

Gay-Lesbian Contract Marriage in Urban China

*The Negotiations of Intergenerational Relations
and Public Expectations*

Chuyan Qiu



Master Thesis, 30 Credits

Asia and Middle East Studies - Chinese Society and Politics

Department of Cultural Studies and Oriental Languages

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

Spring 2017

Gay-Lesbian Contract Marriage in Urban China

The Negotiations of Intergenerational Relations and
Public Expectations

Chuyan Qiu

© Copy Chuyan Qiu

2017

Gay-Lesbian Contract Marriage in Urban China

The Negotiations of Intergenerational Relations and Public Expectations

Chuyan Qiu

<http://www.duo.uio.no/>

Abstract

This paper focuses on the gay-lesbian contract marriage in urban China. It documents the lived experiences of gay men and analyses their motivations and struggles when considering a contract marriage with lalas as an alternative way to resolve the intense pressure to marry. Contract marriage is a way for gays and lalas to construct the façade of heterosexuality to release from the marriage pressure from both society and family

The negotiations in the families represent the intergenerational relations in China, including the ever-closer emotional and financial interdependence among family members which shaped by one-child policy, the instabilities in the reform era, and the lack of a well-orchestrated welfare system. The negotiations in the society represent the public values towards gay men as well as a broad logic of a post-Mao middle-class good citizenship, within which filial responsibility strengthen the pressure to marry that gay men face. Practical regulations which tie the legal rights to the marriage, such as childbearing permission, also shape gay men's motivation to conduct a contract marriage.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my supervisor Koen Wellens, and other professors who have helped me during my master study, Anna L. Ahlers, Mette Halskov Hansen, in IKOS, University of Oslo.

Special thanks to Elisabeth Lund Engebretsen from Center of Gender Research, University of Oslo, for her inspiring work in this field and her valuable comments on my study.

Thanks to Professor Fengshu Liu from Department of Education, University of Oslo, for her guidances in qualitative research methods of my thesis.

Thanks to my mom, for everything.

Content

Abstract	4
Acknowledgement	5
Notes on Romanization and Terminology	7
1. Introduction	10
2. Background	19
3. In the Family: Negotiating Intergenerational Relations and Individual Autonomy	26
4. In the Public: Negotiating Regulations and Public Expectations	43
5. Conclusion	52
Bibliography	55
Selected Glossary	62
Appendix	64

Notes on Romanization and Terminology

Romanization

All terms in italics in this thesis are in the Chinese language unless otherwise stated, which indicate names of events, institutions, organizations, and Chinese pinyin. The pinyin system is the official romanization system for standardizing Chinese in mainland China, Malaysia, Singapore, and Taiwan. This system was first developed in the 1950s, after being revised several times, it was published by the Chinese government in 1958 and subsequently adopted by the International Organization for Standardization in 1982 and the United Nations in 1986 (For a brief introduction of the pinyin system, see Fox 2017). Now the pinyin system is widely used in mainland China to spell standard Chinese, which is the language used during my fieldwork, and also in most recent global academic writings. The retention of Chinese words and phrases in this thesis is intended to demonstrate that those phrases have their own dynamics, linguistic history, and particular interest, with translation to English in brackets.

All the translations in this thesis from Chinese to English were produced by myself unless otherwise noted.

Terminology

Various terms are used in academic queer studies in China. Each of those has its own disciplinary effect, and the choice of terms is and based on different emphases and occasions and it is always problematic for scholars.

“*Tongzhi*” as an old name originating in Hong Kong has been used widely and exclusively in both academics and pop culture to signify non-normative genders and sexualities in the Chinese context. Literally, “*Tongzhi*” means “comrade”, dating back to the revolution era in the 20th century China. It refers to the revolutionaries who shared a comradeship and represents a self-proclaimed identity that “need not reproduce the Anglo-American experiences and strategies of lebigay liberation” in the Chinese case (Chou 2000: 1). After

being appropriated as a synonym for LGBTQ and referred to the First Gay and Lesbian Film Festival in Hong Kong, the queer connotation of “*tongzhi*” became popular in both gay and straight communities in Hong Kong and Taiwan, and later in mainland China (Kong 2011: 14).

The use of “*tongzhi*” contains an emphasis of community solidarity, and it is used diffusely in formal and political occasions (Kam 2013: 117). Compared with the postmillennial emergence of other terms, “*tongzhi*” is used as an “older” (old-fashioned) term for self-identification, often by older generations (Ho 2010: 87; Engebretsen 2014: xvi). It has also been shown in my fieldwork that, no informant used “*tongzhi*” for self-identification.

The term “homosexual” (*tongxinglian*) has a medical connotation, which is not the research focus of this thesis.

Building upon these scholars’ work, I prefer to use the term “gay” or “gay men” rather than “*tongzhi*”, “queer”, “homosexuality” or “LGBTQ”, in this thesis. This needs explanation.

Firstly, the term “gay and lesbian” has been challenged by queer theorists as it very often has the tendency to merely imply white middle-class gay and lesbian experiences (Kong 2011: 14). Loretta Ho (2010) demonstrates that the use of these imported or adapted terms, “gay” or “lesbian”, by Chinese urban citizens with same-sex desires, tends to imply a “higher social status” or a “modernity”. The way that Chinese men and women speak of same-sex subjects represents a Western source and a yearning for modernity (Ho 2010: 89). However, as far as I observed in my fieldwork, the use of term “gay” and “lesbian” (directly in English) has become the most common way of self-identity. In current urban China, the use of these particular terms has considerably limited connections to modernity and social status.

Although all of the informants in my fieldwork are urban citizens from an educated background, the use of this term stays understandable. The terms “gay and lesbian” in this thesis only refers to the Chinese men and women with same-sex desires who call themselves gay or lesbian.

If the increasing use of the terms “gay and lesbian” among urban Chinese same-sex desired populations, which represents the flourishing development of Western and global gayness in Chinese society, needs discussion, it is obvious that the interplay between Chinese/Western

and modern/traditional articulations of gender, sexuality, identity, and community in the routines of everyday life in current Chinese society is complex. There is no best choice of terms, Engebretsen (2014) demonstrates that “using categories aim to depict subjective and collective identity in any context, especially that of interlinked transnational circuits of exchange, risks overgeneralization, erasure, and reproduction of problematic and violent power inequalities. This is especially the case in the context of studying stigmatized and poorly understood populations and lifeways, including non normative sexualities and genders (Engebretsen 2014: xvi).”

1. Introduction

Contract marriage is a way for gays and *lalas*¹ to construct a façade of heterosexuality to release themselves from the marriage pressure that both society and family inflict on them. Contracts, or even just implicit agreements, are conducted to secure both personal independence and privacy of the couple, and to fulfill the familial and social obligations with the façade of a husband-and-wife relationship.

The phenomenon of gay-lesbian contract marriage has recently been viewed and studied by both Chinese and Western scholars, but there is no acknowledged English equivalence for the Chinese term describing this phenomenon. The term *Xinghun* 形婚 (*Xingshi Hunyin* 形式婚姻) in the Chinese homosexual community is the generally acceptable and non-ambiguous term in widespread use to refer to this gay-lesbian contract marriage. In English, it is referred to as Nominal marriage/Performative family (Choi & Luo 2016), Cooperative marriage (Wang 2015), Fake marriage (Davison 2011), Formality marriage (Liu 2013), Contract marriage (Engebretsen 2009; Cho 2009), Marriage of convenience (Engebretsen 2014), Reproductive relations (Dempsey 2010), and so forth.

The discussion of gay-lesbian contract marriage is situated within the broader context that, this happens in an era when partnering options for gay people are increasing globally, e.g. in Latin America (Esteve, Lesthaeghe & Lopez-Gay 2012), at the same time there is a consensus that the repression of homosexuality has been considerably reduced by the Chinese state within past decades since the introduction of China's "opening up" (Jeffreys 2006; Kang 2012). Meanwhile, the institution of marriage is undergoing dramatic changes globally (Amato 2004; Cherlin 2004; Coontz 2004; Thornton, Axinn, & Xie 2007). Even in Chinese societies (mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan), within the last decade, marital norms and behaviors have been radically changed from prevailing to today's "deinstitutionalized" (Davis & Friedman 2014: 2).

By documenting the lived experiences of gay men and women in urban China through their narratives, this research aims at answering the following questions: what are the motivations

¹ The term "*lala*" refers to women with same-sex desires. It is a colloquial translation of "lesbian" and used as female-gendered same-sex sexual identity.

when they consider contract marriage as a possible way to resolve the intense marriage pressure? How do they negotiate their familial and societal roles? This research focuses on gay-lesbian contract marriages, to illustrate the ongoing transformation of marriage, sex, gender, and family in modern China. This research will especially focus on gay men's negotiations with their families, to explain the struggles when facing growing tide of personal autonomy and individualism (Yan 2010), the persistent hegemony of heterosexual marriage, and the transformation of intergenerational relations. The narratives of gay men in this research also help to challenge the simplistic understanding of contract marriage as a way to conform-to-normativity strategy (Cho 2009; Engebretsen 2014). Those narratives also contribute to understanding their shifting roles in the negotiations of intimate relations beyond the binary of hetero/homo and public/private, as the boundaries between them are blurring (Ho 2006: 561), as well as the new-emerged intimate practices in China. The negotiations of gay men demonstrate various motivations besides family responsibility and social norms, as well as personal desires, benefits, and lifestyles. This research would not argue whether the emergence of gay-lesbian marriages challenge familial heteronormativity and create alternatives to intimate relationships and family in China, and conform to a heterosexual way of life (Kong 2011: 10). In addition, these narratives represent not only a repository of lives, subcultures and feelings of gay men in today's urban China, but also "a theory of cultural relevance, a construction of collective memory, and a complex record of queer activity" (Halberstam 2005: 169-170).

1.1 The Window and the Flies

When you open the window for fresh air, flies also come in.²

— Deng Xiaoping

All changes started in the year 1978, with the introduction of Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms and Open Door Policy. Nearly three-decades of rapid development brought dramatic shifts in almost in all social aspects (Perry & Selden 2000; Sigley 2006). It created not only

² The flies refer to "corrupt foreign ideas about sexuality" among other western influences (Farrer 2002: 26).

thriving skyscrapers, but also environments for people to experiment with a sexual identity, including the same-sex identity (Rafel 1999a, 2007; Wan 2001; Brownell and Wasserstrom 2002; Farrer 2002; Li 2002; Pan, Wang, Parish & Lauman 2004; Kong 2011; Kam 2013). China's belated entry to global modernity, epitomized by Western-style sexual and political liberation, brings Chinese people the Western-style dating, commercial sex industries, radio programs providing advice regarding sexual issues, and a growing gay and lesbian sense (Jeffery 2006: 2). State engineering, marketization and Westernization in Chinese society have dramatically shifted the institution of marriage and sexual values, as well as Chinese people's expectations and practices in related realms (Yan 2003). Social norms are increasingly permissive of same-sex relations (Davis & Friedman, 2014), which can be represented by the developing legal attitudes and the increasing social visibility and acceptance towards same-sex relationship.

1.2 Methodology

This study is based on ongoing qualitative research work. I started the preparation work in the second half of 2015. Homosexuality, especially for those who are currently in contract marriages, is still a publicly sensitive topic in China, the first step, which is also the basis, to enter the field and build up mutually trustful rapport with informants, was not easy. I first started my informant collection through my personal network, my friends, my social network followers, and so forth. With some verbal agreements, I decided to go to China to do my fieldwork in January 2016. Before my departure, only several people agreed to participate in my research, some of subjects even withdrew when I started to make appointments. During my fieldwork, I tried to expand my research pool through snowball sampling by asking informants that if they could think about someone they know that could be interested in my study and would be willing to be interviewed by me. Luckily, some of them were so kind that they introduced some gay men to me, this also helped me to build trust with my subjects. Among them, one of the most interesting cases I collected during my fieldwork, the story of Tixiaowen, was introduced to me by another informant. I interviewed 15 gay men in total, and had some unstructured follow up conversations. I am aware of that the lived experiences of Chinese gay men significantly vary from those of other groups considered as sexual

minorities, say lesbians, bisexuals, transexuals, and other groups. I am aware of the limitations of my research of solely interviewing gay men.

Among the informants, several of them are friends of mine, one of the advantages of interviewing friends is that it is not necessary to build a trustful rapport. However, the veracity of friends' narratives can be doubted. The methodology of interviewing friends or acquaintances has been discussed extensively both its advantages and limitations. It is insufficient to claim for objectivity and refer to a positivist. On the contrary, as Blichfeldt, Heldbjerg and Relationsledelse (2011) point out, "researchers who refer to reality as being socially constructed through interaction among individuals and their life-worlds of subjective interpretations may generate especially valuable results by interviewing friends and/or acquaintances"(Blichfeldt, Heldbjerg & Relationsledelse 2011: 5). In my case, my research refers to reality, to focus on the individuals and their life stories, objectivity is not a goal of this research. The advantages of interviewing friends or acquaintances in qualitative research have also been discussed, the choosing of interviewees who were known by the researcher draws on the advantages of interpersonal relationships, and is also expected to ensure that previous knowledge of interviewees could be helpful to form more complete portraits of the interviewees (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 2002; Roberson 2003). Nevertheless, the development of technology, especially the widely use of social networks, blurred the boundaries of friendship, or wider speaking, interpersonal relationship. For me, it is difficult to identify some informants I collect for my research as acquaintances, or even friends of mine. It is true that we have been followers of each others' social network accounts for years, like Weibo, Instagram etc, I am to some extent aware of some of their personal experiences, homosexual identities, intimate desires, marital struggles, through social network from the photos and tweets they post. I have been following a man's Weibo for several years because he sometimes posts beautiful photography. As time goes by, I slowly realized his homosexual self-identity, as he came out in the cyber world, with stories of his intimate relationship. On New Year's Eve January 2016, he posted a short article about his new year's stay back to hometown, he came out to his mother, and decided to look for contract marriage to a *lala*³ to decrease the pressure his mother faces from other family members After reading this, I sent him a private mail through social network and asked him to participate in my research. He

agreed at the beginning, but dropped out due to personal reasons. In this case, can I say we are friends or acquaintances even though I have known him for years and aware of his personal experiences? I can hardly say yes. As for some other informants in my research, it was the first time for me to meet and talk to them in person after knowing them for years. So the limitations of interviewing friends and acquaintances do not fully apply here. So when facing the difficulties of methodological choices, we should choose tools which could enable us to investigate the topic of interest and offer us the best possible access to reality, instead of being stuck in methodological rites and technicalities, because the core of theoretical and purposeful sampling is about finding the cases that give a maximum of information (Feyerabend 1993; Gummesson 2003).

