents' anxiety concerning how to face others, especially when their friends and relatives ask them about their children's marriage. After having discussed the parents' acceptance and their practices in their children's care arrangement, this thesis goes on and discusses how parents explore ways to represent their family in this chapter. For parents, the reason why representing their family becomes a problem is the same reason why their children come out; that is, the children reaching the marital age in life course.

When Dongdong Baba faced his son coming out, just like many parents analysed in the previous chapter, he felt that he would not be a grandfather. Yet, understanding that expressing such concerns was useless and incapable of changing anything, he did not verbalise such thoughts. Another problem was he felt that he could not talk about this with his siblings, friends and colleagues. In the interview, Dongdong Baba concluded that the children's marriage is part of the parents' sociality.

> Dongdong Baba: The colleagues whom I do not meet often ask about this issue more often. Why? Their children have already got married, and I have attended the wedding feasts (and have given them gifts). If my son does not get married, they cannot "give the gift back to you"*(还你这个礼)*. Chinese

> people underlines that courtesy calls for reciprocity *(礼尚往来)*. Courtesy on one side cannot last long (*有来无往非礼也*).

The sentence "Courtesy calls for Reciprocity" that Dongdong Baba cited in the interview originally came from the Confucian classic *Book of Rites*. It originally means that people should interact with one another based on courtesy. While in daily life, people understand that the interaction based on reciprocity characterises long-term gift giving, receiving gifts and returning gifts (Yan, 1996), and doing this at children's weddings is part of the obligatory expressive reciprocal practice. The sentiment, social norm and moral obligation are all presented and expressed in the flow of gift (Yan, 1996). Inviting friends to their children's wedding feasts and attending the wedding feasts of their friends' children are vital moments in a parent's sociality. It also means that they enter a new stage in their life course together. In our interview, Dongdong Baba told a joke said by his friends when they met.

> Dongdong Baba: I dared not to refer to this issue (my son's marriage), but they must talk about it. "All children get married." "Only your child remains unmarried." "When do you want to invite us to have a wedding feast (*喝喜酒*)?" "What happened? Has your child has got married without inviting us?"
>
> "If my son gets married, won't I invite you? I will definitely invite you. You cannot say no," I replied. I could only say this.

Marriage is an important event in a person's life course for him/her to achieve adulthood (Yan, 2017a; Kam, 2013; Kam, 2015). It is also an important event for their parents' life course and sociality. For Dongdong Baba, he did not find a way to solve the dilemma. Once he had an idea that he could sell his flat and move to the city

where his son was working so that he could avoid the occasions of being asked by friends about his son's marriage. However, this thought was no longer attractive to him later. On the one hand, he felt reluctant to leave the place where he had been living for so many years. He would need to conform to his son's lifestyle if he moved. On the other hand, he was concerned about the economic situation, as the prices in general in the city where his son was living were higher. At the time of the interview, he was thinking about how to talk to others regarding his son's lifestyle. He held the opinion that he would let others know this "sooner or later".

Dongdong Baba's story is not just his personal experience, but also represents the typical and universal issue encountered by the majority of parents in the "PFLAG China" community. For parents, finding a way to represent their family under such a situation is a serious issue, and this constitutes as the theme of this chapter. The idea of (re)presentation in everyday life comes from Goffman (1959)'s theory of self-presentation, which views social interaction as role-playing. According to Goffman (1959), the well-established roles and defined situation ("front stage") with particular expectation provide reference for individuals to conduct impression management, where the presentation of self is conducted to avoid embarrassment. Then, people with discredited characteristics face the issue of information management, one strategy of which is hiding the information (Goffman, 1963). However, in this study, social actors can redefine the situation of social interaction as the social change provides new and diverse ideas and expectations, seen in the cases

where parents disclose their children's lifestyle to obtain recognition. This makes the (re)presentation in this study different from Goffman (1959)'s emphasis on the influence of established role expectation.

When academic studies use the terms "represent family" and "representation of family", they usually refer to how popular and public discourses, media, advertisements, academic knowledge debates and political rhetoric discuss and construct family issues and family problems (Chambers, 2001; Lämsä et al., 2017), including the ones concerning LGB issues (Reed, 2018; Cavalcante, 2015; Borgerson et al., 2006). Yet, individuals' ways of constructing their family images in their daily life are not analysed based on the concept of "represent family". Another concept provided by family studies as an analysis tool is "displaying families". Arguing that the family relationship is not only "done", but also needs to be "displayed", Finch (2007) develops the concept of "displaying families" and states the following:

> Display is the process by which individuals, and groups of individuals, convey to each other and to relevant others that certain of their actions do constitute "doing family things" and thereby confirm that these relationships are "family" relationships. (Finch, 2007: 67)

In this definition, there are two layers of meaning. The first layer is individuals conveying to one another to confirm the specific quality of their family relationship, and the second one is conveying the specific meaning to relevant others. The focus of this concept, displaying the existence and quality of the particular family relationship, truthfully can be found in cases of parents' disclosing presented in this chapter. When they disclose their children's sexual orientation and seek recognition from others, they

actually display that they share a supportive relationship with their children. This concept does provide inspiration, but it does not function as the whole framework of this chapter because the focus of this chapter is parents' diverse ways of representing their families. The reason for choosing the term "represent" rather than "present" is that this chapter wants to underline that the consideration and behaviours on representing are not simply demonstrating the truth. Representing is "always a result of choices made during the process, and thus about what aspects are selected over others" (Lämsä et al., 2017: 165).

Based on the concept of representation, this chapter discusses how parents consider and conduct family representation in their daily life. This includes how parents consider whether they should disclose having a gay or lesbian child and what cultural tools are used in representing the family both in the cases that parents decide to or not to disclose. This chapter firstly discusses the representing work of parents who decide to disclose children's lifestyle of same-sex love, and then it moves to discuss the practices of family representation when parents decide not to disclose. In the fieldwork, I found that parents used the term "coming out of the closet" (*出柜, chugui*). This term is used by gay and lesbian people to describe disclosing their own gay and lesbian identity. However, when parents use the term *chugui*, they are talking about disclosing their children's identity and their status as parents with gay and lesbian children. In order to avoid ambiguity, this chapter uses the term disclosing instead of "coming out". This chapter only analyses parents representing to their

relatives and friends in their daily life. How parent volunteers disclose to advocate for social recognition, and how parents disclose in the "PFLAG China" community and the broader LGB community are not discussed in this thesis.

This chapter finds two kinds of motivation when parents decide to disclose: (1) seeking support from others; (2) sharing the family information and seeking recognition from others. There are two reasons for parents' decision not to disclose: viewing disclosure as unnecessary and the fear of potential gossip and stigma. For parents, representing is a boundary work, which is shown in choosing the right person to disclose to and in how parents get prepared to face potential rejection. The right people usually include parents' siblings, nieces, nephews, good friends and, sometimes, their own parents as well. When parents disclose, they are empowered by the idea that "our own family" is the most important, emphasising the social and symbolic boundary between "own family" and outsiders. In addition to the boundary between "own family" and others, two other cultural tools empowering parents are found: the "scientific" knowledge normalising same-sex love and the moral power of "good children" making their lifestyle intelligible. When parents do not want to disclose that they are a family with a gay or lesbian child, they resort to two ways of representation: representing their children as married or representing their children as independent individuals, perhaps not interested in marriage.

6.2Parents' "Coming out"

6.2.1 Choosing Right Persons to Disclose to: a Boundary Work

First, this chapter analyses the circumstances surrounding the parents' disclosing that they are a family with a gay or lesbian child. Two kinds of motivation for disclosing are identified. The first is these parents' need for help when they are still struggling in facing the new family moment and accepting the new truth, their children's gay and lesbian identity. When they disclose after having already accepted their children, they are sharing the information and expressing their intimacy with their siblings or close friends as "they care for my son". More importantly, by disclosing, parents are seeking recognition from their relatives and friends.

Parents do not usually disclose to all their relatives and friends, no matter what their motivation is. Twenty-seven interviewees reported their thinking and action on the issue of disclosing. Four parents disclosed to nearly all members of "extended family", friends and even neighbours. Two of these four parents actually told their stories to the media, so some friends found out from the media. Eight parents, including a couple, had not disclosed to anyone outside their nuclear families when the interviews were conducted, but two of them planned to disclose it to their siblings and some friends in the future. In the cases of fourteen parents, including a couple, a select group of people like their own parents, siblings, nephews, nieces and some friends were chosen to disclose to. Choosing the right person to disclose to is a boundary work for parents, as they need to evaluate and make judgement about their

relationships. Drawing a boundary is a cognitive process, which makes and maintains social division and social positioning (Barth, 2000). Lamont and Molnár (2002) conclude the areas where the concept of boundary is used in social analysis: (1) formation of social and collective identity; (2) division and inequality between different social groups, based on class, ethnicity, race, gender and sexuality; (3) the ways professions are distinguished from one another, e.g. experts from laymen, science from non-science and how disciplines are distinguished from one another; (4) community formation and boundaries within a community; (5) national identities and the constructive factors like borders. In the studies of family and intimacy, the concept of boundary is also used in analysing diverse issues, including individuals' daily emotional and linguistic practices of defining "families" in Western societies (Boss and Greenberg, 1984; Boss, 1980), work-family balance (Cunningham-Burley et al., 2005; Scott and Innes, 2005; Frone et al., 1992; Brannen, 2005; Chesley, 2005; Shaffer et al., 2011), the relationship between family and public institutions like schools (Phelan et al., 1991; Shucksmith et al., 2005), boundaries between family members like the parent-child boundary (Bancroft et al., 2005) and the differences and similarities between friendship and family (Allan, 2005; Roseneil, 2005). What this section discusses is the role of boundary thinking in parents' representation practices.

Parents in the "PFLAG China" community follow a differential thinking when they are considering whether they should disclose and who they can disclose to. The

majority of parents do not want to let everyone know of this in their daily life. They are evaluating their relationships in the process of choosing the right person. In Xinlei Mama's opinion, making judgment on which person she can disclose to is an issue of "relationship-ology" (*guanxi xue,* 关系学), depending on the how much she knows about the person and how close they are. With the belief that she does not have the "duty" to tell everyone, she only discloses to some good friends, her siblings and an aunt of hers. In her opinion, her four sisters are her consanguinity, the closest person to her in the kinship network. So, Xinlei Mama made sure that the people she chose to disclose to would have no problem in accepting her lesbian daughter's lifestyle and would not cut off their relationship and interaction with her. In addition to her siblings, in the kinship network, she disclosed to one aunt of her for two reasons. First, she was close to this aunt, and, second, her aunt was a scientist who could accept her daughter's sexual orientation based on scientific knowledge. For the persons who Xinlei Mama disclosed to, facing the information is also an issue of "relationship-ology". The most extreme and typical case was one of her male friends who expressed understanding based on his personal friendship with her while he had reservations in supporting same-sex love as a whole. "The relationship is very amazing. Actually, what he recognises is my virtue (and) the relationship with me," commented Xinlei Mama. In her eyes, after the communication regarding her experiences in her family and volunteering in PFLAG China, this friend showed more understanding. Another case is the story of Mei Mama. She once posted some information regarding *tongxinglian* on her social media but one of her friends asked

her not to post anything regarding *tongxinglian* further as *tongxinglian* was disgusting. Mei Mama quickly replied that her son was *tongxinglian* and argued that "if you feel it is disgusting, we do not need to be friends any longer". Her friend apologised to her the next day, but Mei Mama said: "You come to apologise just because we are friends. Now, I am going to send you something (to read). If you can accept it, we can still be friends." She then sent some positive information discussing *tongxinglian* to her friend to read.

When she first faced her son coming out, Sinan Mama felt that she was overwhelmed by negative feelings and then she told her sisters whilst crying. Her sisters were her "life-saving straw" as she shared close relations with them. Before disclosing his gay identity and his same-sex partnership, her son had taken his partner home to meet his parents and aunts every year. His partner eventually got familiar with his families and members in the kinship network, under the label of his good friend. Sinan Mama told her son's coming out to her eldest sister, who replied that she had already found out. The eldest sister and her husband were both medical doctors, so they held a friendly attitude to homosexuality issues. They persuaded Sinan Mama to accept this and "go with the flow" *(shunqiziran, 顺其自然),* with the narrative that it was ok as long as the two young men were happy regardless of their sexual orientation.

> Sinan Mama: At the very beginning, I wanted to find a (person to) rely on and pour out. If my sister had given me much "negative energy" (negative feedback), it would have been more difficult to accept (my son's gay identity and his same-sex partnership).

Sinan Mama got support from her siblings during struggling in accepting her son's lifestyle and partnership. Her sisters were the insiders whom she could rely on at a difficult time. For the parents who have finished the acceptance, their disclosing is just about sharing the information, either because they share a close relationship with their siblings and friends or because others care about their children's marriage. For parents in such a motivation, choosing the persons to disclose to is also a boundary work, or "relationship-ology", as concluded by Xinlei Mama.

Ruoyun Mama's husband spoke extremely ambiguously when one of his good friends asked him about his son's marriage. His answer made them feel very confused. When this friend and his wife visited Ruoyun Mama's family and asked about their son's marriage again, Ruoyun Mama decided to disclose, and then they understood why the father had talked ambiguously before. In their conversation, Ruoyun Mama not only spoke about her son's sexual identity, but also about their valuable relationship by saying: "You are the persons deserving our trust." She underlined that usually she did not tell acquaintance. Such a statement made the disclosing a confirmation of their close friendship. Ruoyun Mama felt positive that they did not show any discrimination against her after knowing this.