Considering both the advantages and disadvantages of interviewing acquaintances and “strangers”, the other part of informants in my research, are real “strangers”. It could be difficult to enter a community of strangers. Gatekeeper plays a key role. In my case, I was introduced by mutual friends to gain the access. Meanwhile, I am still an outsider of their lives as I always emphasize that I study in Europe when I do my introduction to informants, to make them feel that I am a real outsider far away from their daily life so that they could feel free to share their narrative. This helped my fieldwork a lot. As some of the new informants were introduced by mutual friends, so the veracity of their narratives is trustful to me.

The interviews of my fieldwork are semistructured. Among 15 informants, 4 of them were interviewed face to face with the use of electronic recording equipments in Sichuan and Chongqing, Southwestern China. The fieldwork is multi-sited, because of the unbalanced development of economy and accesses to resources, the domestic flow of population to seek for better resources to education and employment has made it hard to define someone’s origins, as some of my informants have moved to new cities when entered high schools, universities, and the job market. The different locations resulted because I asked informants to choose a location they prefer, then I would take taxis or even trains to reach the place they chose. I would like to show my sincerity by doing this, also ensure the confidentiality of the informants by asking them to choose locations they feel comfortable and safe to conduct interviews. Before I went to China, all informants agreed to participate in the face to face interviews with electronic recording equipment. However, during my stay in China, some of

them were not able to offer me a chance to talk face to face due to their business trips and personal schedules. So 10 of all informants were interviewed through Skype or FaceTime, with their permission to take notes during interviews. As this fieldwork is multi-sited, the modern technology, such as Skype, offers a new way to overcome the limitation of time and places to conduct a face-to-face interview (Janghorban, Roudsari, & Taghipour 2014). In addition, cyber space offers a safer environment compared with participation in bars or communities. Each of the interviews lasted at least one hour or more, often the conversation went beyond the interview time, the conversation with Tixiaowen even lasted for two days. One case among the 15 subjects is unique, the talk with Lu. He is a self-identified gay man, currently in a marriage with a heterosexual woman, and working. He could not offer me an hour for interviewing either during daytime at office nor nighttime at home. He was willing to tell me his story, at last, he could only talk with me for half an hour everyday after work on the metro back home. We talked through communication app WeChat on our cellphones, I also asked him to delete our chatting history everyday before going back home. This interview lasted for weeks.

Ethical issues were carefully managed during my fieldwork due to the nature of homosexuality and contract marriages in current China. As the Lu case I mentioned above, I was totally aware of his situation, any careless ethical handling could be harmful to his life, as he has tried so hard to hide his sexual identity from both his wife and work colleagues. The ethical principle “to do no harm”, as Karen O’Reilly points out that “ethics is about trying to ensure that you cause as little pain or harm as possible and try to be aware of your effects on the participants and on your data”(O’Reilly 2005: 63; cited in Engebretsen 2014: 28), is significantly important when doing research in China on sensitive topics like homosexuality and contract marriages. Confidentiality is a significant aspect of ethical issues, pseudonyms have been used for informants in this research. Here I argue the authenticity of the use of pseudonyms in this case that, all of my informants have English names, though the English names are chosen by themselves, not being approved by any official authorities, and without legal validity. The use of English names is seen universal among urban citizens in both daily life and cyber place, regarding the sensitivity of gay identity in daily life, their English names may refer to a more real, active, and well-known role in cyber space. I kept their choices of pseudonyms in this writing. When I was doing preparation work, I informed informants about

my personal background, my research purpose, and the ethical regulations, to protect their personal information and privacy and conduct interviews with their consent.

Chinese is the language I used when conducting interviews, mostly I used Mandarin, several cases were done in different dialects according to interviewees' preferences. All informants agreed to conduct followup interview to update information of them after the first interview. I stayed in touch with all informants through WeChat, especially because some informants were blind dating to seek contract marriages with *lalas* when I interviewed them for the first time, afterwards I used WeChat to follow up on the process of their blind date, for example the first time I interviewed Tixiaowen in January 2016, he just finished a almost-successful contract marriage with a *lala* in Shanghai, and was seeing a new potential "partner" for contract marriage. I have been talking with him through WeChat to track his progress, until our latest conversation in March 2017, when he was seeing the third *lala* to try to conduct contract marriage. What I have found is, some information they mentioned during our random conversations without interview structure or electronic recording equipment, is relevant and also very inspired to my research, so sporadic and ongoing online chatting with informants are also included in conversations for data collection.

Positionality is another significant part of ethical issue, it is what allows me to start my work. What makes me focus on and make sexuality research possible and insightful is my subjective experiences, which moreover means my research could be critiqued as lacking of objectivity. The subjectivity applies in translation of theory, method, and data. This sense of positionality also formulates relevant and critical questions (Teunis & Herdt 2007: 17).

Insider and outsider positions fluctuate, positioning is never apolitical or transparent (Engebretsen 2014: 27).

Besides the insider role of my native Chinese identity, another positionality issue is about my personal sexual identity. In fact no informants have ever asked about my personal sexual identity, instead, I was automatically identified as "one of them", which can be helpful when undertaking research on homosexual people in China, as Kong has argued, "it is easier for a gay researcher to build rapport in the early stages and to be accepted by the interviewees than it is for a straight-identified researcher," however, some differences like "class, age, education background and other sociocultural factors" are also possible between a gay

researcher and his informants. (Kong 2011: 209-210; Kam 2015: 180). Though I have never presented myself to any communities, I feel it is necessary to announce my personal identity, not just to be honest and clear to readers and academic community, but also to the positionality. Even this announcement contains personal struggles, but as Kam emphasizes, "...as a fellow participant also requires me to share the same honesty with my readers. The honesty of a researcher about her personal identification ... is a basic ethical requirement of a field researcher." (ibid.).

My awareness of the differences between me and my informants reminds me of the other role I obtained in my research, an outsider. When my informants asked about the details of my research, I realized that they were much less concerned when I told them my academic background, studying in Europe and writing a thesis in English for a European university. The outsider role comes from the fact that they do not and will never identify me as someone in the local homosexual community. As Gloria Wekker has observed, the positive significance of "the stranger" should not be underestimated and does not necessarily constitute a lack of access and exclusion; informants opening up to outsiders rather than one's peers is not uncommon in fieldwork (Wekker 1998: 118; cited in Engebretsen 2014: 25).

It is true that I am both an insider and outsider, but I will never be a real insider or outsider to my informants. The dual role during my fieldwork challenges the ethical and methodological aspect of my research. This question has been discussed much in the feminist research tradition, particularly the egalitarianism, reciprocity and intersubjectivity between the researcher and the researched (Stacey 1988). In my case, my Chinese and bisexual identity allows me to start my research easily, meanwhile, I have to engage in a constant effort to "defamiliarize" myself from this culture. I also need to maintain a sense of strangeness as an outsider during the research process (Acker 2000: 194).

My dual roles bring both the benefits and risks to my research, which makes reflexivity a significant tool to me. A shared position allows the researcher to easily empathize and overcome distortion or exploitation (Wasserfall, 1993), while it can also easily lead the researcher to a biased situation. I had my guideline during the whole fieldwork, and adapted my methods by listening to my recordings and reading my notes after interviews. I was always open to feedback from both professionals in this research area and also people who

are not familiar with homosexuality studies, which is very helpful for my research and also for my personal learning progress. In my fieldwork process, I remained reflective about both my research methods and ethical principle.

2. Background

2.1 Homosexuality in China: The Reduction of Repression and the Increase of Acceptance

Previous scholars (e.g. Hinsch 1990; Ruskola 1994; Sommer 2000; Chou 2000; Sang 2003; Balzano 2007; Kang 2012) have argued that the same-sex intimacy was widely tolerated in ancient China, as long as it did not challenge existing social hierarchies; it was generally confined to a continuum of erotic behaviors which coexisted with heterosexual marriages; from a legal perspective, non-heterosexual relationships were not criminalized. In the following Republican era, major Western theories and literature on sexuality were translated into Chinese by intellectuals for the first time. The concept of homosexuality, as a specific sexual orientation or even identity, was introduced to China through Havelock Ellis's medical theory, and gained hegemony, played a dominant role and was regarded as the major social understanding of homosexuality in China (Sang 2003; Kang 2009; Kong 2011).

The following Maoist period (1949-1976) is frequently referred to as a dark period of restraint and repressed sex, created by sustained campaigns against prostitution, concubinage, and non-marital intimacy (Ruan 2013: 120-123; Wu 2003: 124-125; Davis & Friedman 2014: 17). However, no law was made during this period to criminalize sodomy or other homosexual acts (Li 2006; Balzano 2007; Kang 2012: 234-236). In practice, those who engaged in consensual same-sex relations sometimes received negative sanctions outside of the court system. They could lose job and party membership and they could be detained without trial or even sent to labor camps (Balzano 2007; Kang 2012: 236). As there were no laws apply to homosexuality, the court could not criminalize homosexuality. Instead, homosexual acts were only condemned as harmful to society and it tended to be categorized as a type of *Liumangzui* (Hooliganism), which was first introduced in Article 106 of Criminal Law of PRC in 1979. The term hooliganism has been used as an umbrella term that referred to a wide range of social misbehaviors, such as group fighting, provoking troubles, humiliating women, engaging in other hooligan activities, disrupting public order, and so forth (Gao 1995: 66; Liu 1995). In the post-Mao and reform era (post-1978), sexual acts between men was explicitly criminalized in the new Criminal Law of PRC. Only when sexual

behaviors between men were coerced or violent, those would be punished (Balzano 2007; Kang 2012). Nevertheless, homosexuality had always been associated with hooliganism. In 1989, the pathologization of homosexuality in the second edition of the Chinese Classification and Diagnostic Criteria of Mental Disorders was seen as the consolidation of legal criminalization of same-sex behaviors (Kang 2012: 154).

With the vigorous economic and social reforms in the 1990s, gay identities and communities slowly emerged and became more visible (Wu 2003; Rofel 2007; Wei 2007). The year 1997 witnessed a monumental transformation that the revised Criminal Law of PRC deleted specific reference to the crime of hooliganism, which had been used to punish male anal sex (Jeffreys 2006; Li 2006; Rofel 2007; Kang 2012).⁴ In 2000, the Ministry of Public Security announced that “members of the Chinese public have the right to choose their own sexuality” (Davis & Friedman 2014: 18). In 2001, the Chinese Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from the list of mental illnesses (Jeffreys 2006: 10; Kang 2012) While homosexuality no longer contains pathological connotations, it has been released from the deviant image by indigenous writings, several representative Chinese scholars, Li Yinhe and Wang Xiaobo (1992), and Zhang Beichuan (1994). It was the first time in China that indigenous academics portrayed homosexuality as a normal way of living in an objective and sociological manner of writing (Wu 2003: 125-133). In the mainstream media, the reports of public same-sex weddings also reflected the growing tolerance for homosexuality in China (China Daily 2012).⁵ On July 5th 2011, CCTV (China Central Television) column “24Hours” criticized homophobic online comments and re-tweets a post written by Lü Liping, a famous actress in China and winner of the Golden Horse Best Actress Award, which urged the local community to respect the LGBT community (Human Rights Watch 2012).⁶

⁴ The discriminalization needs discussion. Kang (2012) argues this was an unintended consequence of China’s aim to turn from a Maoist “rule of man” to a modern “rule of law”. Only specific sexual behaviors were included in previous laws refer to the crime of hooliganism, never has homosexuality. And after the discriminalization, sex between men could also be criminalized as a form of prostitution. Nevertheless, the discriminalization in 1997 is still seen as a monumental shift in the study of sex and sexuality in China.

⁵ Same-sex marriage has not sanctioned by the state in China by the time of the completion of this thesis.

⁶ Read more on the report of All-China Women’s Federation website. <http://www.womenofchina.cn/html/node/131836-1.htm>

Since the end of this period, campaigns for the legalization of same-sex in China have been mounted by civil society (Rofel 2007, 2012). Li Yinhe, a prestigious sexologist and sociologist, firstly proposed the Chinese Same-sex Marriage Bill as an amendment to Marriage Law to NPC (the National People's Congress) and CPPCC (the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference) in 2001, and resubmitted it subsequently in 2004, 2006, 2008, and 2012. While furthering of legal reforms, local communities networks and grassroots NGOs have flourished in large cities. Gay-oriented magazines, hotlines, websites, support groups and networks and so forth emerged, which have been increasing the public visibility and promoting legal reforms of both gay men and lesbians (Wei 2007; Ho 2010; Rofel 2012; Engebretsen 2014).⁷

The above-presented processes of decriminalization of homosexuality in China indicate some “achievements” including the significant shifts in legal and community norms. However, legal rules and logics still remain tied to heterosexual relationships only. The legal recognition of same-sex marriage in China still remains uncertain. It is undoubtedly that the letter of the laws and their enforcement have reduced sanctions against both heterosexual and homosexual relations outside marriage, and a more open societal attitude towards homosexuality and its presence has emerged in China (Davis & Friedman 2014: 20; Kong 2011)

2.2 The Deinstitutionalization of Marriage in China:

Not for Gay Men

When the “flies” and “mosquitos” from the west, according to Deng Xiaoping, are flourishing in Chinese society, in the same era and a wider global context, the institution of marriage, which gay men and lesbians in China are conducting contracts to get into, is undergoing dramatic changes (Amato 2004; Cherlin 2004; Coontz 2004; Thornton et al.,

⁷ Wei (2007) focused in Chengdu and demonstrated the production and transformation of queer space in urban China; Ho (2010) studied the gay-oriented websites to demonstrated the gay space in Chinese cyberspace; Rofel (2012) discussed the work of LGBT NGOs in China; Engebretsen (2014) focused in Beijing and studied the local *lala* communities and networks: the Tongyu network and the *Les+* magazine.