When the interview with Linlin Mama was conducted, she had already been in the process of disclosing to her and her husband's siblings. Aside from siblings, she outlined four female friends as her besties (*guimi, 闺蜜*) to whom she planned to disclose. Such a definition showed that she shared an intimate relationship with them.

She tried to talk about the knowledge she had acquired related to gays and lesbians in front of them. Linlin Mama said in the interview: “Because (they are my) besties. They particularly care about whether my son has a girlfriend as he is twenty-one years old. (They) ask about this every day, indeed (laugh).” Unlike some parents’ friends focusing on marriage, Linlin Mama’s female friends cared about whether her twenty-one-year-old son was in a relationship rather than whether he had a potential wife for marriage. Linlin Mama viewed her friends asking as the representation of their intimate relationship. She showed a more positive attitude and action than many other parents since she was not just forced to respond, but saw the disclosure as a part of her relationship with others. Until the moment of the interview, she had expected that two of her four besties would be able to accept same-sex love, while two would not. She planned to provide more concerning knowledge among them first and then disclose that she had a gay son.

The stories analysed above actually show that the process of parents’ choosing the persons to disclose to is a boundary work. They evaluate their relationships with others. The chosen ones are sort of “insiders”. Usually, parents’ siblings and some good friends are the ones to disclose to. Meanwhile, some parents keep the information within their nuclear family and do not disclose to others at all, which is analysed later in this chapter.

6.2.2 Seeking Recognition

One of the most important meanings of parents' disclosing is the seeking of recognition for their gay and lesbian children from members in their kinship network and from friends. This section discusses the cultural tools that parents use in this process. These tools do not only promote others' acceptance and recognition but they also empower parents. This chapter concludes that there are three cultural tools which empower the parents: parents' exclusive authority over their children, the scientific knowledge normalising same-sex and the moral power of "good children" justifying their behaviours.

6.2.2.1 "Our family is the most important": Parent's Exclusive Authority as Justification

During the process of demanding recognition when disclosing, the prevalent cultural tool identified is parents' exclusive authority. This cultural tool implies that parents have the final say on their children's issues and is underlay by the symbolic and social boundaries between different (nuclear) families. The "boundary" has two layers of meaning. The first is that parents have the final say on their own children, giving them more courage and confidence on disclosing. The second is building and confirming the idea that rejection from "outsiders" can be borne because "our own family" is the most important.

As analysed in the previous chapter, what is hard for parents to accept is not the knowledge that homosexuality is normal but a gay or lesbian child who cannot get

married in their own nuclear family, which disrupts their expectations regarding elder life. In such a situation, parents realise that it is not so difficult for their siblings to accept a gay nephew or a lesbian niece, as it does not happen in their "own family".

> Xiaoyang Mama: (If) my child is not like this, but (if) my colleague's or my younger sister's child is like this, actually it is easier for me to accept. I will think that it is others' business, which does not happen to me. There is no problem at all.
>
> Xinran Mama: Some children put too much pressure on themselves, and fear the relatives and (parents') friends. Actually, they care about their own children, not you. Put yourself in others' shoes…if your aunt's child is gay…your mother would not laugh at him.
>
> Caicai Mama: As long as (someone's) own parents can accept, as long as (someone's) closest persons can accept, don't take other relatives seriously. They would not feel panic about your son indeed in their heart. We, from the heart…and the real panic is in heart.

Such narratives actually make parents understand the situation better. Parents could use the notion of boundary to seek recognition, while the others should just respect the parents' governance of their own family.

Once, Xinran Mama's gay son asked her about what would happen if her neighbours knew of his gay identity, and she interpreted what her son said as the fear in his mind. This made Xinran Mama believe that it was her responsibility to "pave the way for the child", which meant solving the problems concerning this. "I should head. (I) can't let the child head," she explained in the interview. Then she went back to her hometown and disclosed her son's sexual identity. She invited her siblings and their spouses, children and grandchildren to have dinner together. As there were so many people, they were sitting at three different tables. Since her elder siblings' children had

already got married, they asked her about her gay son's marriage as a matter of course. Then Xinran Mama said that he would not marry. Others asked: "Why?" "He is *tongxinglian*. He does not like girls," said Xinran Mama. All of them became totally silent, but after one minute, her niece broke the silence by saying: "Don't worry. We would not ask him when he comes back." Thereupon, this problem was solved among her siblings. Her main motivation for disclosing was her aim to save her son the bother of facing the others' questions and curiosity concerning having a girlfriend or marriage.

> Xinran Mama: My thought was simple. If you look down (on me), we have our own life separately (and cut off the interaction). That's better. Indeed, if at that time I had said this to my brothers and sisters with crying, I reckon, they would have cried with me. If I had scolded him (my son), they would have scolded him together with me that my son *xuehuaile* (had learned to be bad, *学坏了*) in the past years.

Actually, at that time, Xinran Mama's siblings did not have much scientific knowledge that normalised same-sex orientation, though they did not hold extreme hostile attitudes. For them, it was Xinran Mama's confirming attitude that did make sense. While disclosing, she did not show a need for help from her brothers and sisters. Rather, she showed her demand for recognition with her authority as a parent of her own family. What they should do was just respect their sister's or aunt's decision.

Such thinking was obvious in the communication between Sinan Mama and one of her sisters. As mentioned above, her eldest sister persuaded her to accept her son's gay identity and his partnership. However, this was not the attitude of all her siblings. During the interview, she gave me the following example:

> Sinan Mama: Actually, she was not willing to accept. She felt that since I had accepted, she should not talk anymore. If it had been her son, she would not have accepted. However, she did not tell me not to consent…She just said: "it was ok as long as you could accept." She just said that she felt she herself still could not accept.

What this sister was doing was respecting and recognising Sinan Mama's decision on issues of her own (nuclear) family. The key point for this sister was not whether she could have accepted if her own son had been a gay rejecting marriage.

The morality that parents have sort of exclusive authority over the issues of their own nuclear family justifies demanding siblings' acceptance. In some cases, such thinking also appears in the grandparents' narratives. When Xiaoxue Mama encountered the endless judgment of her husband's uncle that her daughter should find a boyfriend and get married soon, she felt unhappy. Knowing this, her mother-in-law comforted her by saying:

> Xiaoxue Mama's repeated her mother-in-law's words: His family issues still cannot be *guan* (*管,* governed) well. He even wants to *guan* (*管,* govern) issues in our family. How our family lives a life, is the business of our family. He is not in the position to *guan* (*管,* govern). (*我们家怎么过是我们家的事情，轮不到他来管。*)

The Chinese word *guan* (*管*) has several meanings in the context of family. It has the meaning of management and regulation, on the one hand, and the meaning of caring, on the other hand. In this context, "govern" and "governance" are the closest academic English words to understand *guan(管)*. Usually, when these parents and grandparents use the term "family", it points to the unit where they are the "family head". In the context where children have already become adults and have been

working in the labour market, or have established their own households, the “family head” points to the moral authority, not necessarily the ones holding the economic power. When parents say “family”, it refers to the unit, including them and their children, in which they are the family head. When grandparents in such circumstances use the term “family” in their conversations, it is the unit, including three generations in which they are the most senior generation and the family head. In this case, the use of the term “our family” is a boundary work emphasising the boundary between insiders and outsiders, and defining who has the power to govern family issues. The idea that they have the final say on their own family governance empowers them to define outsiders’ intervention as illegitimate.

So far, this chapter has shown that the boundary and hierarchy between “our own family” and others help parents demand recognition from the others. Moreover, the boundary makes parents feel that rejection from relatives can be endured as their “own family” is the most important.

Fei (1992[1947]: 62-63) describes individuals’ social circle by saying: “It is like the circles that appear on the surface of a lake when a rock is thrown into it. Everyone stands at the centre of the circles produced by his or her own social influence.” Based on this metaphor, parents’ siblings are the insiders in parents’ social circle, which make them the ones to disclose to. Yet, they become outsiders compared with parents’ innermost social circle, “our own (nuclear) family”. This thought appears occurred to

several parents when thinking of disclosing, and it is the answer to the question of whether parents feel concerned before disclosing.

> Sinan Mama: Relatives…including siblings, are all like this. If you think that the fact that your younger sister has such a son makes you lose face, it is ok that we do not interact (anymore)…I feel that my mentality is very good now.
>
> Linlin Mama: Since I decide to tell you, (I am) very proud and confident to say that my son is *tongxinglian*. (If) you accept, we continue social (interaction). Not accepting is your own business. We can stop social (interaction). I feel like this in my subconsciousness.

The narratives of cutting off relationships even appear in some parents' disclosing action. When he was asked about his son's marriage, Jianguo Baba replied saying "my son is *tongxinglian*…He would not marry in the whole life. If you accept, we are still sisters and brothers. If not, then sorry, we cut off the relationship." His siblings immediately argued that it was impossible for them to break up relationships with him, and they accepted their nephew's lifestyle well after reading the PFLAG China's booklet given to them by Jianguo Baba.

So far, this chapter has discussed how parents' exclusive authority empowers them when disclosing to relatives and friends and demanding recognition. Now, this chapter will present an unexpected finding concerning how parents could be highly respected by others when they show how well they accept their gay and lesbian children. Ruoyun Mama found that others respected her more than before, because of how well she dealt with the acceptance and family governance.

> Ruoyun Mama: Now all my relatives and friends know this issue. They do not disrespect and discriminate against me after knowing this. On the contrary, they are more respectful to me. (Others) feel that it is not easy for me as a

> mother. “You can do (accept) to such a degree, while we cannot.” … Once, I gathered with other colleagues. When mothers got together, we were discussing (our) children’s issues…I came out. After seeing my performance, she (a colleague) said: “you do not need comfort.” She said: “I really admire you. If this happened on my child, I could not behave like you.” She was telling the truth. If this does not happen to you, you can comfort others. When this really happens to you, it is not like that.

Holding the thought that it was necessary to face relatives’ care about her son’s marriage issue and she was prepared to accept cutting off interaction if rejected, she disclosed the information. She concluded that the members in her kinship network did not discriminate against her. Rather, they respected her more, believing that they could not have tackled this issue as properly as she had done. They absorbed the knowledge normalising same-sex orientation provided by Ruoyun Mama, and moreover understood the difficulties she had experienced in terms of family governance. Thus, in Ruoyun Mama’s case, the members in her kinship network respected her courage and capability.

The story of Sinan Mama and her sisters analysed above is typical as it shows that both she and her sisters understand the boundary between her family and her siblings’ families. However, in rare cases, a rejection from members in the kinship network happens. When Yifei Mama disclosed her son’s gay identity to her husband’s eldest brother, she did not expect that he would not accept this at all. Her husband’s eldest brother saw it as the “tragedy of the clan” and said that the nephew should not visit him in the future. This made Yifei Mama angry, and they had cut off the relations when this interview took place.

> Yifei Mama: I regretted it very much after telling this. I did not expect him to react so fiercely. (My son) is not his child, after all. I do not know how come (he) does not know (that he should) be a good person (*zuoge haoren,* 做个好人). (My son) is not your child. Why can't (you) say that you can accept?

Two points can be concluded from the reaction of her husband's eldest brother. The first one is that he holds negative attitudes towards homosexuality. The second point is how he understands his role in the kinship network. He views himself in a position of authority which would enable him to reject the others' children in the clan. He does not follow the logic of respecting the issues in others' family. Yifei Mama rejects that her husband's eldest brother should have a say on her child. That is why the she sees him as a person who does not know how to *zuoren* (do personhood). Doing personhood is a moral process that makes oneself a proper relational self, and the relational self requires that an individual should fulfil the moral obligations towards others (Yan, 2017a). Here, in Yifei Mama's opinion, the relational moral obligation means respecting the issue related to her family and respecting how she deals with her family issues. The eldest brother of her husband failed to do this, thereby proving his failure in doing personhood. A rejection like this rarely appeared in my sampling, which could be explained by two probable factors. First, many parents of PFLAG China do not easily disclose without preparation, and this increases the possibility of getting others' recognition. Second, it seems that not many people would behave so fiercely like the uncle mentioned, especially among the urban middle class. Consequently, the case of rejection and cutting off relationships was rarely mentioned.

The morality that parents have the exclusive authority over the issues in their own nuclear families intensifies the legitimacy of demanding recognition in the kinship network. Such authority of parenthood gives parents much courage and empowers them. Based on the understanding of boundaries, they hold the opinion that people only care about the business in their own families. This opinion helps parents to build an optimistic attitude to disclosing their children's gay and lesbian identity. Such optimistic attitudes have two layers of meaning. First, parents expect their siblings to accept since, in the end, the child rejecting marriage and choosing same-sex love is not in their families. The second is summarised by the idea that "our own family" is the most important, so the potential rejection from others is not so crucial.

6.2.2.2 Science as the Justification for Demanding Recognition

Some parents use the scientific knowledge normalising same-sex attraction as the justification for demanding recognition, just like how the children use scientific knowledge to persuade their parents to accept their lifestyle. After reading the PFLAG China's booklet *Knowing LGBT*, Jianguo Baba's elder sister said that it was not the children's problem and then "how couldn't I accept?" When Xiaoxue Mama disclosed to her sister-in-law, Xiaoxue Mama showed her the videos produced by PFLAG China to make her understand the *tongxinglian* issue, containing the stories of parents in the "PFLAG China" community.