2007). The US-based sociologist Andrew Cherlin create the terminology 'deinstitutionalization' to identify the process through which "previously taken-for-granted assumptions about the propriety of premarital sex, grounds for divorce, or even the necessity of marriage no longer prevail" (Cherlin 1978, 2004). Davis & Friedman (2014: 2-3) did their studies in three Chinese societies: Hong Kong, Taiwan, and People's Republic of China, demonstrating the key shifts of deinstitutionalization of marriage emerged in China in recent decades. Their findings share many similarities to what Andrew Cherlin highlighted in the local communities in US: a higher age at first marriage, fewer barriers to divorce, declining marital fertility, and greater social acceptance of premarital and extramarital intimate relationships, and the emergence and acceptance of same-sex intimate relationships. Thus, it can be concluded that marriage in these three Chinese societies is becoming deinstitutionalized. In the new environment, individuals have more freedom to pursue new possibilities for marital and sexual satisfaction. These work have shown that there are trends that challenge the universality of marriage. However, in China, marriage still remains remarkably resilient and the traditional family obligations and parental authorities are strongly supportive. In the global context of the process of deinstitutionalization of marriage, China is the only country with an increase of crude marriage rates from 2004 to 2010 among East Asian and Euro-American countries (Davis 2014b). A Survey by All-China Women's Federation shows that the proportion of women and men who agree with the statement that for women "a good marriage is better than a career" has increased between 2000 and 2010 (Attané 2012: 9). In China, virtually all men and women with college level education backgrounds get married by age 35. Even in urban area like Shanghai, in 2005, only 9.3 percent of men and 5.3 percent of women at the age 35 to 39, have never married (Davis & Friedman 2014: 8). In China, childbearing is only legally permitted within marriage, despite the ongoing negotiation between marriage and sexual intimacy (Davis 2014a). Parental authority dies hard in Chinese intergenerational relations. Filial duty is considered as an obligation towards parents from kids by 96 percent of people (Whyte 1997). Half of the Chinese people hold the idea that married couple should have children, and 45 percent agree that having a son to carry on family roots is necessary (Choi & Luo 2016: 262).

Considering Chinese society, the conception of deinstitutionalization of marriage could not fully capture the renegotiation between the ongoing intimate relations and marriage. The

persistent decision to marry among Chinese people remains influential and stubborn. The Chinese young generation, in which gay men and women are involved, are facing tremendous pressure to get married before being tagged as *shengnü* (leftover women)⁸. Research from both indigenous scholars and western scholars demonstrate the nationwide anxiety and persistence of marriage in China, of both the parents' generation and the youth generation. Zhang and Sun (2014) did a case study on the parental matchmaking corner in People's Park in Shanghai, indicating the enduring persistence of marriage in urban China and drawing on the anxieties and expectations of marriage that the parents have for their kids. Under pressure from parents and the public, the youngsters, including gay men and gay women, are pushed to get married right after completing their university education, regardless of their actual sexual desires. Kam's (2013) research about Shanghai *Lalas* shows that gay people in urban China, especially *lalas*, face conflicting expectations from families and their *tongzhi* identity, and the pressure of marriage is the most pronounced one among these conflicts (2013: 71). How do modern Chinese young men and women resolve the intense marriage pressure from their parents and the public? With the voluntary delays in marriage, "22 percent of college-educated men and 16 percent of college-education women had yet marry by age of 35" (Cai & Feng 2014: 112). The rush to get married before turning a certain age, say 35 for those who are tagged *shengnü*, has made women, as well as LGBTQ communities and other non-traditional relationships in China, miss the chance of the biggest accumulation of real-estate wealth in history, and it created unprecedented gender inequality in wealth (Fincher 2014: 74). For the Chinese young men and women who have same-sex desires but share the same intense pressure of marriage, a rush to devote to a marriage is not even an option, since the fact that same-sex marriage has not yet been officially legalized in China. Conducting heterosexual marriages used to be the only option for the majority of Chinese gay men, 80% to 90% of gay men in China are led to marry to women because of the powerful social pressure (Li 2002; Liu & Lu 2005; Tatlow 2015). Meanwhile, conducting *xinghun* is considered to be a way for some gay men and women in China. They can, therefore, construct the façade of heterosexuality, get released from the marriage pressure from both

⁸ *Shengnü* 剩女, translated as "leftover women" (Fincher 2014), or "surplus women" (Zhang & Sun 2014), defined by All-China Women's Federation in 2007 as single women older than 27. In media use, the age ranges from 30s and 40s, to 27 and 28, even 25 (Liang 2006; Zhang & Sun 2014:124; Fincher 2014: 16).

society and family, and fulfill the familial and social obligations in the façade of a husband and wife relationship, while retaining both partners' personal independence and autonomy to some degree. It seems that the increase of individualism and personal autonomy when conducting a marriage, and the increasing visibility of same-sex intimacy could apply to the indicators of the theory of deinstitutionalization of marriage by Andrew Cherlin. However, the retaining of personal autonomy through conducting a contract marriage, deflects the pressure from family and society by conforming to it paradoxically (Cho 2009: 416).

To interpret and understand contract marriage more clearly, here I suggest to draw theoretical insights from a new institutional approach to marriage by Lauer & Yodanis (2010). They apply ideas from the new institutionalism in sociology and economics to the case of marriage, and reconsider conceptually the discussion surrounding Andrew Cherlin's theory of deinstitutionalization of marriage, arguing that alternatives to marriage can become institutionalized in parallel with marriage, but without marriage becoming deinstitutionalized in itself.

Scholars have examined and introduced the indicators of the deinstitutionalization of marriage and the alternatives to the institution of marriage (Cherlin 2004; Coontz 2004; Thornton et al. 2007). However, Lauer and Yodanis suggest to rethink the indicators more accurately on the weakening of the formal and informal rules and assumptions of the institution of marriage. Although there is no doubt that the institution of marriage is undergoing some changes, the set institutionalized rules and assumptions of marriage remain rigid, and whether marriage is deinstitutionalized is an empirical question which cannot be fully addressed (ibid.: 61). People's autonomy in marriage, such as whether or when to enter or end a marriage, has been increasing. However, these options are institutionalized themselves and will only strengthen the institutionalization of marriage instead of changing it (ibid.: 62). The increased personal autonomy and identity have become the central concerns of individuals, drawing on the theory of individualization (Bauman 2003; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Giddens 2013). The theory of individualization has completely switched the purposes of marriage from functional to symbolic, displaying the personal achievements and social status as a "marker of prestige" (Cherlin 2004: 855). In the gay-lesbian contract marriages, the individuals own highly autonomy regarding economy, childbearing, and "real" intimate relations in practical. However, the choice of conducting and entering a marriage is

questioned. The individualization thesis from Cherlin, which interprets individual choice to enter marriage freely as a lifestyle choice among all alternatives, has been challenged by scholars (Gross 2005; Jamieson 1999; Smart & Shipman 2004). Lauer and Yodanis demonstrate that individual decisions regarding marriage are guided by existing institutional contexts (ibid.: 64).

The continuing choice of marriage stays persistent globally as well as in Chinese society, involving gay men and women. Lauer and Yodanis based on DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) study of isomorphism, outlined institutional pressures toward marriage as three mechanisms: coercive, normative, and mimetic processes, which involve policies, regulations, and practices that affect the actors (ibid.: 65-67). The Chinese society differs greatly from "the West" that is studied by those scholars, I would not expect any single theory and approach to fully explain the persistent choice to marry in China. However, parallels could be addressed here among existing literature, such as the institutional basis of marriages conferring status. By locating in urban China to explain and interpret the persistent choice to marry under various pressures, characteristics of Chinese society must be taken into account, both legally and culturally, such as the *hukou* system, the one-child policy and the intergenerational relations. The negotiations of gay men and women when experiencing intense pressures to conform hegemonic heterosexual norms and marriage differ from the general pressures to marry those heterosexuals face, which will be formulated in the following narratives.

3. In the Family: Negotiating Intergenerational Relations and Individual Autonomy

3.1 The Pressure to Marry

For centuries, in Chinese society, marriage and family formation was regulated by the states and markets and was utilized strategically to expand the human and material assets of the patrilineal family within Confucian and patriarchal universe (Davis & Friedman 2014: 25-26). However, the reformation of family emerged within the past decades, along with the reform of the state (Glosser 2003). It has reduced the parents' control of their children's spouse and increased the autonomy and intimacy of young man and women, the same as the reformers envisioned in the early century. However, family still plays a core role that anchored in the principles of collective and intergenerational reciprocity (Davis & Friedman 2014: 26). Even in current China, the norm of lifelong reciprocity between generations still pervasively exists, and parents also remains deeply engaged in their children's marriages (Zhang & Sun 2014; Kam 2013: 67).

When gay men have not yet come out to their parents, the pressure to marry that they face from their parents is similar to what the heterosexuals face. Holidays and Festivals, especially Spring Festival in China, are the time when family members get together from different cities and celebrate reunions with various familial interactions, in which young men and women's single marital status would be frequently discussed in the conversations. I begin with Tony's visit back home during the Spring Festival in 2016, just few weeks before our interview.

"This Spring Festival is really *kepa* (horrible)", summarizing his home visit, Tony, a 27-year-old employee in a state-owned enterprise, just suffered from the most intense pressure to marry from his parents that he had ever experienced. Tony works in Tianjin, northern China, a 2-hour-flight from his hometown in East China. He had not been home for Spring Festival for a few years as he used to work in a southwestern African country with his company's

project conducted by the Chinese government, which made this time a great opportunity for Tony's parents to let their child know their anxiety about his single marital status,

This time I felt *feichangdadejali* (very huge pressure) to marry from my parents regarding my single marital status. I am actually not single, I have *nanyou* (boyfriend), but of course my parents do not know about this. Normally they express their worries regarding my marriage when we talk on the phones, I always say "*haode* (alright)" "*wozhidaole* (I got it)" to shirk this topic easily. But this time, as I have not seen them for quite long, they have given me intense pressure to get married soon, I started to consider *xinghun* (contract marriage) as a viable solution to release me from the pressures from my parents.

Tony started to seek a *lala* to conduct contract marriage one month after our first conversation, he checked some advertisements posted by *lalas* in *xinghun*-themed chatting groups on the Internet, and contacted with a few *lalas*, I have followed Tony's contract marriage progress in the later months, he did not succeed as he said to me "I do not know if I really want it (contract marriage)".

Parents' worries and anxiety regarding their children's marital status include not only their repeated persuading, but also their eager involvement in the matchmaking of their children, it is parents' responsibility to help their children find a good partner to get married with and to step into the "right" track of life (Zhang & Sun 2014: 133; Kam 2013: 67). Luke has been to matchmaking dinner twice, all forced by his parents. After completing his study in Leeds, UK, he went back to China and settled down in Beijing, since then the pressure to marry continually came to him from his parents.

My parents always ask me when I will get married and have child, and I have been trying to shirk answering these questions. Once I was *bijile* (driven crazy) and shouted to them, "I will neither marry nor have children"! After that time, I guess my parents realized *yanzhongxing* (seriousness) of this issue, they started to arrange matchmaking dinners through their own networks. The first time I went to the matchmaking dinner, the girl was introduced by one of my parents' friends. We met and had dinner together, talked a little, after this time, I texted this girl perfunctorily and ended the possibility for another meeting with her. I met

another girl, also introduced by my parents' friends, in Hangzhou. I flew from Beijing there just to meet her, we spent the whole day together, eating and talking, but afterwards the whole thing just *buliaoliaozhi* (end inconclusively). Of course it ended like this, I attended this sort of matchmaking dinner, just because they were introduced by my parents and their friends.

The pressures to marry and attend matchmaking dinners are not only from direct family members, but also from family relatives and even neighbors (Choi & Luo 2016; Sun 2012; Gaetano 2014). Justin is a 27-year old freelancer, during his master study in business in London, he was inspired by the culture there. Going back to his home city after graduation, he opened his own cafe. His narratives demonstrate the pressure from family relatives.

I did not come out to all by families except for one of my *biaoge* (male elder cousin), we used to be very close, he is *zhinan* (straight man) and has no problems about my identity. But when I reached *shihunnianji* (marriageable age), he came to me and had a talk with me privately to ask me to *duijiating fuze* (be responsible for families) and get married. He even told me that *xinghun* ok (contract marriage is ok). He is the only one in my family which gives me pressures to marry. I am considering contract marriage, as *biaoge* proposed, but I am worrying about the risks of being exposed.

Most of the time gays choose to compromise over conflicts with their parents. Therefore, they receive a number of potential partners, or attend these matchmaking dinners arranged by parents' friends, without any expectations. In some cases, gays could not take control of the following stories once they started the first step. Edison is 33 years old and works for a well-known international company. He has a very good relationship with his mom, no doubt that his single marital status has brought his mom anxiety especially when he turned 30 years old. His mom had introduced several girls to him. "We [with his mom] are *guanxihenhao* (in good relations), so I did not say no to her", Edison explained his relationship with his mom, and these girls his mom introduced to him,

I received these girls' numbers from my mom, I talked with them online, after talking I started to *tuoyituo* (put off), as time went by, they *fangqile* (gave up).