Apart from parents' own explanation, in some cases, the younger generation in the kinship network plays an important role in supporting their uncles or aunts with a gay

and lesbian child. Endorsed by their cultural capital, nephews or nieces can help their uncles or aunts disclosing and seeking recognition.

Linlin Mama revealed her son's gay identity to her elder sister, but the sister reacted based on the narratives that this was a disease that needed to be cured. Having heard her sister's comments, Linlin Mama was in a heavy mood, but her niece born in the 1990s, the daughter of her elder sister, intervened immediately, insisting that same-sex love was normal and was not a disease.

When Xiaoxue Mama expressed that she was in suffering without giving a specific reason, her nephew, the son of her elder sister, soon realised what happened and persuaded her to accept her lesbian daughter, as he had known that his cousin was a lesbian. At that moment, Xiaoxue Mama had already acquired some knowledge about LGBT, but she still had concerns which she discussed with her nephew, namely regarding how she would face his aunts and uncles. The nephew told her not to worry. "You do not need to face yourself. Let me help you with coming out." Then this nephew told Xiaoxue Mama's all siblings her daughter's sexual orientation. In Xiaoxue Mama's words, this nephew "helped me come out to all of them." However, her eldest sister and the sister's husband did not understand and blamed Xiaoxue Mama for not educating the daughter well and spoiling the daughter, which made her do whatever she wanted. As for Xiaoxue Mama's nephew, he took the role of explaining and supporting his aunt. Except for explaining that same-sex orientation was normal, he also argued that "my *xiaoyi* (youngest aunt) is already in pain and you

should comfort her instead of pressuring her." His effort was effective, and they called Xiaoxue Mama and comforted her saying that her daughter could still have a good life even if she would not get married. Examining Irish gays and lesbians' experiences, Ryan-Flood (2014) argues that with the increasing social acceptance, gay and lesbian individuals are experiencing lateral relationships rather than alienation in the kinship network; in the lateral relationships, their siblings, nephews and nieces are taking an important role in supporting them. This is what is demonstrated in Xiaoxue Mama's story.

In our interview, Xiaoxue Mama underlined that this nephew was a guy graduating from university. Her nephew has some sort of authority in the kinship network. This authority stems from his cultural capital as a young man with a higher-education background, which empowers him to conduct family governance. Thus, he persuaded the others to accept his cousin's lifestyle successfully. Behind this is the new dynamic in the intergenerational relationship in contemporary social change in mainland China. Sociologist ZHOU Xiaohong highlights the phenomenon of parents learning from the filial generation and the filial generation back-feeding their parents, culturally. Zhou uses the terms "culture feedback" (Zhou, 2001; Zhou, 2012) and "cultural reverse" (Zhou, 2020) in his English writings, but this thesis uses the term "cultural back-feeding" as it implies a sense of active practices, which makes it more appropriate. The cultural back-feeding represents the shift from unidirectional pattern of cultural transmission into the bidirectional or even multi-directional patterns, as a

result of intensified social change making the filial generation understand new things and new rules and have more say (Zhou, 2001). Influences of this shift vary across themes; they are less significant on value judgments of right and wrong, but more significant on understanding society and human life, consumption, aesthetic tastes and interest (Zhou, 2001). For the parent generation, they are feeling lost and facing tension in intergenerational relationship, but are improving their ability to adapt to rapid social change with the help of the cultural back-feeding from the filial generation (Zhou, 2001; Zhou, 2012). Generally speaking, in the context of PFLAG China, when the parents face the disclosure of children's lifestyle, both parents and their children get involved in a new process of cultural back-feeding.

In the case of Xiaoxue Mama, her nephew used his say endorsed by his higher-education background to conduct the cultural back-feeding to his uncles and aunts, and successfully persuaded them to accept his lesbian cousin. He acted as the support for Xiaoxue Mama, so she did not need to face members in the "extended family" on her own.

6.2.2.3 The Moral Power of "Good children"

The third cultural tool empowering parents in disclosing is the positive valuation based on children's good performance and good quality. For the parents' relatives and friends, a child's good reputation justifies their same-sex love behaviour. As they are seen as good children, it is impossible that they "learn to be bad" (*学坏了, xuehuai le*) in people's understanding.

When I asked Ruoyun Mama whether she felt concerned before she disclosed to others, she replied that she was prepared to cut off the relationship with those rejecting. Moreover, she told me that all her relatives, friends and colleagues knew that her son was a good child. First, her son performed well in education and in his career. Second, he was a sensible child and capable of arranging everything and looking after himself well, which saved his parents the need to worry about him. She concluded that "many people admire me" for raising such a good child. Ruoyun Mama maintained that both in the parents' kinship network and in volunteering, parents could gain confidence from their children's good performance. She said: "Children are brilliant, (and parents) feel proud and are very confident. In doing public benefits, (parents) are very confident as well. This is certain."

When Chengtian Mama tried to disclose to her neighbours in the countryside, she firstly argued that if they accepted, they would still be her good friends, but if they discriminated against her or her son, then she would cut off the interaction with them. This made her neighbour confused. When Chengtian Mama spoke the term *tongxinglian* out, her neighbour said it was not a problem.

> Chengtian Mama, repeating her neighbour's words: Your child is so good. Not a bad child. He likes boys, then let him be. Your health is not so well. Don't *guan* (*govern*) so many issues.

On the one hand, it seems to be obvious that her neighbours do not see same-sex love as essentially wrong. On the other hand, her neighbours view her son as a good child.

His sexual orientation does not change his fame as a good child. One the contrary, his good reputation makes his life choices more intelligible and legitimate.

6.2.3 The Tacit Strategy

So far, this chapter has discussed parents' explicit disclosure of having a gay or lesbian child. Another strategy revealed in the fieldwork is the tacit disclosure. The tacit disclosure happens when parents do not talk about their children's lifestyle directly, but others eventually understand and refrain from asking about it.

Yifei Mama never told her sisters about her son's lifestyle of same-sex love, but she believed that they must have known. For a period of time, Yifei Mama volunteered to answer the hotline of PFLAG China. She believed that her sisters must had heard her answering those calls when they had visited her. For her, the fact that they never asked whether her son had a girlfriend was the evidence, proving that they had heard the calls when visiting her.

> Yifei Mama: My two sisters should have known, but they never ask me…My child has already been thirty-one. They never ask whether he has a (female) partner. This means that they supposed to know but they are not willing to speak it out (她们不愿意捅破这层窗户纸).

Yifei Mama's sisters never asked and Yifei Mama never spoke directly about this at any time. This may mean that her sisters had a tacit understanding of the situation and they chose to avoid asking about their nephew's marriage.

Actually, the tacit disclosure was not done by Yifei Mama purposely. In this situation, Yifei Mama was certain that her sisters already knew of her son's sexual orientation, which was quite specific compared with other parents. In the majority of circumstances where parents do not openly disclose their children's sexual orientation, parents seemingly assume that their friends and relatives do not know the "truth". I suppose this is a factor making the tacit situation barely mentioned.

6.3 Representing in Other Ways

So far, this chapter has analysed how parents make their decision to disclose that they are a family with a gay or lesbian child, and the cultural tools utilised in this process. Though they are very typical, disclosing is not the universal and common option. This section analyses parents' strategies of representing in other ways, rather than "coming out" as a family with a gay and lesbian child. The discussion includes parents' consideration and their action. Two kinds of narratives about the circumstances of not disclosing are found: the belief that disclosing is not necessary as it is their own business, and the fear of shame and gossip caused by the disclosure of such information. Parents may be under the influence of both thoughts simultaneously.

The first thought is underlain by the concept of "boundary". Under boundary thinking, parents find it only necessary to disclose to insiders. As analysed above, many parents are only willing to disclose to siblings or good friends, but they do not want to

disclose to “outsiders”. In some cases, parents do not want to disclose to anyone outside their nuclear family and keep their children’s gay and lesbian lifestyle within the privacy of the family.

Aside from the belief that disclosing is not necessary, concerns about social reputation also influence parents’ thoughts. Social reputation is also called face, including *lian (脸)* and *mianzi (面子)* in the local language. Face is “the positive social value a person effectively claims” on a line that others assume this person has taken (Goffman, 1955: 222). In the Chinese context, face is divided into social face and moral face (King, 2006). The moral face is expressed as *lian (脸)* referring to moral reputation, while the social face is expressed as *mianzi(面子)* which is achieved through success and ostentation (Hu, 1944). For Hu (1944), *lian* is both a social sanction for enforcing moral standards and an internalised sanction. However, Zhai (2016) questions the internalised aspect and argues that the process of getting face can be both moral and immoral. Zhai (2016) redefines *lian* and *mianzi* as parts of face according to the social expectation, regardless right or wrong, and argues that *lian* points to conforming to the common value and the *mianzi* points to rankings in social esteem.

> *Lian* is the image conforming to others’ expectation represented when an individual (or a group) uses various methods to cater to the common value in a certain social circle, for themselves or relative others. *Mianzi* is the psychological process that the individual judges whether the others’ valuation conforms to self-expectation, after the individual (or group) acts according to the images conforming to the others’ expectation. Its basic purpose is improving the ranking in the others’ eyes. Its effect lies in the degree of social prizes. (Zhai, 2016: 92-93)

Based on the idea that face lies in social esteem, "losing face" is not caused by the existence of a gay or lesbian child in the family, but by the others' potential negative attitudes after knowing this. Yifei Mama gave the most typical answer when I tried to discuss what *mianzi* was for parents, which was the term I often heard in the sharing sessions of PFLAG China.

> I: How do you understand the *mianzi*? What is *mianzi*?
>
> Yifei Mama: Can a person tell all his classmates and teachers that he is *tongxinglian*? Can he do that? This is *mianzi*. Why cannot? You think this is not good, or you think this will be discriminated against by others. This is *mianzi*.
>
> I: Do parents worry that they would lose *mianzi*, or that their children would be discriminated against?
>
> Yifei Mama: Both. Parents worry that children will be discriminated against when others know. Then, (she described the gossip:) "How do you educate (children)?" "Their family's child is *tongxinglian.*" … After all, it is not accepted by all people. All these issues, as long as they are not accepted by all people, you dare not to say. This is *mianzi*.

Yifei Mama's narratives show that the potentiality of losing *mianzi* lies in the potential negative response from others. For parents, the lack of positive social recognition also makes them feel the possibility of losing *mianzi*, as they do not know how others and the abstract society would react to this issue.

In the circumstances where parents do not want to disclose, they have two options found in the fieldwork: representing their children as married and representing their children as independent and maybe not interested in marriage. The most extreme case of the former is with parents representing by organising a male-female wedding. Unlike the parents who justify their children's exemption of marriage by "coming

out", in the latter circumstance, parents just represent their children as the ones not interested in marriage.

6.3.1 Representing Children as Married

Caicai Mama was living in an urban district. When asked by her neighbours whether her son had got married, she answered with a "yes". When they asked her whether her son had any kids, her answer was that her son wanted to be a dink (dual income, no kids) and she could do nothing about his decision. Caicai Mama was able to use this strategy, because in a metropolitan context, people do not know much about one another. She said: "They ask this kindly, and I answer kindly. You ask me for the first time, and you would not ask me for a second time."

Tong Mama just viewed her daughter's lifestyle as a family business, and she did not want to disclose this information to others. In her opinion, she could not expect them to "understand like me". Since others would not understand everything about her family from their heart, what she really needed to do was just look after her own family and to lead a "peaceful" life.

> Tong Mama: We do nothing wrong. We do not need to (disclose and explain) … She has her lover and a child. (We) just do not want relatives and friends to know. What is important is that my daughter could be happy.

Tong Mama also evaluated the relationship with relatives in the big city where she was living. In her estimation, the elder generation interacted much, but the young people would not spend much time together with the elder generation. Realising that the young generation would have their own life also decreased the necessity of

disclosing her daughter's *tongxinglian* lifestyle to them. What they wanted to do was organise a wedding feast where a gay friend would act as the bridegroom and to invite relatives and friends to come and see that Tong Mama's daughter got married. Another issue driving Tong Mama to make such an arrangement was that her daughter would be a mother, and Tong Mama did not want others to think that she had a grandchild but not a son-in-law. In other words, Tong Mama did not want people to understand her daughter as a woman who had a child outside the frame of marriage. Everything Tong Mama did can be attributed to her desire to lead to a "peaceful" and "happy" life instead of making efforts to explain to others to get recognition.

Another story is that of Yushan Baba and Yushan Mama. They had accepted their son's lifestyle of same-sex love and his same-sex partnership, but they still felt that it was not easy to let others know.

> Yushan Baba: I cannot publicise (*公开,gongkai*) this (my son's lifestyle). Why do I say this? In our Chinese society, this issue (same-sex love) is not publicised. Is this a problem? It does not disturb society…In our country, this issue has not been covered in the laws…Once it is covered by law…it will be publicised. After being publicised, it will be easy (to be accepted) in society.

Yushan Baba's narratives made it clear that, when he considered disclosing, it was important for him to obtain support from the authority in society. For him, if this issue had received open endorsement from the state, he could have been encouraged to disclose his son's *tongxinglian* lifestyle. Without such an endorsement, he could not feel confident that his friends or relatives in his hometown would react positively. So,

parents like Yushan Baba did not want to take the risk of facing the others' negative response.