But this time, my mom's friend introduced her daughter to my mom, I added her Wechat number. She is a university teacher in Chengdu, as we currently live in different cities, we only text through Wechat. She is *jiating bucuo* (from a wealthy family), as we keep texting each other, the girl *juede wo bucuo* (thinks I am good), this is not the way I planned. At that time I just got an offer of a new job which requires me to move to the US temporarily. I accepted this job offer because I really want to *biyibi* (shirk this issue). After I moved to the US, we kept texting through Wechat, she even said if we decide to settle down together, she would like to move to the US with me. This is not gonna happen. I plan to go back home to talk with her in person this summer, I will find an excuse to make it clear, but I won't *jiangshihua* (tell the truth).

Besides the pressure to marry comes directly from relatives of gay men who are in the closet, in some cases both parents and their children can be affected by this pressure (Choi & Luo 2016: 267). Ajay is 27 years old and works as an audit for a well know auditing firm. His Spring Festival trip back home was also full of pressure to marry, mainly from relatives, this pressure affects both his parents and him.

My parents have never directly pressured to marry, but they are very *chuantong* (traditional/old fashioned). They only sent my relatives' concerns about my marital status to me. Though they've never directly pushed me, I asked if they resonated with my relatives' concerns when they passed on the messages to me, and they said yes. They indirectly give me pressure to marry just because they are facing the pressure from our relatives.

Gay men in urban China who have not come out to their families, face intense pressure to marry from their parents. More broadly speaking, the pressure comes from relatives, friends, and sometimes even neighbors (*ibid.*), affecting both parents and their gay men children.

The family relatives, other than the parents, as a resource of the pressure to marry demonstrates the traditional role that family members used to play in family affairs in history. Marriage used to be treated as a valuable opportunity for both individuals and families to form societal alliances and allocate resources, as the norms of succession and inheritance were uniform and obligatory in Chinese societies, such as in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan

(Watson 1991). Family is also treated as a community with common interests, shared values, and collective honors and status (Fei 2006). Thus, when an individual fails to meet certain societal expectations, like remains single and never married, he is considered to be the one who brings shame upon his family. Since it is the parents who are responsible for the failure of their child they will feel the intense pressure from the others, and they tend to pass on this pressure to their child, just as shown in Ajay's experience.

For those who have come out to their parents, even though same-sex marriage is not legalized in China, would there still be the same intense pressure to marry? In some cases, yes. Ben is 38 years old and works as director at a tech firm in Beijing.

My parents started to nag me about my single marital status from I graduated university. At that time I just started to work and I rented a flat with another guy, which was quite common for freshmen. Yet in reality, that guy was my boyfriend. So I have never been afraid of my parents' visit, and my parents treated him just as my flat-mate. We were together for years, and my parents saw him frequently. They definitely *you yidian xiangfa* (had some thoughts), but never *dianpo* (revealed it). They started not to mention the issue of my single marital status anymore, my mom once told me, "*buguan heshei zaiyiqi, zhiyaoni kaixin jiu hao* (no matter whom you choose to stay together with, as long as you are happy it would be alright)".

In Ben's case, his parents may realize his real intimate relation with his flat-mate, a guy in fact is his boyfriend, but his parents choose not to reveal it. Tacit strategy is a common way for both Chinese parents and their gay children to negotiate their social and familial relationships (Chou 2000; Engebretsen 2014). The statement that "family harmony" created by these tacit and complicit strategies represent the open-minded violence regarding homosexuals has been criticized by scholars. They argue that tactic strategies constitute a specifically Chinese homophobic form of violence, relegate gay men and women under the rhetoric of harmony, and deprive them of resources for life or for action (Ding & Liu 2005: 35; Huang 2011). The effects of tacit strategies here is not the focus in this thesis, however, in Ben's case, his parents never again mentioned the pressures for him to marry.

Sometimes when gay men come out to their parents, it is difficult for parents to accept the truth. Gradually they will probably realize that they have to accept their child's sexual orientation, but marriage will be regarded as another issue. Hugo is a 29-year-old engineer who recollects his experience when he came out to his parents:

I came out to my parents involuntarily. It was World AIDS Day 2009⁹, I talked about some issues regarding HIV with my boyfriend at that time online. Unfortunately, my father found our chat and browsed through our chat history. My parents knew my boyfriend, and they had suspicions about our relationship, but it was never confirmed, until then. So at that night I was forced to come out to my parents, and they were *qingxu jidong* (high with emotions). They did not really criticize me. Instead, my parents could not stop blaming themselves for not promptly realizing the emergence of issues in their parenting. Afterwards, my parents were *yi yu, shimian, and diluo* (depressed, suffered from insomnia, and were in low morale). They slowly accepted the fact, of course. But they have clearly expressed their disappointment, not to my sexual orientation, but to the fact that I would not bear a child. *Tamen xiangyao houdai* (they want posterity). They proposed to me that contract marriage would be viable, as they heard of a report which gossips about a well-known suspected-gay Chinese actor's rumor and suggests that he has a son from the contract marriage. We could *jiejian* (learn from it).

After his parents proposed to have a contract marriage, Hugo considered it seriously. He checked with some agencies to help him conduct a contract marriage and to bear a child in Thailand, in order not to let his parents down. However, Hugo's current partner did not endorse this plan. "It would bring very negative influence to our relationship", he emphasized. Hugo finally dropped this plan, "*weile wode xingfu* (for the sake of my happiness)". In our later conversations, Hugo told me that he was busy helping his partner to move to Australia. Since Hugo had a permanent residence in Australia, they wanted to settle down there together. Due to the generational gaps in sexual mores, coming out does not put an end to heterosexual marital pressures. For parents, being a gay man does not make them

⁹ World AIDS Day is held on the 1st December each year, and was the first ever global health day, held for the first time in 1988. More on <https://www.worldaidsday.org>

get rid of normative marriage, and marriage is considered to be a social and familial duty (Engebretsen 2014: 118).

Having a child being a gay or remaining single, parents feel the pressure coming from the real or imagined public gaze. The anxieties of how others would react, including friends, colleagues, neighbors, originate from parents' early experiences when state or workplace authorities *danwei* 单位 (working unit) were involved in close monitoring of their intimate lives. At that time *danwei* arranged group dating, approved applications of getting married or divorced, and mediated family disputes. These experiences from the specific era in Chinese history frame the public gaze parents generation claim when they have to deal with their children's marital status and gay identities (Whyte & Parish 1984; Davis 2014a; Zhang & Sun 2014: 137-139).

3.2 The Pressure to produce heirs

Another pressure that the gay men experiences is childbearing. In Chinese history, marriage was a familial decision initiated by the parents of a son seeking a daughter-in-law to continue the husband's patriline, and producing offspring within a marriage was every man's filial obligation (Davis & Friedman 2014: 6). Gay men in China, as the sons of families, face huge pressure to produce heirs to carry on the patrilineal blood lines of their families. As talked above, there are trends challenging the universality of marriage. However, unlike the West, childbearing is only legally permitted within marriage in China, which causes that marriage remains a strong social institution in China (Lesthaeghe 2010). Contract marriage becomes the exclusive gateway for gay men in China not only to meet the patrilineal succession needs but also to achieve their own dreams of having children while maintaining a certain degree of personal independence and autonomy.

In these narratives, several informants talk about the term *chuanzongjiedai* (producing a male heir to carry on the family blood). It is the most common word that the parents use when persuading or even imposing their *chuantong* (traditional) on gay men.

In Ajay's case presented above, the pressure to marry comes from his relatives, as he is the only son of his generation in his family.

My family is very *chuantong* (traditional), I know my parents worry about my single marital status and future childbearing, but they have not yet directly imposed pressure on me, as I act quite *lengdan* (indifferently) in all family activities. Actually the pressure to marry and *chuanzongjiedai* (produce a male heir to carry on the family blood) completely comes from my uncle. Very *kexiao* (funny/ridiculous) right? In my father's family, there are only two males, my father and his younger brother, my uncle. My uncle and his wife had a daughter, who is the only child, so this fact makes me the *weiyide xiwang* (the only hope) in my family to produce heirs to carry on the patrilineal blood line, and to simply pass on our last names. But I have never thought to bear a child, *wo meiyou "zijide haizi" zhege gainian* (I don't have the concept of "my own child").

According to all the informants, *chuanzongjiedai* is vital in their parents eyes, although according to their narratives, none of them accepts this ideology. The undergoing transformations of the values regarding family, marriage, and sexuality in China, makes the young generation have new understandings and experiences, which are different from their parents' and other older gay men's. Tommy is 25 years old, working as a teacher at a private education institution. He shared his experience about his ex-boyfriend's choice to marry and bear a child.

I started this relationship with my ex-boyfriend during my university time. He was 9 years older than me, which made him face more struggles concerning the expectations from his family and career to marry and bear child. While I was just a school student in my third year of my bachelor studies, he chose to marry a *zhinü* (heterosexual woman). I was quite sad back then. Recently, they are preparing for having a baby together. Yes, I know this because we are still in touch. After he got married, we met several times, but just had dinner together. He has been very honest with me so I know that he has been dating other guys after getting married ... I will not tell the woman the truth, but I am sure that I will never *hetamen yiyang* (do what they've done).

Comparing with Tommy's difficult time when he had to deal with his ex-boyfriend's choice to marry and have a child with a heterosexual woman, Kelvin's story with his ex-boyfriends

shows a different type of struggle. Kelvin is a 27-years-old pilot working for an airline companies in China.

He was the first boyfriend in my life. I went to Wuhan to do my bachelor study and I met him there. He was local, in his 40s, in a marriage with a woman, and had a child. He was *tanbai* (frank/honest) at the beginning, and I *jieshou* (accepted) his life. I understood the pressure that he had to face. I understood his choice [to marry and bear a child with a heterosexual woman]. When his son was 10 years old, his wife discovered the fact. And in the third year of our relationship, his wife spotted *wode cunzai* (my existence). She was in huge and indescribable pain. She hated her husband but she did not choose to divorce him because *haizi taixiao* (the child was too little). She lived with pain, so did my ex-boyfriend. The whole family was *feichang tongku* (suffering terribly) ... I was young. I thought love took everything. I did not think about other issues. Now we are friends. We are still in touch ... I will not have children. I feel no responsibility of *chuanzongjiedai*. I have talked about this issue with my parents. They do not approve of *chuanzongjiedai* either. As they sum up, *women chengzhangyu biangede niandai, guannian yishi zhuanbiande taikuaile* (We grew up in an era of transformations, social consciousness and ideology transformed rapidly).

The traditional ideology of *chuanzongjiedai* has a huge influence on gay men to conduct marriages in China, as it is still the exclusive gateway to bear children. Nevertheless, the ideology is undergoing some changes under the dramatic transformation in economic, politics, and society (Davis & Friedman 2014), not only in the young generation, but also in their parents' generation, as what Kelvin quoted from his parents. Nilao's parents have also accepted and adapted to these dramatic transformations which emerged in China within the last decades. Nilao is a 38-year-old columnist. His family is Wa people, one of China's 55 ethnic minority groups who inhabits southwest China. The one-child-policy does not apply to minority populations so his family has three children, and his has one elder brother and one younger sister. Both his brother and sister have got married and have children. His younger sister has a son while his elder brother "only" has a daughter. Technically speaking, the task

of *chuanzongjiedai* in his family has not been completed, because there is no male heir to carry on the family's name.

...but I can't, and I'm not responsible for this. My parents are very *kaiming* (open-minded), *bukanzhong nannü* (do not value the gender of children). My father once said, regarding the assimilation in our society, the younger generation could not even speak our own language now. Our ethnicity is disappearing, *meiyou houdai* (no heirs) is not that important.

The transformation of ideology regarding marriage, family, and sexuality in China, has changed the expectations and practices for gay men in urban China, as well as their parents' generation, to negotiate their intimate lives.

3.3 Vincent's Contract Marriage with Jenny

Though the fact that contract marriage is commonly talked about and often considered among gay men in urban China, it is still a prudent choice which requires overall negotiations, a well-conceived plan, an accurate performance, and indescribable struggles.

Vincent is a 35-year-old engineer. He was a very good friend of two boys during his middle school studies in southern China. He knew that *woyou yixie zhuangtai buyiyang* (I have states different), but he was unwilling to admit the differences until he went to Australia one year after graduating from university.

I met my ex after I moved to Australia. We moved together naturally, and stayed together for 7 years. During the first two or three years of our cohabitation, I always woke up with a start at night, questioning myself, "why am I in a relationship like this?" *Wohen zhengzha* (I was struggling). I finally made up my mind to have a talk with my ex, I told him that we should end our relationship. I think that I should have a *zhengchangde hunyin* (normal marriage).

After splitting up with my ex, I started to realize how important he used to be in my life. He was a very big part of my life. It was the first relationship in my life. I

started to think and pay more attention to women, but I realized there were many things I could not accept [about women].

Vincent quitted his job in Australia and moved back to China after splitting up with his ex, to make an attempt to come back to the “normal” way of life. His parents were very happy about his return. When Vincent went back home and stayed with his parents, he still hurt due to the split with his ex. With the expectation of some comfort from families, he told his parents the whole story of his love, It was the first time for his parents to confirm their son’s sexual orientation, despite the fact that they had suspected it before, but their reaction was not what Vincent expected.

I told my dad first, probably it was too shocking for him to stay calm. He told my mom. The first reaction from my mom touched me profoundly. She said, “*ni zenme shenghuo nameku* (you lived such a hard/sorrowful life)”. I was so deeply moved by my mom that I thought she was very *mingshili* (reasonable and in good sense) and worrying about my happiness. However, only after a short time, my mom, together with my dad, chose to oppose [my gay identity].

Vincent’s parents could not accept the truth, which they had suspected before, that their sole son was gay. They even felt repugnance towards the truth, so that it was forbidden to talk about it again at home. They threatened him with their health conditions, “After you told me this issue, *wo zhengge wanshang shuibuzhao* (I could not fall asleep the whole night)”. His parents were also worried about their own social status. Considering that they are living in a medium-sized city, having a gay child would be a hot topic to be gossiped, as Vincent’s father blamed - *ni zhegesi rangwo zenme jianren* (how can I socialize with people regarding your issue [being a gay child]). Vincent’s gay self-identity was considered to be a family shame by his parents. The following Spring Festival after his coming out, the whole family gathered together to celebrate new year. As presented in the previous part, the marital status of young generations in the family was a key topic during these family gatherings.

When *sanguliupo* (different female elders in the family) constantly asked my mom why I was still single, my mom *dangchang bengkui daku* (emotionally collapsed and wailed with grief on the spot), but she remained silent with endless

tears instead of telling others my gay identity. Because in her eyes the fact [having a gay child] is *buchi* (despised).

Besides avoiding talking about it, Vincent's parents also made an attempt to seek some support. After being allowed by Vincent to discuss the issue with others, his parents turned to Vincent's aunt, his father's sister and a doctor, to yearn for some support. Vincent's aunt gave his father scientific explanations and a conclusion, "*bupeng buchuji buwen* (do not bang, touch, or ask)". She asked his father to the idea of changing it, considering the fact that Vincent's sexual orientation is irreversible.

But Vincent's parents were not that easily persuaded. They introduced a girl to him, who is from Guangzhou, south China. 2012 is a pretty hard year for Vincent, he was suffering from the hurt of splitting with his boyfriend, the opposition from parents, the lack of social activities, and even social security issues. So when there was another job opportunity in Brisbane, Australia, Vincent accepted the job and moved back to Australia. Meanwhile, he also kept the phone number of the girl and stayed in touch with her, as she was introduced by his parents.

After moving back to Australia, Vincent met his boyfriend, who he was deeply in love with. Meanwhile, his ongoing connection with the girl introduced by his parents and the persistent persuading of his parents made Vincent completely confused about what he wanted and needed. He had not yet met the girl from Guangzhou in person. They only communicated online. He decided to go back to China to meet the girl in person, to clarify his minds and to resolve all the issues.

I made my decision to go back to China to meet the girl in person. The night before my departure, I totally *bengkui* (emotionally collapsed), because I was thinking what if I decide to stay together with the girl after meeting her in China. I have to leave my current boyfriend who I love so much. But I've made my decision. After flying back to China at the beginning of 2013, I finally made it clear that I do not want to stay together with girls, not just this girl, I mean female generally. I do not want to *pianhun* (cheat marriage, refers to gay-straight marriage without revealing same-sex sexual orientation).

After making up his mind that *pianhun* is not what he prefers, Vincent started to consider *xinghun*. During his stay at home in the first half of 2013, he posted an advertisement seeking a *lala* wife on the Contract Marriage Forum (*xingshi hunyin ba/xinghun ba*) on one of the biggest web portals in China, Baidu.¹⁰ Vincent had a meeting with a *lala* Jenny, who firstly contacted him and who he eventually conducted a contract marriage with. Four other *lalas* contacted Vincent after seeing his advertisement, but Vincent did not meet them.

I made my decision to conduct a contract marriage with a *lala*, I think “*pianhun yaodui suoyouren yanxi yan yibeizi, xinghun zhishi dui yibufenren* (conducting a gay-straight marriage requires life-long performance to everyone, while contract marriage requires performance to a certain group of people). This decision aims to alleviate the pressure from both my parents and the society.

Jenny, the *lala* Vincent married, has a college level education and used to be airplane maintenance personnel. After quitting this job, Jenny opened a café by herself in Guangzhou. Vincent describes their first meeting like this:

We met in her café for the first time. She had long hair, but looked *youyidian lata* (a little bit slovenly). I did not care about appearance, neither education level. I thought it would be more like making friends. What I cared the most about was *dairenchushi* (the way to treat others and act in society), which was proved in later days that she was very good at it. We talked about the economic conditions of each other, as I did not want her economic condition to bring any influence to my standard of living. It was very good that we were both economically independent, and we decided to maintain the economic independence, and live individually after we married, only *yiqi yanyanxi* (play-performing together) when needed, especially during Spring Festivals and some other holidays. Her family was fine, her father passed away several years ago. Her mom remarried and currently lived in Macau. Only some relatives were living in the same city Guangzhou.

¹⁰ More about the operations of Contract Marriage Forum on Baidu, see Engebretsen 2014: 110-114.

After knowing each other for 1 year, Vincent got married to Jenny at the end of 2014, back then he was working in Melbourne. Vincent flew back to Guangzhou, and went to register their marriage with Jenny. After the registration, Vincent brought the marriage certificate back home to his father. His father was so happy that he took out his cellphone, took photos of the marriage certificate, and sent to all family relatives. Vincent's father felt that this issue had been *chuli haole* (managed well). Vincent's father wanted them to have a wedding banquet, but Vincent refused. He said because this was not a *zhenxinde jiehun* (true love marriage), he did not want to receive wishes.

One fact which is worth the attention here is that both Vincent and Jenny had come out to their own family about their gay desires before they conducted the contract marriage, but not to their parents-in-law. Vincent's parents thought they had successfully persuaded their gay child to switch back to a "normal" life by marrying a heterosexual woman. Jenny's family thought exactly the same that Jenny chose to marry a heterosexual man. Both the two families thought there were problems in their own child, but they stayed silent about the other.

After being married, Vincent moved back to Melbourne to work, Jenny stayed in Guangzhou, running her own café. On the New Year Day or Chinese festivals, Vincent flies back to China, and they take part in family activities together.

After conducting this contract marriage, the pressure on me *queshi xiaole* (did decreased). Nobody pushed me to marry anymore. Now the problem is to have children. We did not talk about childbearing in the contract marriage. I am not ready yet, but I would love to have one, like *ganqing jituo* (emotional sustenance). It is also my parents' hope. I think *qingqing* (affection between blood relations) is very different with *banlü* (partnership). It's something that will not be taken away. The hesitation to me is that if I should have a child with Jenny. I do not think I have the ability to take good care of a baby alone, but if I leave the baby to Jenny in China and just support them with money, without accompany, I do not feel it is my child.

More than one year later after our conversation, Vincent got a promotion and now he is preparing to move to Hong Kong in the second half of 2017, which will be very close to

Jenny and Vincent's parents, he expressed, "I do not want to live together with my parents. When they come to visit, I feel very intense pressure, but I would like to live closer to them".

3.4 Intergenerational Relations in China: The Financial Capitals and Moral Capitals

From the narratives of gay men in urban China, we could address that, with the rapid transformation of values and concepts regarding marriage and sexuality in China, the deinstitutionalization of marriage could be captured, while the institution of family appears more robust and far less deinstitutionalized in Chinese societies (Davis & Friedman 2014: 27). The negotiations of gay men between the pressure to marry, which is from their parents, and the personal autonomy and independence of their same-sex desires is requiring integrated explanation of intergenerational relations in an era with dramatic transformations in economics, politics, and ideology.

The financial capitals and moral capitals together shaped the interdependence between gay men and their parents. As Zhang and Sun's (2014) summed up, "Financial pressure, the lack of a well-orchestrated and implemented social welfare system, and the emotional bond among generations due to the one-child policy thus create ever-closer interdependence among family members of different generations (Zhang & Sun 2014: 137)."

Martin King Whyte's (1997) research of filial obligations in urban China demonstrates that adult children depend heavily on their parents for the financial assistance with housing, education, employment, babysitting, and even just housework. In summary, state policies such as the one-child policy, and the volatility caused by market reforms, together in various ways lead to the intensification of intergenerational emotional bonds and mutual material interdependence (Whyte 1997: 25).

Regarding the fact that current young people of marriageable age were born under the one-child policy (after 1980), their parents have devoted themselves to providing unprecedented opportunities for the only child to "develop careers and lifestyles that are compatible with their educational and economic status" (Zhang & Sun 2014: 124), and the younger

generations must rely on their parents to act as a sanctuary from the turbulence and instability caused by market reforms (Wang 2010). One of the major difficulties for younger generations to step in the society is the unreasonable high prices of housing and their limited salaries.

Since the introduction of the marketization of real estate, China now has the largest residential real estate market in the world, with the value of more than US\$ 30 trillion (Fincher 2014: 45-47). Compared with their parents who have shared the benefits of state-sponsored housing, the young generation, including those gay men in urban China, could not afford the high real estate prices individually, instead they have to rely on one or both sets of parents heavily to buy an apartment (Davis 2010).

On the other hand, parents cultivate strong emotional ties with their children to safeguard that they will be supported by their children when they turn to old age. Resource leverage, as it has previously been shown in these narratives by gay men, has acted as the main mechanism in China through which parents obligate their children to respect, obey and reciprocate (Whyte 1997). The principles of collective and intergenerational reciprocity still die hard in Chinese society. The parents' generation focuses on the health and success of their one-and-only child, regardless the children's sexual orientation, which cultivates the tied between the support they expect to receive in their old age and the success and happiness of their single child (Zhang & Sun, 2014: 139). Regarding this fact, it is less surprising that parents remain anxious about their gay son's marital status, sometimes even after accepting the gay-identity of their sons, and keep making efforts to lead their gay sons back to the "right" track, while gay men seldom rebuff their parents' efforts, just like they still attend those matchmaking dinners.

To sum up, the intergenerational emotional bonds strengthened by one-child policy, the instability caused by rapid economic and social reforms, and the lack of well-orchestrated and implemented social welfare system, together created the ever-closer interdependence among family members of different generations; in addition, the increase of the desire for personal autonomy among young gay men in China as well as their needs to rely on parents for financial supports for accesses to the development of education, career, and lifestyle together shaped the motivations for gay men in urban China to conduct contract marriages (Zhang & Sun 2014: 137; Choi & Luo 2016: 277)

The moral capitals in the intergenerational relations, together with public values, consist in the post-Mao middle-class logics of good-quality citizenship, which I will portray more in the following section.

4. In the Public: Negotiating regulations and public expectations

4.1 “I want my children to know their mom”: the story of Tixiaowen

I have been following up Tixiaowen’s process of entering a contract marriage since our first time meeting at the beginning of 2016. He was introduced to me by a friend of mine, Justin, who also took part in my research, when I first started it. According to Justin: “you have to meet Tixiaowen. He wants and needs someone to talk with about his *xinghun mafan* (contract marriage troubles). He has so much to negotiate and even more to share.” Tixiaowen is an optimistic and confident man, 32 years old and works in finance. We later became friends. When I met him and conducted the interview for the first time in January 2016, he just ended a nearly successful contract marriage with a *lala* named Shaner in Shanghai, and he was currently dating another *lala* named Muzi.

Shaner and I met in a *xinghun* party in Shanghai in 2015, since then we started to date. She was a local Shanghai lady, living with her parents. I visited her parents once a week. They liked me. Everything was going very well until Shaner told me that she was *taileile yanbuxiaqule* (too tired to perform anymore), because of her girlfriend. Shaner’s girlfriend was pushing Shaner so hard that Shaner could not bear the pressure of double-faced performance, so they broke up. After breaking up with her girlfriend, Shaner broke up with me too, as she decided to marry a *zhinan* to resolve the marriage pressure.

After Shaner left, Tixiaowen started to attend *xinghun* parties again. He met Muzi this time, a girl from Sichuan, the same home province as Tixiaowen.

Muzi is a little short. As you can see, I am not tall, so I would prefer a taller girl, good for our child [laugh]. We both wanted and agreed to have a child in our discussion. The problem now is, she has been a little bit too urgent about our contract marriage. I am suspicious of her intentions. As we agreed to have a child,

so we must register our marriage legally in order to register the *hukou* of our child. She has emphasized that she doesn't want to divorce, and once we get married as she wants to have Shanghai *hukou*¹¹. Yes I want a child, but I am seriously considering if I should have a child with Muzi. I do not want to *sheji jingji jiu fen* (get involved in economic dispute). Moreover, I am worried that once we have some problems in the marriage and decide to divorce, she would win the custody of child.¹² She is in such a urgency now, and she is dating other gay men too to conduct contract marriages. Probably they will be faster.

The negotiations of childbearing in the contract marriages are chaotic in China regarding not only the large-scale law that childbearing is only legally permitted within marriage, despite the ongoing negotiation between marriage and sexual intimacy (Davis 2014a), but also a variety of particular “Chinese characteristic” regulations, such as *hukou* system mentioned above. While prudently negotiating the possible contract marriage and childbearing with Muzi, in December 2016, some friends introduced another *lala* to Tixiaowen, Cici, a self-identified T¹³ who just completed her study in the UK.

Cici wanted to marry and produce children so urgently as her parents were pressing her really hard. I was actually not that interested in such a urgent negotiation, but she was introduced by friends, so that I agreed to meet and gave one photo of mine to her to show his parents... Cici was very man (in English, means masculine), but she was a nice person. As she was introduced to me by some friends, I had some *liaojie* (acquaintances) of her. I am not anxious now, but I have some concerns. We both want a child. Her mother is very *qiangshi* (strong,

¹¹ More about *hukou* system in China, see Whyte 2010 and Fincher 2014: 76.