Besides, the children's marriage is part of their parents' face. When their son was over thirty years old, many people, such as their siblings, asked about their son's marriage and were willing to be marriage matchers for him. Under such pressure, they organised a wedding for their son in their hometown.

> Yushan Mama: Many people wanted to introduce *duixiang* (a potential wife). I told my son: "How about arranging a wedding?"

The bridegroom was their son, and the bride was a temporary actress recruited. They were truly satisfied with the wedding because the actress's performance was extremely good. The bride's parents were not there, and they explained that her parents would organise a wedding feast soon in the bride's hometown.

> Yushan Mama: (The wedding was) done. (Our) son left on the afternoon…We finished the cleaning, went back home and had a good sleep. Everyone knows that my son is married…No one asks us anymore.

Yushan Baba knew that the government did not oppose same-sex love, but he and Yushan Mama did not want to take the risk of facing negative responses and gossips in their hometown, which was a small town. Their son was working in a big city and he did not show up in his parents' social circle often. For them, the problem was solved by such a wedding. Their son's lifestyle and his same-sex partnership were recognised by them. Like Tong Mama, Yushan Mama and Yushan Baba decided to keep this as a family (private) issue, not an issue of their "extended families".

Hongmei is a lesbian girl. She told me about her experience of acting as the bride in a wedding to help her gay friend. Actually, this gay man had come out to his parents but his father insisted that a (male-female) wedding was necessary. They organised the wedding in his hometown, a village.

> Hongmei: His parents are angry with him, and still feel unsatisfied with him. (They) feel like, "do you must be like this (gay)?" However, his parents were very polite to me. I said that I could not accept the continuous arrangement and keeping contact with (his) relatives, so he said that I went abroad.

This gay man's father was a businessman. Once his business partners wanted to introduce their daughters to his son, but this young gay man declined. Then the situation started to become embarrassing as this young man kept on rejecting invitations to get to know the daughters of his father's friends though he did not have a girlfriend as his potential wife. In this case, the only excuse his father found was that his son had already got a suitable girlfriend. As a matter of course, they organised the wedding described above.

As discussed in Chapter 1, many individuals choose marriage between a gay and a lesbian to deal with the pressure from parents to get married. When they form such a marriage, the uninformed parents expect the couple to live together and visit each other's relatives. However, in the cases presented in this section, what happens is simply a cooperative wedding when parents are informed. The cooperation discussed in this section only requires a one-off performance. When parents do not want to take the risk of people gossiping about them, such a wedding is an option, which provides the participants with a social identity as married individuals. It shows that parents

have entered a new stage in their life courses, just like their peers. Since their children have been represented as married, it is not necessary to let outsiders know their children's "extra-nuptial" sexuality at all.

6.3.2 Representing Children as Independent

The second strategy is representing children as independent individuals who may be not interested in marriage. The background of this strategy is the filial generation's rising autonomy and the new understanding of marriage emerging in the process of social change.

Caicai Mama has different strategies in representing her family. As analysed above, Caicai Mama represented her son as married to her neighbours, and only disclosed to her husband's siblings her son's *tongxinglian* lifestyle as they were living in the same city, which made the disclosing necessary in her opinion. Her own siblings were not living in the same city with her, so she resorted to a different strategy, that is emphasising that she gave her son the freedom to decide his marriage and procreation matters.

Xiaohuang Baba's son had a higher-education background in Hong Kong. For many people in mainland China, Hong Kong represents a modern, metropolitan and Westernised life. This provides a cultural tool for Xiaohuang Baba. He represented his son as a person preferring the modernist life.

> Xiaohuang Baba (described his narratives): Whether he could get married, I do not know. That the modernists in Hong Kong do not get married for their

> whole life, it is possible. In Hong Kong, many people in their 40s and 50s still do not get married.

His son's good performance at schooling and his educational background made Xiaohuang Baba eligible to represent his son as a modernist. Such a label could explain and justify his son's behaviour that was not in accordance with the norm of getting married when reaching the marital age. When Yifei Mama's colleagues asked about her son's marriage, she responded that her son did not want to get married. She was fine with the others' judgment that "children nowadays are selfish" when she argued that her son did not want to bear the responsibility of establishing and governing a family.

Eventually, people might lose the interest in asking about children's marriage. This is demonstrated in Haoran Mama's experience. When her son was at the marital age, the response to the others' questions about his marriage was that her son had not found a suitable girl to marry. Eventually, the others stopped asking about this.

> Haoran Mama: (It is) not necessary to express it (the son's sexual orientation and lifestyle), since it has been such a long time. When the child was just over twenty years old, (people would ask). Now he is over forty and he does not have a family. We are all having a tacit understanding. In the past, they asked, but now it is not necessary to ask as he is over forty years old… Now they do not ask, since it has been for so many years. They are not chasing you every day to ask you. Everyone has their own business. Every family has their own business.

The majority of parents in the "PFLAG China" community were born in the 1950s and the 1960s, Haoran Mama, however, was born in the 1940s, and her son was born in the 1970s. This made her experience different as her son was passed the normal age

for marriage. All parents representing their children as married have been analysed in this chapter. Only a few parents adopted this strategy, but it typically shows the meaning of the children's marriage in their parents' life and sociality. Many parents are still exploring their ways of representing their children and family in their daily life.

6.4 Conclusion

The activism narratives constructed by PFLAG China stress a symbolic connection between the children's family coming out, the parents' family recognition, the parents' disclosing in daily life and the parents' standing out to advocate social recognition. However, this is not the real everyday life for many parents involved in the "PFLAG China" community. Some parents are willing to disclose to their close relatives and friends but are not willing to participate in social advocacy. Whereas, some parents are willing to disclose to strangers in social advocacy but are reluctant to disclose to people around them in daily life. This chapter analyses the parents' family representing work in their daily life. This chapter has shown that the most significant background to representing is others' care about the children's marriage, which is a part of the parents' sociality and a source of pressure for parents. That is why people in the gay and lesbian community hold the opinion that "when children come out of the closet, parents step into the closet".

Based on the framework of representing family, this chapter has discussed how parents ponder their "coming out" issue. The pressure that parents face is other people's care about the children's marriage when their children reach marital age, and this drives parents to consider the representing work. For the parents disclosing children's lifestyle of same-sex love, disclosing entails doing boundary work that is divided into two layers. First, parents need to decide whether someone is the right person to disclose to. The right person usually includes the parents' siblings and close friends, being close in the parents' social life. Second, for the parents, their siblings and friends, their own nuclear family is the most important. On the one hand, parents understand that it is not so difficult for their gay and lesbian children to be accepted by their siblings and friends- as long as they are the children of "others' families". On the other hand, parents do build the understanding that as their own family is the most important, the others' potential rejection is bearable. This thinking is represented by parents' narratives as follows: "It is ok that we break off the social interaction if you do not accept this."

For some parents, disclosing is a way of seeking help from others. For parents who have accepted their children's lifestyle of same-sex love and rejecting marriage, the disclosing is seeking recognition from the kinship network and friends. Three kinds of cultural tools are identified in parents disclosing and demanding recognition. The first, is parents' exclusive authority over their own children, relying on making boundaries between their own family and the others, and requiring that the others should

recognise the gay and lesbian children who have been recognised by their parents. In this case, family recognition is the moral basis for recognition in the kinship network. Parental exclusive authority empowers and encourages parents, as it makes them realise their cultural advantage and authority. Rejection from others is possible, in which case, parents have the choice of breaking up the relationship and social interaction. The second cultural tool is the scientific knowledge normalising same-sex attraction. Several parents show their siblings and friends the booklet produced by PFLAG China when disclosing, which includes the "scientific" knowledge about sexual orientation and the stories of these parents. Just as its positive role in parents' acceptance, analysed in Chapter 4, the pertinent scientific knowledge can help parents make their children's identity and choice on lifestyle intelligible and legitimate. The third cultural tool is the children's reputation as "good children" among parents' siblings and friends. For them, good children's practices of same-sex love do not change the fact that they are understood as "good children". On the contrary, their reputation as "good children" makes the gay and lesbian lifestyle more understandable and legitimate. Helped by these three different cultural tools, parents are empowered and encouraged in disclosing and demanding recognition from their relatives and friends.

Disclosing is not the whole picture of parents' representing work. Many parents are able to disclose to siblings and close friends, but refrain from disclosing to others. Some parents even see their children's sexual orientation as their (nuclear) family

privacy, and decide not to tell anyone else. This makes parents represent their families in other ways, instead of simply disclosing that they are families with children practising same-sex love. Two kinds of motivation behind their choices are identified. First, parents feel that disclosing to many people is not necessary, as analysed above. Second, parents fear others' potential negative feedback, shaming and gossiping. Accordingly, parents use two ways to represent their families. First, parents construct their children as independent, influenced by modern lifestyle, maybe not interested in marriage or having offspring, thereby constructing themselves as parents respecting their children's choices. The second is representing their children as married, so that others would stopping ask about their children's marriage. The most dramatic practice is that some parents and their children organise a wedding feast together to release their parents' pressure.

In the previous chapters, this thesis has discussed the public goods PFLAG China provides to gay and lesbian individuals and their parents, how parents accept their children's lifestyle and how parents participate in their gay and lesbian children's life arrangements after acceptance. For its part, this chapter has discussed how these parents represent families in their daily life. Having finished the empirical analysis, this thesis will move on to the conclusion.

Conclusion

This study has not followed the framework of identity politics, which concentrates on victimhood and resistance. Gay and lesbian movements originally developing in Western contexts have often essentialised the package of "rights" defined as the articulation of the interest of the population with same-sex attraction. These movements have based themselves on the rhetoric of freedom, equality, human rights and even universal value. However, the binary understanding of sexuality and the sex-love-marriage package should not be seen as universal and self-evident facts. This study has moved beyond the thinking based on identity politics and argued that the expression of same-sex love is entangled with the understanding of marriage, intimacy, intergenerational relationship and more broadly, personhood. In Chapter 1, this thesis has discussed the homoeroticism across the historical change in the Chinese context. The existing academic works (Wu, 2012; Zheng, 2014; Zheng, 2015; Kang, 2009; Wei, 2012) emphasise that homoerotic relationships in imperial China were seen as personal behaviour rather than a social identity, and, in many cases, these relationships were organised around social hierarchy. Unlike these works which mainly focus on homoerotic relationships per se, this thesis has paid more attention to the understanding of marriage and its relationship with same-sex sexuality. In imperial China, homoeroticism was not a barrier hindering those who practised it from entering marriage. Marriage, the acknowledgeable double bond of sexuality and economy between two opposite-sex non-consanguineal individuals (Cai, 2001), is

always a social institution in many societies. The Han society (the main ethnic group in China) is just one of them. Same-sex sexuality in imperial China was about a person's desire or taste, but marriage was a life project of conjugal cooperation, raising offspring and a duty for the lineage. Same-sex sexuality/love was not a competitive counterpart for male-female conjugality. The understanding of marriage from the perspective of life cooperation and gaining adulthood is still strong in mainland China today. Thus, it is not surprising that the modality of same-sex sexuality is extra-nuptial sexuality or prior-nuptial sexuality. In this regard, the most problematic behaviour of the youth in the "PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) China" community is not their same-sex love, but taking same-sex love as the justification for rejecting marriage. Such a choice is new in the Chinese context, which is both connected to the transnational gay and lesbian movements and the understanding of love and marriage. Apart from evaluating their same-sex love positively, individuals who practise same-sex sexuality in the "PFLAG China" community understand marriage from the perspective of its being based on male-female love, which is now in competition with same-sex love. Thinking this way makes them inclined to reject marriage. Coming out is their description of the intimacy and emotional status they desire, at least at that moment. Thus, their family coming out is an announcement of their decision on marriage when they are facing their parents' expectation to get married. As a consequence, parents in the "PFLAG China" community find themselves in a situation that they have never expected and that they cannot understand.

Chapter 3 has discussed the history and practices of PFLAG China, an organisation that provides support for children desiring same-sex love and for their parents in the new family moment, which is the disclosure of children's life choices. Featuring its parent volunteers, PFLAG China has become a nationwide organisation with a focus on same-sex love issues in mainland China. It has two main tasks on its agenda: promoting family acceptance of children's lifestyle (same-sex love and rejecting marriage) and fostering social acceptance. In order to achieve social recognition, some parents tell their stories and advocate social acceptance in interviews via the media. Departing from the understanding based on identity politics which views this non-governmental organisation as the representative of the *tongxinglian* (same-sex love) population, this study finds that what PFLAG China is actually doing is governing the population practising same-sex sexuality and their families. How PFLAG China conducts governance and what public goods are provided have been the focus of Chapter 3. It advocates that individuals should "be their authentic selves bravely". Such narratives hold commitment to identity politics. However, though PFLAG China holds the narratives of identity, what PFLAG China is doing is family governance as it stresses that, the *tongxinglian* youth should insist on their life choices and communicate with their parents, rather than choose self-sacrifice. As for parents, PFLAG China provides them with peer support and a way to understand the gay and lesbian youth and their own children subsequently. Gay and lesbian young people are also empowered because through communicating with parents in the "PFLAG China"

community, these young people get to understand parents' perspectives better and see the possibility of parents accepting the lifestyle they aspire to.

For parents, the disclosure of children's "same-sex orientation" is the starting point for them to perceive themselves as parents with *tongxinglian* (gay and lesbian) children. For them, acceptance not only means acquiring knowledge about "sexual orientation", but more importantly, a self-work to renew their understanding of children, family and their selves as parents. The sociobiological accounting of sexual orientation helps parents resist the stigma constructed by early psychiatric knowledge, which views children's same-sex attraction as the result of a parenting failure. Then, it normalises *tongxinglian* children and justifies parents' acceptance since it is not a mental disease. In this process, parents actively make efforts to understand their children better. The narratives of "let children be their authentic themselves" is not just about identity, but also about respecting children's life choices. Thus, when communicating with their children, parents also reflect on their role as parents and on the parent-child relationship.

The existing academic research on same-sex sexuality issues in the Chinese context suggests that parents are the most significant problem. Some studies insist that natal families as the main source of oppression, leading children to self-sacrifice. This thesis has particularly investigated parents' thoughts. On the one hand, parents hope to be grandparents, which seems to be less likely when their children reject marriage. Only their children can achieve this dream for them. However, on the other hand,

parents actively pursue their children's happiness. In their understanding, marriage means happiness for their children as it provides care and procreation. However, for the gay and lesbian youth in the "PFLAG China" community, coming out to their parents is their announcement of two life choices: rejecting marriage and forming a same-sex partnership.

Through the intergenerational negotiation, parents not only acquire the scientific knowledge, but also, more importantly, accept their children's self-defined happiness. Rejecting marriage and forming a same-sex relationship are just the happiness defined by these young people in the "PFLAG China" community. During the process of acceptance, the narrative of supportive parenthood is a pivotal cultural tool, which underlines the happiness of children. Parents develop the understanding that marriage should only be formed for children's happiness; thus, they should not pressure children to get married for the parents' sake. Parents' acceptance means putting a stop to the pressure they have been exerting on their children to get married, whether or not they accept to meet their children's same-sex partners. However, that their children will not get married worries these parents greatly. Chapter 5 analyses the intergenerational negotiation based on the parents' worries. First, it saddens many parents that they may lose the chance of becoming grandparents, since many of them have only one child because of the one-child policy. Second, they feel worried about their children's care arrangements. These children will not get married and may be childless in a society where the marriage institution provides the primary care,

including the conjugal mutual support and the elder care provided by the filial generation. Parents hope that the same-sex partnership can provide support for their children. Thus, many of them acknowledge and recognise their child's same-sex partnership. Some of them even assist their child's same-sex partner in case the latter is communicating with their own parents concerning life choices. Another important point is offspring. Regarding this, there are two kinds of hope; first, parents want to become grandparents and, second, they want their children to enjoy the happiness of being parents. Contrary to the Western contexts, where gay and lesbian people's decision to have offspring is usually dealt with as the individual's decision or the same-sex couple's decision, in the context of mainland China, parents participate in the decision-making process whatever the consequence of the intergenerational negotiation.

This research has found that, for parents in China, children's marriage has two main layers of meaning. The first is the happiness of their children. How parents deal with this has been discussed in the Chapter 5. The second is about the family's reputation, as the children's marriage is important in the parents' life course and is part of their sociality. Thus, another dilemma the parents encounter is whether and how they can inform others that they are a family with a *tongxinglian* child. Chapter 6 analyses parents' thoughts and practices of family representation in daily life. The majority of parents in the "PFLAG China" community do not feel that it is necessary to tell everyone about their children's lifestyle of same-sex love. Two factors determine this

decision on the parents' part. The first one is boundary thinking, which views children's sexual identity and their life choices as their own familial issue. The other factor is their thoughts on family's reputation ("face"): the fear of prejudice, gossiping and discrimination. Therefore, usually, parents' siblings, some good friends, and sometimes the children's grandparents are the ones eligible to know their children's lifestyle. Boundary thinking also helps parents render the others' potential rejection as bearable, because "our own family" is the most important thing. Parents can rely on the authority of parenthood, scientific knowledge, the good characters of their children and sometimes the support from nieces or nephews to demand recognition in the kinship network. In the circumstances where parents are not inclined to disclose the information, they represent their children as independent ones not interested in marriage, or ones having already married. Usually parents and children would reach an agreement on this issue through their intergenerational negotiation.

Based on the analysis in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, the characteristics of the ideal sexual modality in the "PFLAG China" community can be concluded. Firstly, the child's same-sex partnership is acknowledged by many parents. The new identity, that is the child's same-sex partner, is introduced in the parents' perspectives and family sites. Thus, the child's partner, who has previously been viewed as the child's friend or schoolmate, has this new identity (the child's same-sex partner/lover). Secondly, some sort of economic ties can be formed based on the agreements of participants in the same-sex partnership. As discussed in Chapter 5, the official arrangement that

participants in the same-sex partnership can choose is the guardianship agreements regulated by the General Provisions of the Civil Law. Parents recognise this relationship with the hope that it can provide happiness and mutual care to their children. Besides, when the same-sex partnership is stable enough and one of the participants has a baby, the same-sex partner of the baby's parent can gain the identity of an adoptive parent, which is an arrangement of fictive consanguinity. Thirdly, such an ideal partnership is semi-social. Chapter 5 and 6 have shown that limited people could know of and intervene in this partnership, like the parents of one or two parties. Some other people may have the chance to know, like some of the participants' friends, cousins, grandparents, aunts, uncles and some friends of the parents. Then, the child's same-sex partnership can get further recognition in situations like the kinship network. Thus, it is a semi-social relationship. Such a sexual modality is a new phenomenon in the Chinese context. In many other cases, the same-sex relationship remains a private one without the recognition and intervention from the consanguineal groups, regardless of the degree of economic ties between the participants in the relationship. Such cases include when the partners do not come out to their parents, when the participants maintain their same-sex relationships as extra-nuptial sexuality and when the parents only accept their child's choice to stay unmarried but keep their child's same-sex relationship as a totally individual issue.

The definition of marriage adopted by this thesis hinges upon three key characteristics: (1) marriage is formed between a male and a female non-consanguineal individuals;

(2) marriage is a double bond of sexuality and economy; (3) marriage is recognised by the consanguineal groups and society (Cai, 2001). On these levels, a further comparison between the ideal partnership in the "PFLAG China" community and several other important sexual modalities can be represented as follows.

Table: comparation between the ideal same-sex partnership shared by PFLAG parents and other sexual modalities

	Participants	Social/private	Economic/non-economic	Sexual/non-sexual
Ideal same-sex partnerships in the "PFLAG China" community	Two same-sex non-consanguineal individuals	Semi-social	Economic	Sexual
Cohabitation in marriage societies	Two non-consanguineal Individuals	Private/semi-social, depending on participants' arrangements.	Economic	Sexual
Marriage	Two opposite-sex non-consanguineal individuals	Social	Economic	Sexual
"Same-sex marriage"	Two same-sex non-consanguineal individuals	Social	Economic	Sexual

As indicated in this thesis, marriage, as a social relationship, is acknowledged both by consanguineal groups and society. Since marriage is the blueprint in the design of "same-sex marriage", "same-sex marriage" is also a social relationship. However, as analysed above, the ideal and practical sexual modality from the parents' perspective is a semi- relationship acknowledged by selected and limited people; thus, this

relationship is not “same-sex marriage”, but a type of cohabitation. As shown in this table, just like marriage and “same-sex marriage”, cohabitation is simultaneously a sexual and an economic bond. However, the degree of the economic ties is set based on the participants’ agreement. Based on the discussion and comparison above, it can be concluded that the ideal model of a same-sex partnership that most parents aspire to, is a semi-social relationship with a certain degree of economic responsibility based on the participants’ negotiation and arrangements. Such a modality of a same-sex partnership is actually a particular type of cohabitation. For parents, a relationship like this is an ideal and practical arrangement, but whether their children can find a suitable partner, form such a relationship and how long it will take is another story.

Existing academic works’ (Chou, 2000; Wei, 2012; Kong, 2010) discussion of same-sex sexuality/love in the Chinese context either views parents as a source of pressure or analyses parents’ strategies, based on the perspectives of gay and lesbian people. Unlike these works, due to the development of PFLAG China, this thesis has had the chance to discuss the experiences of parents who have accepted their children’s lifestyle of rejecting marriage and practising same-sex love in the Chinese context. Through this empirical study, this thesis has found that during the contemporary social change, parents are actively exploring a happy family life. The discussion based on the context of the United States understands queer intimacy as detachment from the families of origin, or, extended families. Weston’s fieldwork in the gay and lesbian community (mainly white middle class) in San Francisco Bay

Area conducted in the 1980s and the 1990s, shows that influenced by the stigma of same-sex sexuality and the desire for autonomy, rejection was the attitude of both the people practising same-sex sexuality and their families (Weston, 1997). Then, queer people rejected marriage and organised intimacies outside their natal families. This theoretical conclusion also implies that the modality of same-sex sexuality is largely a private modality, without the recognition and intervention from participants' consanguineal groups. However, the studies conducted in other contexts find that natal families are still important in queer intimacy. Based on research in the Irish context, Ryan-Flood (2014) argues that the increasing acceptance of same-sex sexuality and cultural emphasis on natal families make queer people maintain close relationships with their families of origin in some cultural communities, and develops the model of "families we keep" to increase the understanding of queer intimacy. This thesis reveals two aspects in parents' family practices, adding more evidence for the "families we keep" model. The first is the parents and children's efforts in achieving happiness for the whole family in their intergenerational negotiation. The second is the parents' practice of acknowledging their child's same-sex partnership, making it a semi-social modality of sexuality. Studies on parents' experiences in the Western contexts mainly discuss how parents accept their children's same-sex attraction/orientation per se (Grafsky, 2014; Johnson and Benson, 2014; Fields, 2001; Willoughby et al., 2008; Carnelley et al., 2011; Phillips and Ancis, 2008), and parents' experiences and roles in social movements (Bertone, 2013; Broad et al., 2004; Broad et al., 2008; Broad, 2011; Johnson and Best, 2012). Very few studies conducted in the

United States (Fields, 2001) and Italy (Bertone, 2013) list parents' attitudes to children's life arrangements, including safe sex, gender conformity and one-to-one stable relationships, but view them as constraints or the "heteronormativity". This thesis has contributed to previous studies by analysing parents' experiences in the "PFLAG China" community and leads to the conclusion that these parents not only accept their children's lifestyle of same-sex love, but also actively participate in their children's life arrangements through an intensive intergenerational negotiation. The disclosure of children's lifestyle and family acceptance does not mean the end of the story but the beginning of a new family negotiation, regardless of the consequences.

The practices of parents in the "PFLAG China" community are the lively experiences of exploring how to be parents in a changing society, which provide several important implications. First, parents can learn and acquire more knowledge to understand their children's life choices since, in a changing society, the filial generation is equipped with more knowledge than their parents. The parents in the "PFLAG China" community actually accept cultural back-feeding from their children, so that they have the chance to negotiate with their children on life arrangements. Second, parents can conduct the intergenerational negotiation, where the children's self-defined happiness matters. Parents in the "PFLAG China" community are not too conservative to accept the idea that same-sex love is normal. Yet, they are still worried about their children's life. In such a context, parents and children are conducting their intergenerational negotiation based on the parents' worries, as shown in this thesis. For their part,

parents respect their children's self-defined happiness and negotiate with them, rather than impose the happiness from their own perspective on their children. Agreement, tension, conflict and ambivalence coexist in the intergenerational negotiation. In many cases, the parents' expectation cannot come true, but negotiation per se is meaningful because it keeps parents and children connected. During the intergenerational negotiation, parents also have the chance to reflect on life arrangements in contemporary society and reflect on whether they should keep acting as anxious and authoritative parents. However, there is still a need to stress that parents' anxiety is closely related to their feeling of economic insecurity in a developing country, as shown in Chapter 5. Parents in the "PFLAG China" community provide experiences of dealing with intergenerational ambivalence. The solution they find in this journey is the one called "emancipation" in Lüscher (2002; 2003)'s typology. In the emancipation model, parents and children maintain a close relationship, emotional mutual support and intergenerational solidarity and, above all, they achieve the innovation of norm and lifestyle. In a changing society, both parents and children benefit from this solution of intergenerational ambivalence.

Influenced by structural functionalism, the theory of family modernisation (Goode, 1963) sees the popularisation of conjugal family and the emphasis on the individual as the results of industrialisation. However, the empirical works have already shown that kinship networks are still important in the western contexts in terms of providing support (Ben-Amos, 2000). The theory of family modernisation also ignores people's

reflection and efforts to pursue family happiness across the historical changes. The stress on the parent-child relationship and the increasing emphasis on the individuals' happiness does not necessarily mean that the Chinese society would transform into a society totally based on individuals' self-determination. The PFLAG China's family governance accords with the idea of descending familism concluded by Yan (2016). Traditional familism prioritises the family interest above the interest of individuals (Yan, 2017b; Banfield, 1967). While, descending familism emphasises children's happiness and views it as a family project and parents' pursuit (Yan, 2016; Yan, 2018). Among the young generation in contemporary China, a new understanding of "filial piety" in daily life has emerged, being "caring and supportive but not obedient" (Yan, 2016: 250). When parents do not demand obedience and submission from their adult children any longer, descending familism naturally emerges, where the children's happiness is the parents' meaningful pursuit (Yan, 2016; Yan, 2011). The "PFLAG China" community takes it as an effective cultural tool in its family governance to help parents immersed in an unsettled life and intergenerational ambivalence. Since family is of high importance in people's moral and emotional life and provides protection for individuals, such an understanding of the parent-child relationship has the potential to overcome the binary opposition between values emphasising family and those emphasising individuals, and to provide effective tools for parenting in post-revolutionary China, and more broadly, in an uncertain future.