¹² The Marriage Law of China might be biased towards women with newborn baby when dealing divorce cases. A case in Beijing in 2011 that a gay man filed for divorce with his *lala* wife, as she refused to let him raise the only child they produced, they planned to give birth to twins through artificial insemination and to each take one, the Haidian District Court rejected the divorce request as it was less than one year after the delivery. More on “Gay man denied divorce”, *Global Times* October 13, 2011. Accessed April 20, 2017. <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/679040.shtml>.

¹³ The T self-identification here generally refers to a more masculine role in a *lala* relationship, more meanings about the T-P roles in lesbian communities in China, see Engebretsen 2014: 47-55.

mighty and bossy). Our child will be raised by Cici's mother, as Cici could not raise the child due to her economic conditions. This is not the mode I want.

Tixiaowen came out to his parents in 2015, when he was 31 years old. His parents had suspected before, but it was not confirmed until Tixiaowen clarified it. His parents had some old classmates of them who were gay, so they understood it. They did not impose pressure to marry on Tixiaowen, but they strongly urged him to produce a child. Childbearing has always been one of the two key intentions for Tixiaowen to conduct contract marriage.

I really want a child, my own one, this feeling became extremely strong after I turned 27 years old. I want to *baziji chuancheng xiaqu* (inherit myself). This is just *geren renshengguan* (personal outlook). Of course surrogacy is always an option for me, but I do hope my child could know and grow up with a mom. That's why I am considering *xinghun*, but the legal and economic concerns are the obstacles... but I am not anxious.

The other reason for Tixiaowen to conduct contract marriage is to ease the pressure to marry which comes from the workplace. As a 31-years-old single financier, he faces a considerable pressure to marry.

I did not come out in my workplace, but I claimed that I have a girlfriend because my colleagues have constantly introduced girls to me. This is also one of the key reasons that I am considering contract marriage. I hope this marriage could be decent (in English). The economic independency of each other is significant as it is the basis of equality and lifestyle. I hope she could also be my partner in my work. One important requirement is her appearance. She must be beautiful so that it will not *diulian* (lose face). As so many colleagues of mine have introduced girls to me, so the *lala* I choose to marry should be more beautiful than them. It is also for the *panbi* (comparison) with other gay men. My ideal mode of contract marriage is that I help her to deceive her parents while she helps me to deceive my colleagues. The image of me being a middle-aged financier with a beautiful wife is important for my clients.

Tixiaowen's negotiations in his workplace as a single financier demonstrate the public expectations of men as well as the gay men's marital status and professions in urban China. Other narratives also show it. Kelvin, the 27-years-old pilot, related his experience in the workplace regarding the public expectations.

There are quite a lot of gay men in my company, the corporate climate towards LGBTQ is quite tolerant. Gay men and *lalas* in my company can easily come out, and they get the defense from the airline. But for me, as a pilot, it is impossible. Pilot in public eyes is a very masculine job. It is a *zhinan zhangkongde hangye* (an industry controlled by straight men). Being a gay pilot would bring negative effects to my future development in my workplace. The corporate culture in aviation industry values professions more than diversity.

While Kelvin's choice of not coming out concerns about his gay identity would negatively affect his future career development in aviation industry, in other industries, coming out becomes necessary. Freddie is a 25-year-old gay man working in advertising. In his narratives, public expectations are totally opposite to the those in Kelvin's narratives.

I came out in my workplace. It was so natural as there were. I would say, 80 percent of people who work in advertising, are LGBT groups (in English). There was one colleague of mine... he was not even gay. He was just gay-friendly (in English). He also claimed that he was gay in the workplace, as the tag of gay in our advertising industry would really refer to "better aesthetic taste", which would bring priorities when being selected by clients. Being an open gay in advertising has advantages, but not always. After I came out, it brought some troubles to me. Boys thought that as a gay man I was supposed to be more outstanding and undertake heavier workloads. Girls wanted to be *gaymi* (gay besties, an English-Chinese compounded slang) with me. It sort of blurred the boundaries of my job and my life.

The same situation occurs in Lu's story, but what matters in his career is his married status rather than gay-identity. Lu is 33 years old, working as a partner of a wedding ceremony service company. The interview with Lu has been quite challenging regarding his personal

intimate situation. He is in a marriage with a heterosexual woman who has no idea about Lu's gay identity. Meanwhile, he is in a relationship with his same sex partner.

My wife and my boyfriend have met each other. My boyfriend was familiar with my marital status, but my wife only thought my boyfriend was my best friend... This was never the way I planned for my life. I had never thought that I would get married. In 2014 I was so in love with my boyfriend back then. I thought he was *the one* (in English). Unfortunately, we split up. While my parents were pushing me so hard to marry, I *yishichongdong jiu chuguile* (came out to parents out of a sudden impulse). They could not accept it at all. They insistently arranged matchmaking dinners for me. My mom has even threatened me with her health situation... I met my current boyfriend in 2014, before I met my wife in a parents-arranged matchmaking dinner. I got married with my wife in March 2015. After getting married, I officially started my relationship with my boyfriend... One reason for me to marry a *zhinü* (straight woman) is for sure because of the intense pressure to marry or, I would say, the force from my parents. Besides, also [it is] because of the job I am doing now. I am running a company that provides wedding ceremony services. An image of being in a happy marriage is important and even necessary for the clients. A single gay guy in his thirties taking charge of your wedding ceremony is not very convincing, isn't it?

Hugo also talked about the public values in his narratives. He works for a German company. The corporate culture of that company attaches significance of the value of families. The HR department has constantly cared for the marital status of employees in order to evaluate if the employee would stay in the same company for longer years. These pressures could be addressed in formal and informal workplace practices; a marriage is tied to employer expectations of employees being committed, loyal and stable (Ahituv & Lerman 2007; Ginther & Zavodny 2001; Korenman & Neumark 1991).

Justin has emphasized the public expectations and his choice in his narratives.

As a freelancer, I do not experience the pressures in workplaces as others, but I did not come out because of the cooperation with some suppliers. I could not control their opinions towards gay men, but I do not want this to bring negative

influence to my career... I significantly emphasize the degree of maturity of one's *shehui juese* (the role in society). I think it is the priority to act well of my role in society. I believe that by gaining remarkable achievements in my professional area, it would be easier for both my parents and the society to accept my gay identity. No matter if I remain single or come out, my parents will also face the intense pressures from their own *shejiao quanzi* (social circles). If I, as their child, achieve success in my own area, it would become more understandable for my parents and their friends to deal with my *geren ganqing shenghuode queshi* (the defect of my personal intimate life).

Justin's narratives point out the public values towards one's marital status and sexual orientations. Gay men live in the society with their own professional roles. The logics of being a "good" citizen have affected gay men's strategies to manage their gay life, such as negotiating the public values and private lives. Justin's opinion that "becoming a successful person in his professional field before coming out makes it easier for others to accept his defects in his intimate life [being gay/single]" represents the Lucetta Kam's theory of public correctness when conducting research of *lalas* in Shanghai, suggesting that gay people in China have to conform the public expectations for those to be good-quality citizens before their same-sex desires in the private (Kam 2013). I will talk more in the following section about the strategies to manage a gay life, such as being a good citizen while being a gay, regarding the public values.

4.2 Managing a gay life: Being a Good Citizen While Being a Gay

As presented in previous section, in addition to financial capitals, moral capitals also shape the intergenerational relations and gay men's choices when facing various pressures to marry. Filial piety, as the vital component of moral capitals, has been being regarded as the fundamental basis of kin relationships and respectable *suzhi* (quality) status in the rapidly transforming family and generational dynamics in urban China (Evans 2007; Whyte 1997; Yan 2003; Engebretsen 2014). The gender differences in filial responsibilities are central.

Males are expected to produce heirs to carry on patrilineal blood lines of their families, and to support and fulfill the filial obligations to their parents, while women should help their husbands' families to produce heirs to carry on the family blood which they marry into.

Filiality is often described as the domain of men in China (Rofel 1999b: 84). This could be confirmed by comparing different family strategies of gay men and *lalas*. Gay men face more pressures to marry, compared with *lalas*, as they have the filial obligations to produce heirs to carry on family blood, which makes gay men in China more likely to conduct heterosexual marriages (Chou 2000; Rofel 2007; Hu 2011; Kong 2011). While *lalas* are easier to rebuff the pressures to marry as the obligations for women to marry and produce heirs do not apply to their natal families.

The ever-closer interdependence among family members of different generations in China is to a large extent created by the neglect of the market-driven government in social welfare and service provision, under this historical and social context, the persistence of filial duty system derives not merely comes from conventions or culture traditions. Harriet Evans (2007) notices the promotion of the Confucian model of filial duty in China in recent years, and she argues that the filial duty is used by ways of compensation for “the government’s focus on economic growth rather than social welfare”; more specifically, it is used as a unifying social structure for collective support of the elderly, particularly for their old age care and economic support (Evans 2007: 173).

Engebretsen’s (2014) elaborate research on the contract marriage negotiations among *lalas* in Beijing argues that the gay-lesbian contract marriage in reality is highly problematic; it could not erase the dominant structures of conformist expectations (Engebretsen 2014: 118), since a significant part of the problem is out of a symbolic and emotional nature. For those gay men and *lalas*, conducting contract marriages or even just hiding their gay identities to their families brings the guilt of lying and being unfilial to parents which gays and *lalas* have to live their everyday lives with. “This [lying to parents and act unfilially] is not simply a remnant of traditional filial norms; central regulatory aspects of filial logic shape the post-Mao middle-class aspiration for good-quality citizenship, which emphasizes qualities such as ‘skillful harmony’, convention, and stability and order in the management of one’s personal life” (ibid.). As Ajay explained in his narrative:

Coming out to his parents is *biyaode* (necessary). Just because my parents gave birth to me and raised me up, they certainly deserve to know the real me [sexual orientation]. I want to become more economic independent first. I think it is a *shanghai* (wound) by not telling them. Even if they do not accept it after I tell them, I hope after a long-time storm we could calm down and talk about it. I believe contract marriage is also a *shanghai* (wound) to the parents. Rather than lie [referring contract marriage], I prefer to be honest.

The middle-class aspiration of a good-quality citizenship has also shaped a desirable gayness/lesbianism which provides guidance for gay men and *lalas* in China to be “good” gay men and *lalas*, i.e. one should strive to be well-mannered, appealing, and outstanding to improve the images of gay men and *lalas* from the society (Engebretsen 2014: 52). The good-quality citizenship, translated from the term *suzhi*, is used in China to evaluate the “qualities of civility, self-discipline and modernity” (Yan 2003: 494) and “justify social and political hierarchies of all sorts, with those of ‘high’ quality gaining more income, power and status than the ‘low’” as a hegemonic discourse in contemporary China (Kipnis 2006: 295). As shown previously in these narratives of gay men, to a larger scope, a good-quality metropolitan citizen is expected to be well-mannered, take the filial responsibility, be outstanding in one’s professional field, conduct a commitment to marriage and family, not only put efforts in getting a “higher” income, power, and status, but also conform to the public values and expectations. The politics of public correctness which are theorized by Lucetta Kam suggests that gay men and *lalas* in China prioritize the conformity to public expectations to be good-quality citizens rather than seeking their same-sex desires in the private (Kam 2013). In regard to the contract marriage practices, the theory of public correctness could not fully address the negotiations of gay men in urban China within the binary distinction of public and private. For example, a variety of motivations and practices of gay men in urban China could not be simply labeled public or private. Presenting these narratives of gay men in urban China also helps to question the simplistic understanding of gay men and *lalas*’ decision to conduct contract marriage only as a conform-to-normativity strategy to conform to familial responsibility and social norms (Cho 2009; Engebretsen 2014)

The negotiations of gay men demonstrate various concerns and motivations in addition to family responsibility and expectations, as well as personal desires, benefits, and lifestyles,

and social recognitions. The narratives of the gay men contribute to the understanding of their motivations within the Chineseness, namely not just the cultural ignorance and institutional discrimination, but also in practical the very specific regulations and laws in China such as the *hukou* system and childbearing only legally permitted within marriage, which to some extent shape the gay men's motivations of conducting contract marriage which derive from their needs and intentions of the lifestyle they plan.

The gay-lesbian contract marriage still remains a sort of new topic in sociological and queer studies, and not a single recorded theory could fully explain the motivations and negotiations. Speaking back to the starting theory where Lauer and Yodanis use DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) approach of explaining isomorphism to outline the institutional pressures to understand the persistent decision to marry, coercive mechanisms, as one of the mechanisms, are pressures toward conformity from formal organizations that actors in the institution are dependent upon, namely the government only providing married people access to rights while denying the unmarried. In this case, the childbearing in China is only legally permitted within the marriage, while same-sex marriage is not legalized. This drives gay men in urban China, like Tixiaowen, to conduct contract marriages with *lalas* when they hope to have a child of their own while maintaining a degree of personal autonomy of their same-sex desires. Not just childbearing permission, there continues to be various of legal rights tied to marriage, such as real estate purchasing permission in big cities like Shanghai, which denies unmarried people in urban China accesses to financial resources, parental rights and others (so on).

By combining theories from different perspectives to understand these narratives of gay men in urban China, we could demonstrate the dilemma of gay men as well as their negotiations with both familial and social norms, from not only a general cultural perspective of view, but also a more practical scope of their everyday lives.

5. Conclusion

This paper uses gay-lesbian contract marriages in urban China as a case, to document the lived experiences of gay men and analyses their motivations and struggles when considering contract marriage with *lalas* as a viable way to alleviate the intense pressure to marry. The contract marriage is are a method for gays and *lalas* to construct the façade of heterosexuality to release them from the marriage pressure from both society and family. Contracts, or even just implicit agreements, are conducted to secure both partners' personal independence and privacy, and to fulfill the familial and social obligations in the façade of a husband and wife relationship. It has been seen, discussed and conducted in *tongzhi* communities in China for some time, yet only explored by a limited number of scholars.

The emergence of contract marriage is in an era when partnering options for gay people are increasing globally, e.g. in Latin America (Esteve et al 2012), and there is a consensus that the repression of homosexuality has been considerably reduced by the Chinese state within the past decades since the introduction of China's "opening up" in the 1980s (Jeffreys 2006; Kang 2012). Meanwhile, the institution of marriage is undergoing dramatic changes globally (Amato 2004; Cherlin 2004; Coontz 2004; Thornton et al., 2007). Even in Chinese societies (mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan), within the last decade, marital norms and behaviors have radically shifted from prevailing to nowadays "deinstitutionalized" (Davis & Friedman 2014: 2).

First, gay men in urban China face intense pressures to marry from their parents, even when their parents are aware of their same-sex sexuality.

The pressures affect not only gay men, but also their parents. The parental anxieties are often framed through the real or imagined gaze of others, including family members, friends, and sometimes even neighbors, and the experiences of public gaze derives from the very specific time in Chinese history when *danwei* (working units) acted as vital roles in monitoring the intimate lives of the parents' generation (Zhang & Sun 2014: 139). Parents imposing the pressure to get married on their children is not a specific issue for gay, but a nationwide phenomenon in China's society. The common mechanisms for parents to impose pressure to marry on their children including ganging up their networks with other family members and

friends to arrange matchmaking dinners for the children, and resource leverage (Choi & Luo 2016).

The conception of *chuanzongjiedai* (producing male heirs to carry on patrilineal family line) is still strongly embedded in China, which brings more intense pressure to get married for gay men in China, compared with *lalas*, and makes them much easier to conduct marriage with females to fulfill the obligations (Chou 2000; Hu 2011; Kong 2011; Rofel 2007).

The negotiations of gay men in urban China between the family obligations and personal autonomy of their same-sex desires, mirrors the ever-closer intergenerational interdependence among Chinese families. The economic instabilities in the reform era, the intergenerational emotional bonds caused by one-child policy, the material mutual interdependences caused by the sharply rising price of housing, bureaucratic systems of employment and school placement (Whyte 1997: 25), and the lack of a well-orchestrated and implemented social welfare system (Zhang & Sun 2014: 137), together created the capitals, both financially and morally, for family members of different generations in current China to rely on each other.

Second, gay men in urban China carefully negotiate their professional roles in workplaces and their gay identities. According to the narratives of gay men, although the tolerance of gay identity has increased to a high degree, in specific industries, stereotypes towards gay men and unmarried people still affect gay men's decisions to come out and enter marriage/contract marriage.

The post-Mao middle-class aspiration for good-quality citizenship, known as *yousuzhi* (good-quality), which emphasizes qualities such as 'skillful harmony', convention, and stability and order in the management of one's personal life" (Engebretsen 2014: 118). Filial responsibility as the moral capitals in intergenerational relations, to a degree shapes the harmony of the family, which makes gay men in China seldom rebuff their parents' efforts and expectations. Even after conducting contract marriage, the sense of guilty lasts due to lying to parents, being unfilial and keeping performing in public and in front of the parents, which also makes gay men and *lalas* suffer and the contract marriage problematic.

The logic of good citizen also shaped the public values towards gay men, namely being well-mannered, appealing, and outstanding in the workplace. As we can address in the narratives of gay men, marriage and family could bring the image of being committed, loyal, and stable

(Ahituv & Lerman 2007; Ginther & Zavodny 2001; Korenman & Neumark, 1991). Such image of a good citizen, which also considers marital status, also shapes the negotiation of gay men in urban China between their professional roles and their gay-identities.

However, only by drawing on the theories which interpret contract marriage from the dominant structures of conformist expectations and public values, such as public correctness by Kam (2013), we could not fully explain the motivations of gay men in urban China to conduct contract marriage. By documenting their lived experiences through their narratives, we could better address their purposes more practical, particularly their negotiations regarding conformity from formal organizations, namely policies and legal regulations. Hundreds of legal rights, are tied to the institution of marriage, especially in the China case, such as *hukou* system, household purchase, and childbearing, according to the coercive mechanisms by DiMaggio and Powell (1983), which Lauer and Yodanis (2010) use to explain the persistent decisions to marry (Lauer & Yodanis 2010: 65-67).

Admittedly, it is still challenging to fully examine the emergence of contract marriage in China. However, documenting the lived experiences of these gay men in urban China, through their negotiations we could note the rapidly transformation of the institution of marriage and sexual values in China, as well as people's expectations and practices in related realms. The narratives of these gay men represent not just a repository of lives, subcultures and feelings of being a gay man in modern days urban China, but also "a theory of cultural relevance, a construction of collective memory, and a complex record of queer activity" (Halberstam 2005: 169-170).

Bibliography

- Acker, S. (2000). In/out/side: Positioning the researcher in feminist qualitative research. *Resources for Feminist Research*, 28(1/2), 189.
- Ahituv, A., & Lerman, R. (2007). How do marital status, work effort, and wage rates interact? *Demography*, 44(3), 623-647. doi:10.1353/dem.2007.0021
- Amato, P. R. (2004). Tension between institutional and individual views of marriage. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66(4), 959-965. doi:10.1111/j.0022-2445.2004.00065.x
- Attané, I. (2012). Being a Woman in China Today: A Demography of Gender. *China Perspectives*(4), 5-15.
- Balzano, J. (2007). Toward a Gay-Friendly China: Legal Implications of Transition for Gays and Lesbians. *Law & Sexuality: Rev. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Legal Issues*, 16, 1.
- Bauman, Z. (2003). *Liquid love : on the frailty of human bonds*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Beck, U., & Beck-Gernsheim, E. (2002). *Individualization : institutionalized individualism and its social and political consequences*. London: Sage.
- Blichfeldt, B. S., Heldbjerg, G., & Relationsledelse, S. U. I. f. E. o. (2011). *Why Not?: The Interviewing of Friends and Acquaintances*: Department of Entrepreneurship and Relationship Management, University of Southern Denmark.
- Brownell, S., & Wasserstrom, J. N. (2002). *Introduction: Theorizing Femininities and Masculinities*: University of California Press.
- Cai, Y., & Feng, W. (2014). (Re)emergence of Late Marriage in Shanghai: From Collective Synchronization to Individual Choice. In *Wives, Husbands, and Lovers: Marriage and Sexuality in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Urban China*. Davis, D. & Friedman, S. ed., 97-117. Stanford, California: Stanford university press.
- Cherlin, A. (1978). Remarriage as an Incomplete Institution. *American Journal of Sociology*, 84(3), 634-650.
- (2004). The deinstitutionalization of American marriage. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66(4), 848-861. doi:10.1111/j.0022-2445.2004.00058.x
- Cho, J. (2009). The Wedding Banquet Revisited: "Contract Marriages" Between Korean Gays and Lesbians. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 82(2), 401-422. doi:10.1353/anq.0.0069
- Choi, S. Y., & Luo, M. (2016). Performative family: homosexuality, marriage and intergenerational dynamics in China. *British Journal of Sociology*, 67(2), 260-280. doi:10.1111/1468-4446.12196

- Chou, W.-S. (2000). *Tongzhi: politics of same-sex eroticism in Chinese societies*. Binghamton, NY: Haworth press.
- Coontz, S. (2004). The world historical transformation of marriage. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66(4), 974-979. doi:10.1111/j.0022-2445.2004.00067.x
- Davis, D. (2010). Who Gets the House? Renegotiating Property Rights in Post-Socialist Urban China. *Modern China*, 36(5), 463-492. doi:10.1177/0097700410373265
- (2014a). On the limits of personal autonomy. In *Wives, Husbands, and Lovers: Marriage and Sexuality in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Urban China*, Davis, D. & Friedman, S. ed., 41-61. Stanford, California: Stanford university press.
- (2014b). Privatization of Marriage in Post-Socialist China. *Modern China*, 40(6), 551-577. doi:10.1177/0097700414536528
- Davis, D., & Friedman, S. L. ed. (2014). *Wives, husbands, and lovers : marriage and sexuality in Hong Kong, Taiwan and urban China*. Stanford, California: Stanford university press.
- Davison, N. (2011). Gay marriage with Chinese characteristics. *Slate*. February 9, 2011. Accessed April 29, 2017. http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/dispatches/2011/02/gay_marriage_with_chinese_characteristics.html
- Dempsey, D. (2010). Conceiving and negotiating reproductive relationships: Lesbians and gay men forming families with children. *Sociology*, 44(6), 1145-1162.
- DiMaggio, P., & Powell, W. (1983). The iron cage revisited: institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48(2), 147-160.
- Ding, N., & Liu, J.-P. (2005). Reticent poetics, queer politics. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 6(1), 30-55. doi:10.1080/1462394042000326897
- Engbretsen, E. (2009). Intimate practices, conjugal ideals: Affective ties and relationship strategies among Lala (Lesbian) women in contemporary Beijing. *Sexuality Research & Social Policy*, 6(3), 3-14. doi:10.1525/srsp.2009.6.3.3
- (2014). *Queer Women in Urban China: An Ethnography*. London: Routledge.
- Esteve, A., Lesthaeghe, R., & López-Gay, A. (2012). The Latin American Cohabitation Boom, 1970–2007. *Population and Development Review*, 38(1), 55-81. doi:10.1111/j.1728-4457.2012.00472.x
- Evans, H. (2007). *The subject of gender: daughters and mothers in urban China*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Farrer, J. C. (2002). *Opening up : youth sex culture and market reform in Shanghai*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Fei, X. 费孝通 (2006) *Xiangtu Zhongguo (乡土中国 From the soil)*. Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe. First published 1949. Shanghai: Shanghai Guanchashe.
- Feyerabend, P. (1993). *Against method* (3rd ed. ed.). London: Verso.
- Fincher, L. H. (2014). *Leftover women : the resurgence of gender inequality in China*. London: Zed Books.
- Fox, M. (2017). Zhou Youguang, Who Made Writing Chinese as Simple as ABC, Dies at 111. *The New York Times*. January 14, 2017. Accessed May 10, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/14/world/asia/zhou-youguang-who-made-writing-chinese-as-simple-as-abc-dies-at-111.html>
- Gaetano, A. (2014). "Leftover women": postponing marriage and renegotiating womanhood in urban China. *Journal of Research in Gender Studies* (2): 124–49.
- “Gay wedding reflects growing tolerance in China.” *China Daily*, October 20, 2012. Accessed April 10, 2017. http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-10/20/content_15833702.htm
- Gao, G. (1995). Comparative research on hooliganism. *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology*, 27(3): 64-78.
- Giddens, A. (2013). *The transformation of intimacy: Sexuality, love and eroticism in modern societies*. John Wiley & Sons, 2013.
- Ginther, D. K., & Zavodny, M. (2001). Is the male marriage premium due to selection? The effect of shotgun weddings on the return to marriage. *Journal of Population Economics*, 14(2), 313-328. doi:10.1007/s001480000058
- Glosser, S. L. (2003). *Chinese Visions of Family and State, 1915-1953* (Vol. v.5). Berkeley, Calif. ;: University of California Press.
- Gross, N. (2005). The Detraditionalization of Intimacy Reconsidered. *Sociological Theory*, 23(3), 286-311. doi:10.1111/j.0735-2751.2005.00255.x
- Gummesson, E. (2003). All research is interpretive! *Journal of business & industrial marketing*, 18(6/7), 482-492.
- Halberstam, J. (2005). *In a queer time and place : transgender bodies, subcultural lives*. New York: New York University Press.
- Hinsch, B. (1990). *Passions of the cut sleeve : the male homosexual tradition in China*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ho, L. W. W. (2010). *Gay and lesbian subculture in urban China*. London: Routledge.

- Ho, P. S. Y. (2006). The (Charmed) Circle Game: Reflections on Sexual Hierarchy Through Multiple Sexual Relationships. *Sexualities*, 9(5), 547-564. doi: 10.1177/1363460706069966
- Hu, Y.-Y. (2011). *Gender, transnational culture, and new media: Enacting female queer sexuality in Taiwan*. Doctoral dissertation. Indiana University, Bloomington.
- Huang, H. T.-M. (2011). *Queer politics and sexual modernity in Taiwan* (Vol. 1): Hong Kong University Press.
- Human Rights Watch. 2012. *World report 2012: China. Events of 2011*. Accessed April 10. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2012/country-chapters/china-and-tibet>
- Jamieson, L. (1999). Intimacy transformed a critical look at the pure relationship. *Sociology*, 33(3), 477-494. doi:10.1177/S0038038599000310
- Janghorban, R., Roudsari, R. L., & Taghipour, A. (2014). Skype interviewing: The new generation of online synchronous interview in qualitative research. *International journal of qualitative studies on health and well-being*, 9.
- Jeffreys, E. (2006). *Sex and sexuality in China* (Vol. 26). New York: Routledge.
- Kam, L. Y. L. (2013). *Shanghai Lalas : female tongzhi communities and politics in urban China*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong university press.
- (2015). *Coming home, coming out: Doing fieldworks in an unfamiliar homeland*. In *Queer/Tongzhi China: New perspectives on research, activism and media culture*, Engebretsen, E. L. & Schroeder, W. F. ed., 179-191. Copenhagen: NIAS press.
- Kang, W. (2009). *Obsession: Male same-sex relations in China, 1900-1950* (Vol. 1): Hong Kong University Press.
- Kang, W. (2012). The decriminalization and depathologization of homosexuality in China. In *China in and beyond the Headlines*, Timothy B. Weston and Lionel M. Jenson ed., 231-248. Lanham MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Kipnis, A. (2006). Suzhi : a keyword approach. *The China quarterly (trykt utg.)*. 2006: 186, S.[295]-313.
- Kong, T. S. K. (2011). *Chinese male homosexualities : Memba, tongzhi and golden boy*. London: Routledge.
- Korenman, S., & Neumark, D. (1991). Does marriage really make men more productive? *Journal of human resources*, xxvi(2), 282-307.
- Lauer, S., & Yodanis, C. (2010). The deinstitutionalization of marriage revisited: A new institutional approach to marriage. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 2(1), 58-72.
- Lawrence-Lightfoot, S., & Davis, J. H. (2002). *The Art and Science of Portraiture*: Wiley.