This thesis is the first PhD-scale dissertation systemically analysing the experiences of parents with gay and lesbian children in contemporary mainland China. Though this thesis argues that it is discussing its topic in the context of "China", the majority of cases analysed are from the Han group (the major ethnic group in China). China is a country with thirty-four provincial-level administrative regions and fifty-six ethnic groups, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau included. Thus, the different situations still need more discussion in the future. During the fieldwork, I realised that there were some differences between the behaviours and involvement of fathers and that of mothers. For instance, mothers seem to be more emotionally expressive and more likely to become actively involved in PFLAG China. However, as this thesis has focused on the family intergenerational relationship and has emphasised the commonality among parents in the parenting and family practices, it has not dealt with the difference between fathers and mothers. It is suggested that future academic studies pay attention to this issue. In addition to the experiences of parents, those of grandparents are worthy of being analysed. As shown in Chapter 4, in some limited cases involving grandparents, grandparents are seemingly more open concerning their grandchildren's life choices of forming same-sex love and rejecting marriage. However, the data collected is not enough to discuss grandparents' thinking in this thesis. Discussing the grandparents' role and experiences in families with children practising same-sex love and rejecting marriage can be another contribution to the existing research in this area.

To sum up, based on the experiences of parents in the "PFLAG China" community, this thesis has made a contribution to the discussion of how parents can deal with the intergenerational ambivalence rooted in social change and maintain a harmonious parent-child relationship. Parents in the "PFLAG China" community are "cultural heroes". They provide experiences of how parents can face a new situation where children choose same-sex love, and, reject marriage. More broadly, these parents provide experiences of how parents can work together with their children in an uncertain future.

Finally, to conclude this thesis, it is worth quoting FEI Xiaotong's (or FEI Hsiao-Tung's) discussion of the "cultural hero" which can be applied here to highlight the experiences and efforts of parents in the "PFLAG China" community:

> During the transitional period, people will feel perplexed and at a loss. They will be full of tension, hesitant and uneasy. It is at this juncture that a type of person whom we might call "a cultural hero" (wenhua yingxiong) most likely appears. The person is able to provide the way to organize new procedures and to gain people's trust. (Fei, 1992[1947]: 129)

Bibliography

Acosta KL (2011) The language of (in) visibility: Using in-between spaces as a vehicle for empowerment in the family. *Journal of Homosexuality* 58(6-7): 883-900.

Adams TE (2010) Paradoxes of sexuality, gay identity, and the closet. *Symbolic Interaction* 33(2): 234-256.

Afshar H, Maynard M, Franks M, et al. (2002) Issues of ethnicity in researching older women. *Growing older: the ESRC research programme on extending quality of life*.(4): 8-9.

Ah-Qiang (2016) *同志走进异性婚姻，都是别人的错吗？[For Entering Opposite-sex Marriage, Is that All Others' Faults?]*. Available at: http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_482404000102waex.html.

Ali M-UA (2017) Un-Mapping Gay Imperialism: A Postcolonial Approach to Sexual Orientation-Based Development. *Reconsidering Development* 5(1).

Allan G (2005) Boundaries of Friendship. In: McKie L and Cunningham-Burley S (eds) *Families in Society: Boundaries and Relationships*. Great Britain: The Policy Press, pp.227-240.

Almack K (2008) Display Work:Lesbian Parent Couples and their Families of Origin Negotiating New Kin Relationships. *Sociology* 42(6): 1183-1199.

Altman D (1997) Global gaze/global gays. *GLQ: A journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 3(4): 417-436.

Arm JR, Horne SG and Levitt HM (2009) Negotiating connection to GLBT experience: Family members' experience of anti-GLBT movements and policies. *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 56(1): 82-96.

Arpino B, Bordone V and Balbo N (2018) Grandparenting, education and subjective well-being of older Europeans. *European journal of ageing* 15(3): 251.

Baiocco R, Fontanesi L, Santamaria F, et al. (2015) Negative Parental Responses to Coming Out and Family Functioning in a Sample of Lesbian and Gay Young Adults. *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 24(5): 1490-1500.

Baker HD (1979) *Chinese Family and Kinship.* Macmillan Press.

Bancroft A, Wilson S, Cunningham-Burley S, et al. (2005) Children Managing Parental Drug and Alcohol Misuse: Challenging Parent–Child Boundaries. In: McKie L and Cunningham-Burley S (eds) *Families in Society: Boundaries and Relationships*. Great Britain: The Policy Press, pp.111-126.

Banfield EC (1967) *The moral basis of a backward society.* New York: Free Press.

Bao H (2018) *Queer comrades : Gay Identity and Tongzhi Activism in Postsocialist China.* Copenhagen , Denmark: Nias Press.

Barlow T (1994) Theorizing woman: Funu, guojia, jiating. In: Zito A and Barlow TE (eds) *Body, subject and power in*

China. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Barth F (2000) Boundries and Connections. In: Cohen AP (ed) *Signifying identities: Anthropological perspectives on boundaries and contested values*. London and New York: Psychology Press.

Beccalossi C (2011) *Female sexual inversion: same-sex desires in Italian and British sexology, c. 1870-1920.* Springer.

Beck U and Beck-Gernsheim E (1995) *The normal chaos of love.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beeler J and DiProva V (1999) Family Adjustment Following Disclosure of Homosexuality by a Member: Themes Discerned in Narrative Accounts. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* 25(4): 443-459.

Bell D (1997) Defining marriage and legitimacy. *Current Anthropology* 38(2): 237-253.

Ben-Amos IK (2000) Gifts and favors: Informal support in early modern England. *The Journal of Modern History* 72(2): 295-338.

Ben-Ari A (1995) The Discovery that an Offspring Is Gay: Parents', Gay Men's, and Lesbians' Perspectives. *Journal of Homosexuality* 30(1): 89-112.

Bernstein BE (1990) Attitudes and Issues of Parents of Gay Men and Lesbians and Implications for Therapy. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Psychotherapy* 1(3): 37-53.

Berry C (2001) Asian values, family values: film, video, and lesbian and gay identities. *Journal of Homosexuality* 40(3-4): 211-231.

Bertone C (2013) Citizenship across generations: Struggles around heteronormativities. *Citizenship Studies* 17(8): 985-999.

Bertone C and Franchi M (2014) Suffering As the Path to Acceptance: Parents of Gay and Lesbian Young People Negotiating Catholicism in Italy. *Journal of GLBT family studies* 10(1-2): 58-78.

Bih H-D (2003) 男同性戀與父母：現身的考量、策略、時機與後果[Gay Men and Their Parents: Decisions, Strategies, and Consequences of Coming Out] *女學學誌—性別與婦女研究* 15: 37-78.

Blumer H (1986) *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method.* University of California Press.

Borgerson JL, Schroeder JE, Blomberg B, et al. (2006) The Gay Family in the Ad: Consumer Responses to Non-traditional Families in Marketing Communications. *Journal of Marketing Management* 22(9-10): 955-978.

Bos HM, Van Balen F and Van den Boom DC (2003) Planned lesbian families: Their desire and motivation to have children. *Human reproduction* 18(10): 2216-2224.

Boss P and Greenberg J (1984) Family boundary ambiguity: A new variable in family stress theory. *Family process* 23(4): 535-546.

Boss PG (1980) Normative family stress: Family boundary changes across the life-span. *Family relations*. 445-450.

Boswell J (1980) *Christianity, social tolerance, and homosexuality.* University of Chicago Press Chicago.

Brainer A (2017) Mothering Gender and Sexually Nonconforming Children in Taiwan. 38(7): 921-947.

Brainer A (2018) New Identities or New Intimacies? Rethinking 'Coming Out'in Taiwan through Cross-Generational Ethnography. *Sexualities* 21(5-6): 914-931.

Brainer A (2019) *Queer Kinship and Family Change in Taiwan.* Rutgers University Press.

Brannen J (2005) Time and the negotiation of work–family boundaries: Autonomy or illusion? *Time & Society* 14(1): 113-131.

Broad KL (2002) Social Movement Selves. *Sociological Perspectives* 45(3): 317-336.

Broad KL (2011) Coming out for parents, families and friends of lesbians and gays: From support group grieving to love advocacy. *Sexualities* 14(4): 399-415.

Broad KL, Alden H, Berkowitz D, et al. (2008) Activist parenting and GLBTQ families. *Journal of GLBT family studies* 4(4): 499-520.

Broad KL, Crawley SL and Foley L (2004) Doing "real family values": The interpretive practice of families in the GLBT movement. *Sociological Quarterly* 45(3): 509-527.

Bruer JT (1999) *The myth of the first three years: A new understanding of early brain development and lifelong learning.* Simon and Schuster.

Butler AH and Astbury G (2008) The use of defence mechanisms as precursors to coming out in post-apartheid South Africa: a gay and lesbian youth perspective. *Journal of Homosexuality* 55(2): 223-244.

Butler J (1999[1990]) *Gender trouble : feminism and the subversion of identity.* New York and London: Routledge.

Cai H (2001) *A society without fathers or husbands : the Na of China.* New York: Zone Books.

Cai H (2008) *L'homme pensé par l'homme.* Paris: Presses universitaires de France.

Cappellato V and Mangarella T (2014) Sexual Citizenship in Private and Public Space: Parents of Gay Men and Lesbians Discuss Their Experiences of Pride Parades. *Journal of GLBT family studies* 10(1-2): 211-230.

Carnelley KB, Hepper EG, Hicks C, et al. (2011) Perceived parental reactions to coming out, attachment, and romantic relationship views. *Attachment & Human Development* 13(3): 217-236.

Cavalcante A (2015) Anxious Displacements:The Representation of Gay Parenting on Modern Family and The New Normal and the Management of Cultural Anxiety. *Television & New Media* 16(5): 454-471.

Chabot JM and Ames BD (2004) "It wasn't 'let's get pregnant and go do it':" Decision Making in Lesbian Couples Planning Motherhood via Donor Insemination. *Family relations* 53(4): 348-356.

Chambers D (2001) *Representing the family.* Sage.

Chang K-c (2004) *男同志父母壓力來源、調適歷程與社會支持之研究[A Study on Stressors, Adaptive Process and Social Supports]*. Shu-Te University.

Cheal D (2002) *Sociology of family life.* Palgrave New York.

Chen J (2013) *现代中国同性恋爱话语译介及小说文本解读[The Translation and Novels Themed Homosexuality in Modern China]*. 成都: 西南交通大学出版社.

Chen K-C (2008) *從「櫃父母」到「同運」行動者：同志父母的出櫃歷程*. National Kaohsiung Normal University, Kaohsiung.

Cherlin AJ (2004) The deinstitutionalization of American marriage. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66(4): 848-861.

Chesley N (2005) Blurring boundaries? Linking technology use, spillover, individual distress, and family satisfaction. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67(5): 1237-1248.

Chou W-s (1996) *北京同志故事[The Stories of Tongzhi in Beijing]*. 香港: 香港同志研究社.

Chou W-S (2000) *Tongzhi: Politics of same-sex eroticism in Chinese societies.* Routledge.

Chow N (2001) The practice of filial piety among the Chinese in Hong Kong. In: Chi I, Chappell NL and Lubben J (eds) *Elderly Chinese in Pacific Rim countries: Social support and integration*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Chua LJ and Hildebrandt T (2014) From health crisis to rights advocacy? HIV/AIDS and gay activism in China and Singapore. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 25(6): 1583-1605.

Clark T (2008) We're Over-Researched Here!' Exploring Accounts of Research Fatigue within Qualitative Research Engagements. *Sociology* 42(5): 953-970.

Congrong Mama (2018) *我有权替孩子预设恋爱门槛吗？：一位同志妈妈这样说*. Available at: https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/5jMz1_BSqRhUBAo94OWNvw.

Connidis IA and McMullin JA (2002) Sociological ambivalence and family ties: A critical perspective. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 64(3): 558-567.

Cooley CH (1902) Looking-glass self. *The production of reality: Essays and readings on social interaction* 6.

Cresswell J (2009) *The Insect that Stole Butter?: Oxford Dictionary of Word Origins.* Oxford University Press.

Cunningham-Burley S, Backett-Milburn K and Kemmer D (2005) Balancing Work and Family Life: Mothers' Views. In: McKie K and Cunningham-Burley S (eds) *Families in Society: Boundaries and relationships*. Great Britain: The Policy Press, pp.23-38.

D'Andrade RG (1982) Cultural Meaning Systems. In: Adams RM, Smelser NJ and Treiman DJ (eds) *Behavioral and Social Science Research: A National Resource, Part II*. Washington DC: National Academy Press, pp.197-236.

Decena CU (2011) *Tacit subjects: Belonging and same-sex desire among Dominican immigrant men.* Duke University Press.

Dempsey D (2013) Surrogacy, gay male couples and the significance of biogenetic paternity. *New Genetics and Society* 32(1): 37-53.

Diamant NJ (2000) *Revolutionizing the family: Politics, love, and divorce in urban and rural China, 1949–1968.* University of California Press.

Dikötter F (1997) Crime and Punishment in Post-Liberation China: The Prisoners of a Beijing Gaol in the 1950s. *The China Quarterly*.(149): 147-159.

Drescher J (2015) Out of DSM: depathologizing homosexuality. *Behavioral Sciences* 5(4): 565-575.

Duggan L (2003) *The Twilight of Equality?: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy.* Beacon Press.

Engebretsen E (2017) Under pressure: Lesbian–gay contract marriages and their patriarchal bargains. In: Santos G and Harrell S (eds) *Transforming patriarchy: Chinese families in the 21st century*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, pp.163-181.

Engebretsen EL (2013) *Queer women in urban China: An ethnography.* Routledge.

Engebretsen EL (2015) Of Pride and Visibility: The Contingent Politics of Queer Grassroots Activism in China. In: Engebretsen EL and Schroeder WF (eds) *Queer/Tongzhi China: New perspectives on research, activism and media cultures*. Nias Press.

Evans H (1997) *Women and sexuality in China : dominant discourses of female sexuality and gender since 1949.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Faircloth C (2009) Mothering as Identity-Work: Long-Term Breastfeeding and Intensive Motherhood. *Anthropology News* 50(2): 15-17.

Faircloth C and Murray M (2015) Parenting: Kinship, expertise, and anxiety. *Journal of Family Issues* 36(9): 1115-1129.

Faricloth C, Hoffman DM and Layne LL (2013) Introduction. In: Faircloth C, Hoffman DM and Layne LL (eds) *Parenting in Global Perspective:: Negotiating ideologies of kinship, self and politics*. London and New York: Routledge.

Fei H-t (1992[1947]) *From the Soil, The foundations of Chinese society: a translation of Fei Xiaotong's Xiangtu Zhongguo.* Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: Univerisy of California Press.

Fei H-tX (2010[1939]) *Peasant Life in China- A Field Study of Country Life in the Yangtze Valley.* Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

Fei X (1983) 家庭结构变动中的老年赡养问题——再论中国家庭结构的变动[The elder care in the change of family structure--rethinking the change of family structre in China]. *北京大学学报: 哲学社会科学版[Journal of Peking Unviersity: Philosophy and Social Sciences]* 3: 6-15.

Feuchtwang S (2015) Social egoism and individualism. *Journal of China in Comparative Perspective* 1(1): 143-160.

Fields J (2001) Normal queers: straight parents respond to their Children's “coming out”. *Symbolic Interaction* 24(2): 165-167.

Finch J (2007) Displaying families. *Sociology* 41(1): 65-81.

Fong VL (2002) China's one-child policy and the empowerment of urban daughters. *American Anthropologist* 104(4): 1098-1109.

Fong VL (2004) *Only hope: Coming of age under China's one-child policy.* Stanford University Press.

Foucault M (1988) Technologies of the Self. In: Martin LH, Gutman H and Hutton PH (eds) *Technologies of the Self : A Seminar with Michel Foucault*. the United States of America: The University of Massachusetts Press, pp.16-49.

Frone MR, Russell M and Cooper ML (1992) Prevalence of work-family conflict: Are work and family boundaries asymmetrically permeable? *Journal of organizational behavior* 13(7): 723-729.

Fu X (2012) *空间·文化·表演: 东北 A 市男同性恋群体的人类学观察 [Space·Culture·performance: an anthropological research on male homosexual people in city A in northeast China].* 北京: 光明日报出版社.

Geertz C (1973) *The interpretation of cultures.* Basic books.

Geertz C (1983) *Local knowledge: further essays in interpretive anthropology.* New York: Basic Books.

Gennep Av (1977) *The Rites of Passage.* London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Giddens A (1992) *The transformation of intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies.* Stanford University Press.

Gilligan M, Suitor JJ, Feld S, et al. (2015) Do positive feelings hurt? Disaggregating positive and negative components of intergenerational ambivalence. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 77(1): 261-276.

Goffman E (1955) On face-work: An analysis of ritual elements in social interaction. *Psychiatry* 18(3): 213-231.

Goffman E (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life.* Garden City, N.Y. : Doubleday.

Goffman E (1963) Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity. London: Penguin Books.

Goldberg AE, Downing JB and Moyer AM (2012) Why parenthood, and why now? Gay men's motivations for pursuing parenthood. *Family relations* 61(1): 157-174.

Gonzalez KA, Rostosky SS, Odom RD, et al. (2013) The Positive Aspects of Being the Parent of an LGBTQ Child. *Family process* 52(2): 325-337.

Goode WJ (1963) *World revolution and family patterns.* New York: Free Press of Flencoe.

Goodrich KM (2009) Mom and Dad Come Out: The Process of Identifying as a Heterosexual Parent with a Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual Child. *Journal of LGBTQ Issues in Counseling* 3(1): 37-61.

Göransson K (2009) *The binding tie: Chinese intergenerational relations in modern Singapore.* University of Hawaii Press.

Gough EK (1959) The Nayars and the definition of marriage. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 89(1): 23-34.

Grafsky EL (2014) Becoming the parent of a GLB son or daughter. *Journal of GLBT family studies* 10(1-2): 36-57.

Guo L (2018) Tongzhi Solidarity under Chinese Authoritarian Government: A Case Study of the Beijing Tongzhi Center. *Komaba Journal of Asian Studies* 14: 75-105.

Guo X (2007) *中国法视野下的同性恋[Homosexuality in the vision of Chinese Law]*. 知识产权出版社.

Guo Y (2011) *中国大陆女同性恋群体组织化历程*. Available at: http://www.chinadevelopmentbrief.org.cn/news-13418.html.

Han E and O'Mahoney J (2014) British colonialism and the criminalization of homosexuality. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 27(2): 268-288.

Hildebrandt T (2012) Development and division: The effect of transnational linkages and local politics on LGBT activism in China. *Journal of Contemporary China* 21(77): 845-862.

Ho JC-j (2017a) *性别治理[Gender governance in Taiwan]*. 國立中央大學性/別研究室.

Ho JC-j (2017b) *重新思考"赋权"[Rethinking Empowerment]*. Available at: http://sex.ncu.edu.tw/jo_article/2017/06/%E9%87%8D%E6%96%B0%E6%80%9D%E8%80%83%E3%80%8C%E8%B3%A6%E6%AC%8A%E3%80%8D/.

Ho LWW (2009) *Gay and lesbian subculture in urban China.* Routledge.

Ho PS-y (1999) Developing a Social Constructionist Therapy Approach for Gay Men and Their Families in Hong Kong. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services* 9(4): 69-97.

Hobsbawm E (1996) Identity politics and the left. *new left review*. 38-47.

Hoffman DM (2013) Power Struggles: The Paradoxes of Emotion and Control among Child-Centered Mothers in the Privileged United States. *Ethos* 41(1): 75-97.

Hollan D (1997) The relevance of person-centered ethnography to cross-cultural psychiatry. *Transcultural psychiatry* 34(2): 219-234.

Hu HC (1944) The Chinese concepts of "face". *American Anthropologist* 46(1): 45-64.

Hu Z and Peng X (2012) 家庭变迁背景下的中国家庭政策[China's Family Policies in the Context of Family Changes]. *人口研究[Population Research]* 36(2): 3-10.

Huang J (2006) 身体, 历史, 国家——近代中国的身体形成 (1895—1937)[History, Body, and the State: the Construction of Body in Modern China(1895--1937)]. 北京[Beijng]: 新星出版社.

Jamieson L (1998) *Intimacy : personal relationships in modern societies.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Jiang L (2011) 留守儿童问题的建构与研究反思[A Reflection of Construction and Research on Left-behind Children]. *人文杂志*.(3): 178-183.

Jing J (2000) Feeding China's little emperors: Food, children, and social change. Stanford University Press.

Johnson JL and Best AL (2012) Radical Normals: The Moral Career of Straight Parents as Public Advocates for Their Gay Children. *Symbolic Interaction* 35(3): 321-339.

Johnson SL and Benson KE (2014) "It's always the mother's fault": Secondary stigma of mothering a transgender child. *Journal of GLBT family studies* 10(1-2): 124-144.

Kam LYL (2013) *Shanghai lalas: Female tongzhi communities and politics in urban China.* Hong Kong University Press.

Kam LYL (2015) Coming home, coming out: Doing fieldwork in an unfamiliar homeland. In: Engebretsen EL and Schroeder WF (eds) *Queer/Tongzhi China: New perspectives on research, activism, and media cultures*. NIAS Press, pp.179-191.

Kang W (2009) *Obsession: male same-sex relations in China, 1900-1950.* Hong Kong University Press.

Kefalas MJ, Furstenberg FF, Carr PJ, et al. (2011) "Marriage is more than being together": The meaning of marriage for young adults. *Journal of Family Issues* 32(7): 845-875.

Kim K, Cheng Y-P, Zarit SH, et al. (2015) Relationships Between Adults and Parents in Asia. *Successful Aging: Asian Perspective*. New York: Springer, pp.101-122.

King Y-C (2006) "面"、"耻"与中国人行为之分析[Mian, Shame and the Analysis of Chinese Behaviours]. *中国社会心理学评论*.(01): 48-64.

Kivnick HQ (1982) Grandparenthood: An overview of meaning and mental health. *The Gerontologist* 22(1): 59-66.

Kleinman S (1996) *Opposing ambitions: Gender and identity in an alternative organization.* University of Chicago Press.

Kong TS (2010) *Chinese male homosexualities: memba, tongzhi and golden boy.* Routledge.

Kübler-Ross E (1969) *On Death and Dying.* New York: MacMillan.

Lamont M and Molnár V (2002) The study of boundaries in the social sciences. *Annual review of sociology* 28(1): 167-195.

Lämsä T, Jokinen K, Rönkä A, et al. (2017) Childhood reproduced: images of childhood represented in children's daily lives in home and day-care settings. *Journal of Family Studies* 23(2): 161-179.

Leach ER (1955) 199. Polyandry, Inheritance and the Definition of Marriage. *Man* 55: 182-186.

Lee E (2013) Afterword. In: Faircloth C, Hoffman DM and Layne LL (eds) *Parenting in Global Perspective: Negotiating ideologies of kinship, self and politics*. London and New York: Routledge.

Lee LO-f (1983) Literary Trends I: The Quest for Modernity, 1895-1927. In: Fairbank JK (ed) *The Cambridge History of China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.451-504.

Lee P-H (2016) LGBT rights versus Asian values: de/re-constructing the universality of human rights. *The International Journal of Human Rights* 20(7): 978-992.
Lévi-Strauss C (1969) *The elementary structures of kinship.* Beacon Press.
Lévi-Strauss C (1985) The View From Afar. Oxford: Blackwell.
Lewin E (1993) *Lesbian mothers: Accounts of gender in American culture.* Cornell University Press.
Li Y (1998) *同性恋亚文化[Homosexual Subculture]*. 北京: 今日中国出版社.
Li Y (2014) *新中国性话语研究[A Study on the Sexual Discourses of New China]*. 上海: 上海社会科学院出版社.
Lu X (2014) *从话语再现到身份抗争: 大众媒介与中国同性恋社群的互动研究[From Discourse Representation to Identity Contention: A Study of the Interaction between Mass Media and the Chinese Gay Community]*. 复旦大学.
Luo J (2013) *法院报告揭"同妻"离婚之难[Court Report Uncover Tongqi's Difficulities on Divorce]*. Available at: http://china.caixin.com/2013-01-12/100481988.html.
Lüscher K (2002) Intergenerational ambivalence: Further steps in theory and research. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 64(3): 585-593.
Lüscher K (2003) Conceptualizing and uncovering intergenerational ambivalence. *BerardoF. M.(Ed.), Intergenerational Ambivalences: New Perspectives on Parent-Child Relations in Later Life*. 23-62.
Lüscher K and Pillemer K (1998) Intergenerational ambivalence: A new approach to the study of parent-child relations in later life. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 413-425.
Mackie V (2017) Rethinking sexual citizenship: Asia-Pacific perspectives. *Sexualities* 20(1-2): 143-158.
MacKinnon CA (1989) *Toward a feminist theory of the state.* Harvard University Press.
Manting D (1996) The changing meaning of cohabitation and marriage. *European sociological review* 12(1): 53-65.
Marcus E (2002) *Making gay history: The half-century fight for lesbian and gay equal rights.* Perennial New York.
Marshall MN (1996) Sampling for qualitative research. *Family practice* 13(6): 522-526.
Martin AD and Hetrick ES (1988) The Stigmatization of the Gay and Lesbian Adolescent. *Journal of Homosexuality* 15(1-2): 163-183.
Martin KA, Hutson DJ, Kazyak E, et al. (2010) Advice When Children Come Out: The Cultural "Tool Kits" of Parents. 31(7): 960-991.
Mead GH (1913) The social self. *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 10(14): 374-380.
Mead M (1969) The Generation Gap. *Science* 164(3876): 135.
Mills CW (2000) *The sociological imagination.* Oxford University Press.

Milne AJM (1986) *Human rights and human diversity: an essay in the philosophy of human rights.* Sterling Publishing Company, Inc.

Moreno-Tabarez U, Chávez KR, Leonelli SJ, et al. (2014) Queer politics in China: A conversation with "Western" activists working in Beijing. *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking* 1(3): 109-132.

Morgan D (2011a) *Rethinking family practices.* Springer.

Morgan DH (2011b) Locating 'family practices'. *Sociological research online* 16(4): 1-9.

Morgan DHJ (1996) *Family connections : an introduction to family studies.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Murphy DA (2013) The desire for parenthood: Gay men choosing to become parents through surrogacy. *Journal of Family Issues* 34(8): 1104-1124.

Murphy TF (1984) Freud reconsidered: Bisexuality, homosexuality, and moral judgement. *Journal of Homosexuality* 9(2-3): 65-77.