- Lesthaeghe, R. (2010). The Unfolding Story of the Second Demographic Transition. *Population and Development Review*, 36(2), 211-251. doi:10.1111/j.1728-4457.2010.00328.x
- Li, Y. 李银河 (2002). *Tongxinglian yawenhua 同性恋亚文化 (Subculture of homosexuality)*. Beijing: Zhongguo youyi chubanshe.
- (2006). Regulating male same-sex relationships in the People's Republic of China. In *Sex and sexuality in China*, Elaine Jeffreys ed., 82-101. London and New York: Routledge.
- Li, Y. & Wang, X. (1992). *Tamen de shijie: Zhongguo nantongxinglian qunluo toushi 他们的世界: 中国男同性恋群落透视 (Their world: Perspectives on the male homosexual community in China)*. Taiyuan: Shanxi Renmin Chubanshe.
- Liang, G. 梁国胜 (2006). Shengnan shengnü duowei zhongceng chengong renshi 剩男剩女多为中层成功人士 (Majority of leftover men and women are middle-class successful people). *China Youth Newspaper*, November 11, 2006. Accessed April 9, 2017. http://zqb.cyol.com/content/2006-11/13/content_1571066.htm
- Liu, D. 刘达临 & Lu, G. 鲁光龙. ed., (2005). *Zhongguo Tongxinglian Yanjiu 中国同性恋研究 (Homosexuality Research in China)*. Beijing: zhongguo shehui chubanshe.
- Liu, H. (1995). Hooliganism. *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology*, 27(3): 57-63.
- Liu, M. (2013). Two Gay Men Seeking Two Lesbians: An Analysis of Xinghun (Formality Marriage) Ads on China's Tianya.cn. *An Interdisciplinary Quarterly*, 17(3), 494-511. doi:10.1007/s12119-012-9164-z
- O'Reilly, K. (2005). *Ethnographic methods*. London: Routledge.
- Pan, S. 潘绥铭, Wang, A. 王爱丽, Parish, W. & Lauman, E. (2004). *Dangdai zhongguoren de xingxingwei yu xingguanxi 当代中国人的性行为与性关系 (Social behavior and social relation in contemporary China)*. Beijing: Social science documentation publishing house.
- Perry, E. J., & Selden, M. (2000). *Chinese society : change, conflict and resistance*. New York: Routledge.
- Roberson, D. (2003). Learning Experiences of Senior Travellers. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 25(1), 125-144. doi:10.1080/01580370309288
- Rofel, L. (1999a). Qualities of desire: imagining gay identities in China. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 5(4), 451-474.
- (1999b). *Other modernities : gendered yearnings in China after socialism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- (2007). *Desiring China : experiments in neoliberalism, sexuality, and public culture*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- (2012). Grassroots activism: Non-normative sexual politics in post-socialist China. In *Unequal China: The political economy and cultural politics of inequality in China*, Sun, W. & Guo, Y. ed., 154-167. New York: Routledge.
- Ruan, F. F. (2013). *Sex in China: Studies in sexology in Chinese culture*: Springer Science & Business Media.
- Ruskola, T. (1994). Law, sexual morality, and gender equality in Qing and Communist China. *Yale Law Journal*, 103(8), 2531-2565.
- Sang, T.-I. D. (2003). *The emerging lesbian : female same-sex desire in modern China*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Tatlow, D. K. (2015). Shining a Light on Gay-Straight Marriages in China. *The New York Times*, May 13, 2015. Accessed in April 20. <https://sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/05/13/shining-a-light-on-gay-straight-marriages-in-china/>
- Sigley, G. (2006). Sex, politics and the policing of virtue in the People's Republic of China. *Sex and sexuality in China*, 43-61.
- Smart, C., & Shipman, B. (2004). Visions in monochrome: families, marriage and the individualization thesis 1. *British Journal of Sociology*, 55(4), 491-509. doi:10.1111/j.1468-4446.2004.00034.x
- Sommer, M. H. (2000). *Sex, law, and society in late imperial China*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press.
- Stacey, J. (1988). *Can there be a feminist ethnography?* Paper presented at the Women's Studies International Forum.
- Sun, P. 孙沛东 (2012). *Sheilaiqu wode nüer 谁来娶我的女儿 (Who will marry my daughter)*. Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe.
- Teunis, N., & Herdt, G. H. (2007). *Sexual inequalities and social justice*. Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press.
- Thornton, A., Axinn, W. G., & Xie, Y. (2007). *Marriage and cohabitation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wan, Y. (2001). Becoming a Gay Activist in Contemporary China. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 40(3-4), 47-64. doi:10.1300/J082v40n03_02
- Wang, D. (2010). Intergenerational Transmission of Family Property and Family Management in Urban China. *The China Quarterly*, 204(204), 960-979. doi:10.1017/S0305741010001049

- Wang, Y. (2015). Cooperative marriage, a "fake marriage" or a new intimate alliance?. Master Thesis. University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam, Hong Kong SAR. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.5353/th_b5388024
- Wasserfall, R. (1993). Reflexivity, feminism and difference. *Qualitative Sociology*, 16(1), 23-41. doi:10.1007/BF00990072
- Watson, R. S. (1991). *Afterword: Marriage and Gender Inequality*: University of California Press.
- Wei, W. (2007). "Wandering men" no longer wander around: the production and transformation of local homosexual identities in contemporary Chengdu, China. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 8(4): 572-88.
- Wekker, G. (1998). Of sex and silence: Methodological considerations on sex research in Paramaribo, Suriname. *Thamyris* 5 (1): 105-129.
- Whyte, M. (1997). The fate of filial obligations in urban China. *China J.*, 38, 1-31.
- (2010). *One country, two societies : rural-urban inequality in contemporary China* (Vol. 16). Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Whyte, M. K., & Parish, W. L. (1984). *Urban life in contemporary China*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wu, J. (2003). From "Long Yang" and "Dui Shi" to Tongzhi: Homosexuality in China. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Psychotherapy*, 7(1-2), 117-143. doi:10.1300/J236v07n01_08
- Yan, H. (2003). Neoliberal Governmentality and Neohumanism: Organizing Suzhi/Value Flow through Labor Recruitment Networks. *Cultural Anthropology*, 18(4), 493-523. doi:10.1525/can.2003.18.4.493
- Yan, Y. (2003). *Private life under socialism : love, intimacy, and family change in a Chinese village, 1949-1999*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press.
- (2010). The Chinese path to individualization. *British Journal of Sociology*, 61(3), 489-512. doi:10.1111/j.1468-4446.2010.01323.x
- Zhang, B. 张北川 (1994). *Tongxingai* (同性爱 same-sex love). Jinan: Shandong Kexue Jishu Chubanshe.
- Zhang, J., & Sun, P. (2014). 'When Are You Going to Get Married?' Parental Matchmaking and Middle-class Women in Contemporary Urban China. In *Wives, Husbands, and Lovers: Marriage and Sexuality in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Urban China*. Davis, D. & Friedman, S. ed., 118-44. Stanford, California: Stanford university press.

Selected Glossary

<i>Pinyin</i>	Chinese	English
<i>buchi</i>	不齿	despised
<i>buliaoliaozhi</i>	不了了之	end inconclusively
<i>chuancheng</i>	传承	inherit
<i>chuantong</i>	传统	tradition, traditional
<i>chuanzongjiedai</i>	传宗接代	producing a male heir to carry on the family blood
<i>dairenchushi</i>	待人处事	the way to treat others and act in society
<i>danwei</i>	单位	working unit
<i>dianpo</i>	点破	reveal
<i>diulian</i>	丢脸	lose face
<i>ganqing jituo</i>	感情寄托	emotional sustenance
" <i>gaymi</i> "	gay蜜	a compound word by "gay" in English and "mi" in Chinese, "mi" means besom friends, gaymi means gaybesties
<i>houdai</i>	后代	later generations, heirs
<i>hukou</i>	户口	a system of residence registration
<i>jingji jiufen</i>	经济纠纷	economic dispute
<i>kaiming</i>	开明	open-minded
<i>lala</i>	拉拉	lesbian
<i>liumangzui</i>	流氓罪	hooliganism
<i>nanyou</i>	男友	boyfriend
<i>panbi</i>	攀比	comparison

<i>pianhun</i>	骗婚	cheat marriage, refers to gay-straight marriage without revealing same-sex sexual orientation
<i>qiangshi</i>	强势	strong, mighty, bossy
<i>qingqing</i>	亲情	affection between blood relations
<i>sanguliupo</i>	三姑六婆	different female elders in one family
<i>shehuguannian</i>	社会观念	social ideology
<i>shehuijuese</i>	社会角色	the role in society
<i>shehuiyishi</i>	社会意识	social consciousness
<i>shejiaoquanzi</i>	社交圈子	social circles
<i>shengnü</i>	剩女	leftover women or surplus women, refer to single women after the age of 27
<i>shihunnianji</i>	适婚年纪	marriageable age
<i>suzhi</i>	素质	quality (of people)
<i>tongxinglian</i>	同性恋	homosexuality
<i>tongzhi</i>	同志	literally means “comrade”, meaning gay or lesbian
<i>xinghun/xingshi hunyin</i>	形婚 / 形式婚姻	contract marriage
<i>yanzhongxing</i>	严重性	seriousness
<i>zhinan</i>	直男	literally translated from “straight men”, means men who prefer women
<i>zhinü</i>	直女	literally translated from “straight women”, means women who prefer men

Appendix: Profiles of Informants

I include a list of key informants I interviewed during my fieldwork in China, in a chronological order of the first conversation I had with them. All of them are self-identified gay.

Huang: 25 years old. University graduate. He assumes that the reason why he does not feel intense pressure to marry from his parents is because he has a younger brother.

Justin: 30 years old. Master graduate from UK. He runs a café on his own. He has come out to friends, but not to families and business cooperators. He will not consider any type of marriage before he achieves remarkable success in his professional field.

Tommy: 25 years old. University graduate. He teaches English in a private education institution. His ex and him split up because his ex decided to conduct marriage and produce a child to resolve the pressure from the parents, but after getting married, his ex still dates other guys behind the wife's back. This experience strengthened Tommy's stand not to conduct contract marriage.

Tony: 27 years old. University graduate. He is an employee in a state-owned enterprise. He faces intense pressure to marry from his parents. He started to date *lalas* for contract marriage after our first conversation in February 2016, but not yet succeed when this paper is completed.

Freddie: 25 years old. University graduate. He works in advertising industry. He admits that in the advertising industry, being a gay is an advantage, which represents an image of "better aesthetic taste". Some gay-friendly straight men in his company also claim that they are gay in order to be competitive in the workplace, regarding the fact that clients do prefer to choose gay designers.

- Kelvin: 27 years old. University graduate. He is a pilot works in one of the biggest airline companies in China. His ex is in a marriage and has a child with a heterosexual woman who does not know his gay-identity. He could not come out because the company thinks that pilot is a very masculine job, and coming out will bring negative effects on the job, while cabin crews can come out freely. He has been dating a *lala* friend for conducting contract marriage. They have met each others' parents. But because they live in different cities, the negotiations are undergoing inconclusively.
- Nilao: 38 years old. University graduate. He is a columnist. His family is Wa people, one of the 55 minorities in China, and was not restricted by one-child policy. He has 2 siblings. His parents do not have the concept of *chuanzongjiedai* (producing male heirs to carry on family blood).
- Hugo: 29 years old. Master graduate from Australia. He is an engineer. He unexpectedly came out to his parents. His parents proposed contract marriage to him as a alternative way to have a child, but he refused. He was engaged with his boyfriend between our first and second interviews.
- Luke: 27 years old. Master graduate from UK. He is an employee in a state-owned enterprise. His parents have imposed intense pressure on him to marry and have child. He is in a same-sex relationship, but he is also attending matchmaking dinners with girls who are introduced by his mom.
- Ben: 38 years old. University graduate. He works as a director in a company doing Internet business. He has never directly come out to his parents, but he used to live with his boyfriend while only introduced him as a friend to his parents. His parents are aware of his gay-identity but never reveal it.
- Vincent: 35 years old. Master graduate. He is an engineer. He has gone through complicated negotiations with his family, and finally conducted contract marriage with Jenny, a *lala* lives in Guangzhou. Both of his parents and Jenny's parents are aware of their homosexual identities, but neither of them have told each other. They both think their children are in a heterosexual marriage.

- Lu: 33 years old. He works as a partner of a wedding ceremony service company. He married a heterosexual woman without letting her know his gay-identity, because his parents impose him intense pressure to marry, and an image of “being in a happy marriage” is necessary regarding his job. He is also in a same-sex relationship with his boyfriend. His wife thinks his boyfriend is his best friend.
- Edison: 33 years old. University graduate. He is an employee in an international company. His mom imposes him intense pressure to marry. He changed his job to work in the US temporarily in order to avoid the pressure. He is dating the daughter of his mom’s colleague one.
- Ajay: 27 years old. University graduate. He works in an audit firm. His parents have never imposed pressure to marry directly on him, but his uncle imposes huge pressure on him to produce a baby as he is the only male in the younger generation in his family.
- Tixiaowen: 32 years old. University graduate. He is a financier. He wants to have a child. When I interviewed him for the first time, he just ended the first date with a *lala* called Shaner. Afterwards, he started to date another *lala* called Muzi. They both wanted to conduct a contract marriage, but he did not want to have a child with Muzi. He was dating the third *lala* called Cici when I interviewed him the latest time.