Murry H (2010) *Not In This Family: Gays and the Meaning of Kinship in Postwar North America.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Myers MF (1982) Counseling the Parents of Young Homosexual Male Patients. *Journal of Homosexuality* 7(2-3): 131-143.

Nandy A (1989) *Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Neff K (2003) Self-compassion: An alternative conceptualization of a healthy attitude toward oneself. *Self and identity* 2(2): 85-101.

Neff KD (2011) Self-compassion, self-esteem, and well-being. *Social and personality psychology compass* 5(1): 1-12.

Neisser U (1988) Five kinds of self-knowledge. *Philosophical psychology* 1(1): 35-59.

Neuberger FS and Haberkern K (2014) Structured ambivalence in grandchild care and the quality of life among European grandparents. *European journal of ageing* 11(2): 171-181.

Ning Y (2013) 现代进步观以及自满：新道德主义与公民社会[Modern Progressism and Its Self-conceit: New Moralism and Civil Society]. In: Ning Y-B (ed) *新道德主义：两岸三地性/别寻思[New Moralism]*. 桃园: 国立中央大学性/别研究室, pp.1-11.

Patton MQ (2002) Qualitative research and evaluation methods(3rd ed.). Sage.

Phelan P, Davidson AL and Cao HT (1991) Students' multiple worlds: Negotiating the boundaries of family, peer, and school cultures. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 22(3): 224-250.

Phillips MJ and Ancis JR (2008) The process of identity development as the parent of a lesbian or gay male. *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling* 2(2): 126-158.

Plummer K (1989) Lesbian and Gay Youth in England. *Journal of Homosexuality* 17(3-4): 195-224.

Plummer K (2003) *Intimate citizenship：Private decisions and public dialogues.* University of Washington Press.

Puar J (2007) *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times.* Durham and London: Duke University Press.
Quinn N (2006) The self. *Anthropological Theory* 6(3): 362-384.
Reed E (2018) The Heterogeneity of Family: Responses to Representational Invisibility by LGBTQ Parents. *Journal of Family Issues* 39(18): 4204-4225.
Richardson D (2017) Rethinking sexual citizenship. *Sociology* 51(2): 208-224.
Robinson P (1999) Freud and homosexuality. *Constellations* 6(1): 80-84.
Robinson PA (1973) Havelock Ellis and modern sexual theory. *Salmagundi*.(21): 27-62.
Rofel L (2007) *Desiring China: Experiments in Neoliberalism,Sexuality, and Public.* Duke University Press Books.
Roseneil S (2005) Living and Loving Beyond the Boundaries of the Heteronorm: Personal Relationships in the 21st Century. In: McKie L and Cunningham-Burley S (eds) *Families in Society: Boundaries and Relationships*. Great Britain: The Policy Press, pp.241-258.
Ruse M (1981) Medicine as social science: The case of Freud on homosexuality. *The Journal of medicine and philosophy* 6(4): 361-386.
Ryan-Flood R (2009) *Lesbian motherhood: Gender, families and sexual citizenship.* Springer.
Ryan-Flood R (2014) Staying Connected: Irish lesbian and gay narratives of family. *The'Irish'Family*. Routledge, pp.187-201.
Saltzburg S (2004) Learning that an adolescent child is gay or lesbian: the parent experience. *Social work* 49(1): 109-118.
Sang T-lD (2003) *The emerging lesbian: Female same-sex desire in modern China.* University of Chicago Press.
Savin-Williams RC (2001) *Mom, Dad. I'm Gay: How Families Negotiate Coming Out.* Washington DC: American Psychological Association.
Savin-Williams RC and Dubé EM (1998) Parental Reactions to Their Child's Disclosure of a Gay/Lesbian Identity. *Family relations* 47(1): 7-13.
Savin-Williams RC and Ream GL (2003) Sex variations in the disclosure to parents of same-sex attractions. *J Fam Psychol* 17(3): 429-438.
Scott G and Innes S (2005) Gender, Care, Poverty and Transitions. In: McKie L and Cunningham-Burley S (eds) *Families in Society: Boundaries and Relationships*. Great Britain: The Policy Press, pp.39-56.
Sediman S (2004) *Beyond the Closet: the Transformation of Gay and Lesbian Life.* New York and London: Routledge.
Shaffer MA, Joplin JR and Hsu Y-S (2011) Expanding the boundaries of work—family research: A review and agenda for future research. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management* 11(2): 221-268.
Shucksmith J, McKee L and Willmot H (2005) Families, Education and the 'Participatory Imperative'. In: McKie L and Cunningham-Burley S (eds) *Families in Society: Boundaries and Relationships*. Great Britain: The Policy Press, pp.57-72.

Silverstein C (1977) *A Family Matter: A Parents' Guide to Homosexuality.* McGraw-Hill.

Sukarieh M and Tannock S (2013) On the problem of over-researched communities: The case of the Shatila Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon. *Sociology* 47(3): 494-508.

Švab A and Kuhar R (2014) The Transparent and Family Closets: Gay Men and Lesbians and Their Families of Origin. *Journal of GLBT family studies* 10(1-2): 15-35.

Swidler A (1986) Culture in action: Symbols and strategies. *American sociological review*. 273-286.

Tan CK (2011) Go home, gay boy! Or, why do Singaporean gay men prefer to "go home" and not "come out"? *Journal of Homosexuality* 58(6-7): 865-882.

Tan M (1996) A Response to Dennis Altman from Michael Tan in the Phillipines. *Australian Huanities Review*.

UNDP and USAID (2014) *Being LGBT in Asia: China Country Report.* Bangkok.

Valens K (2013) *Desire between women in Caribbean literature.* Springer.

Vitiello G (2011) *The libertine's friend: Homosexuality and masculinity in late imperial China.* University of Chicago Press.

Walby S (1994) Is citizenship gendered? *Sociology* 28(2): 379-395.

Wall G (2010) Mothers' experiences with intensive parenting and brain development discourse. *Women's Studies International Forum.* Elsevier, 253-263.

Wan Y (2001) *中国大陆同性恋浮出水面（完整版）*. Available at: https://www.aibai.cn/newspage/1102/.

Wang D (2014a) *做人之道: 熟人社会中的自我实现[Logic of Zuoren: Self-realization in Acquaintances Community].* 北京: 商务印书馆.

Wang SY (2019) When Tongzhi Marry: Experiments of Cooperative Marriage between Lalas and Gay Men in Urban China. *Feminist Studies* 45(1): 13-35.

Wang X (2017) *Gender, Dating and Violence in Urban China.* Routledge.

Wang X and Li Y (1992) 他们的世界: 中国男同性恋群落透视[Their World: Male Homosexualities in China]. 山西人民出版社.

Wang Y (2014b) Exploring the Contradiction of Cooperative Marriage Between Gay Men and Lalas as a Strategy of Practicing Reproductive Rights in Mainland China. *LGBTQ Policy Journal* 5.

Ward J (2015) *Not Gay: Sex between Straight White Men.* New York and London: New York University Press.

Weber M (1993) *Basic concepts in sociology.* Citadel Press.

Weeks J (2017) *Sex, politics and society: The regulation of sexuality since 1800.* Routledge.

Wei W (2010) 圈内人如何看待同性婚姻?-内化的异性恋正统主义对"同志"的影响[How do Gay Men View Same-sex Marraige: The Influence of Internalised Heteronormativity]. *華東理工大學學報 (社會科學版)* 25(4): 35-45.

Wei W (2012) *公开: 当代成都“同志”空间的形成和变迁[Going Public:The Production and Transformation of Queer Spaces in Contemporary Chengdu,China].* 上海: 上海三联书店.

Wei W (2016) 同性伴侣家庭的生育：实现途径、家庭生活和社会适应 [Reproduction of Same-sex Couples]. *山东社会科学[Shandong Social Science]*.(12): 75-82.

Wei W (2017) Good Gay Buddies for Lifetime: Homosexually Themed Discourse and the Construction of Heteromasculinity Among Chinese Urban Youth. *Journal of Homosexuality* 64(12): 1667-1683.

Wengraf T (2001) *Qualitative research interviewing: Biographic narrative and semi-structured methods.* Sage.

Weston K (1997) *Families we choose: Lesbians, gays, kinship.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Whyte MK (2020) Confronting puzzles in understanding Chinese family change: A personal reflection. *Chinese Journal of Sociology* 6(3): 339-363.

Willoughby BL, Doty ND and Malik NM (2008) Parental reactions to their child's sexual orientation disclosure: A family stress perspective. *Parenting: Science and practice* 8(1): 70-91.

Wong D (2007) Rethinking the coming home alternative: hybridization and coming out politics in Hong Kong’s anti-homophobia parades. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 8(4): 600-616.

Worth H, Jun J, McMillan K, et al. (2019) ‘There was no mercy at all’: Hooliganism, homosexuality and the opening-up of China. 34(1): 38-57.

Wu C (2000) *明清社会性爱风气[Sexualities in Ming Dynasty and Qing Dynasty].* 人民文学出版社.

Wu C (2012) *Homoerotic sensibilities in late imperial China.* Routledge.

Wu Z (2016) *巨婴国[A Country of Grown-up Babies].* 杭州: 浙江人民出版社.

Yan Y (1996) *The flow of gifts: Reciprocity and social networks in a Chinese village.* Stanford University Press.

Yan Y (2003) *Private life under socialism: Love, intimacy, and family change in a Chinese village, 1949-1999.* Stanford University Press.

Yan Y (2011) The individualization of the family in rural China. *boundary 2* 38(1): 203-229.

Yan Y (2016) Intergenerational intimacy and descending familism in rural North China. *American Anthropologist* 118(2): 244-257.

Yan Y (2017a) Doing Personhood in Chinese Culture: The Desiring Individual, Moralist Self and Relational Person. *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology* 35(2): 1-17.

Yan Y (2017b) Intergenerational Relatedness and Neo-Familism in Contemporary China. In: *Age Agency Ambiguity: gender and generation in times of change*, University of Oslo.

Yan Y (2018) Neo-familism and the state in contemporary China. *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development* 47(3): 181-224.

Yang H (2012) *隐藏的世界: 农村妇女的人生归属与生命意义[The Hidden World: A Research on the Life Vest and the Life Meaning of Xiangnan]*. 北京: 中国政法大学出版社.

Yang S-h (2015) 以“责任伦理”为核心的中国养老文化——基于文化与功能视角的一种解读[Chinese Culture of Support with the Core of "the Ethic of Responsibility"—Based on the Perspective of Culture and Function]. *晋阳学刊*.(5): 89-96.

Zhai X (2016) *中国人的日常呈现: 面子与人情的社会学研究[The Chinese Representation in Everyday Life: A Sociological Study of Face and Favor]*. 南京大学出版社.

Zhang F (2009) *血浓于水——华北高村汉族的亲属制度[Blood Is Thicker Than Water: The kinship system of the Han at Gao village in North China]*. 昆明: 云南出版集团/云南人民出版社.

Zhang L (2018) Cultivating the therapeutic self in China. *Medical Anthropology* 37(1): 45-58.

Zhang L (2020) *Anxious China: Inner Revolution and Politics of Psychotherapy.* University of California Press.

Zhang Z (2001) *暧昧的历程: 中国古代同性恋史[The Course of Ambiguous Love: Ancient China's Homosexual History]*. 中州古籍出版社.

Zhao B (2013) *The Little Emperors' new toys: A critical inquiry into children and television in China.* Springer Science & Business Media.

Zhao B and Murdock G (1996) Young pioneers: Children and the making of Chinese consumerism. *Cultural studies* 10(2): 201-217.

Zhao X, Wang X and Li Q (2017) 中国养老政策的演进与绩效[The Evolution and Perfomance of Elder Care Policy in China]. *青海社会科学*.(6): 162-167.

Zhao Y (2018) 为国破家: 近代中国家庭革命论反思[Destorying the family for the Nation: Reflection on the Family Revolution in Modern China]. *近代史研究*.(3): 74-86.

Zhao Y (2019) 为了人生幸福: 五四时期家庭革命的个体诉求[In Pursuit of Happiness: The Individual Purpose of Family Revolution around the May Fourth Movement]. *华中师范大学学报 (人文社会科学版)* 58(1): 128-141.

Zheng T (2014) Contesting heteronormality: Recasting same-sex desire in China's past and present. *Wagadu: A Journal of Transnational Women's and Gender Studies* 12: 15-40.

Zheng T (2015) *Tongzhi living: Men attracted to men in postsocialist China.* University of Minnesota Press.

Zhou X (2001) Cultural Transmission: Parent-Child Relations in a Changing Society. *SOCIAL SCIENCES IN CHINA-ENGLISH EDITION*- 22(4): 76-85.

Zhou X (2012) Cultural feedback and intergenerational transmission in artifact civilization. *Social Sciences in China* 33(2): 46-60.

Zhou X (2020) *Cultural Reverse.* Routledge.

Zhu J (2018a) *Straightjacket: same-sex orientation under Chinese family law – Marriage, Parenthood, Eldercar*. Doctoral Thesis, Leiden University, Netherland.

Zhu J (2018b) 'Unqueer'kinship? Critical reflections on 'marriage fraud'in mainland China. *Sexualities* 21(7): 1075-1091.

Zhu J (2018c) " We're Not Cheaters": Polyamory, Mixed-Orientation Marriage and the Construction of Radical Honesty. *Graduate Journal of Social Science* 14(1): 57-78.