

**CHINESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES
TOWARD THEIR GAY AND LESBIAN PEERS**

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Chinese university students who have gay and lesbian peers and want to plant the seeds so that they can be more open, tolerant, accepting, and welcoming of sexual diversity in their universities.

Also to my supervisor Professor Don Cochrane whose faith in me gave me faith in myself. Words cannot adequately describe the deep gratitude I owe him for my education and for helping me become a more compassionate person.

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ABSTRACT

In this research, our participants were asked five questions: Do gay and lesbian people fit into Chinese society? Are Chinese university students open and tolerant on gay and lesbian issues? How do these students perceive their gay and lesbian peers? How do their beliefs affect their attitudes toward their gay and lesbian peers? Is their university a safe and welcoming place for gay and lesbian students? To answer these questions, a qualitative methodology was employed involving six one-on-one interviews and two focus group interviews.

The participants did not believe that gay and lesbian people fit into Chinese society; however, the students themselves are becoming more open and tolerant on gay and lesbian issues in recent years because of the influence of technological innovation, media, and Western culture.

The findings suggest a degree of acceptance of gays and lesbians though the participants simultaneously distanced themselves from their homosexual peers. They perceived the university to be a safe place for gay and lesbian students in the sense that nobody would hurt them, but they did not see the university as a welcoming place.

To better understand the students' perspectives, the transcripts were analyzed within a Chinese cultural and social context. Offering a realistic picture of heterosexual students' perspectives might encourage them to reduce discrimination against their gay and lesbian peers, and to create a better learning environment for both heterosexual and homosexual students.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In spite of my passion for teaching and learning, my journey into the study of sexual orientation in education is one of fate more than of choice; fate, however, turned into choice. I will share a painful story which later on became a main impetus for me to engage in this research. Several years ago, I taught in a private English training school in Beijing, China. One day, I was invited to attend one of my students' twentieth birthday party. I will call her Lily (pseudonym). After her birthday party when others had left, Lily shared her deepest secret with me. She had never told anyone else about her "problem" of having a different sexual orientation. In her eyes, I found trust, excitement, relief, but also desire to look for help. At that time, I was a young female teacher with only one year's teaching experience, and had virtually no knowledge of gay and lesbian people. Sex-related topics made me extremely shy and uncomfortable. I felt deeply embarrassed, and finding an excuse, ran away immediately. Later on, she dropped out of my training course, and I did not see her again. Her sad eyes often appear in my mind. I am in deep sorrow and feel regret when I recall this experience.

Years later, I came to Canada to do a master's degree in education. Before I started to do this research, I had a major concern: as a heterosexual woman, I doubted whether I could really understand gay and lesbian people. As Richards observes: "... heterosexual people, brought up in a culture that powerfully supports their loves, can barely understand or even imagine a gay world" (Richards, 2005, p. 7). This probably explains why most researchers in gay and lesbian studies are themselves gay men or lesbian women. Like Richards, gay or lesbian researchers have suffered great pain in their lives,

and they are more eager to use their voices to speak for themselves and others. When I began to question the possibility doing this research, I was fortunate to meet Professor Don Cochrane who provided me with great help and support. As a straight person, he has done much work in gay and lesbian studies. From his experience, I was more convinced that my interest, passion, and enthusiasm for gay and lesbian studies could help me traverse this “outsider” problem. With his encouragement, I developed a strong interest in gay and lesbian studies, and settled on it as my master’s thesis area.

When I decided to conduct research on gay and lesbian issues in a Chinese university, many of my friends and relatives did not understand. In the mind of most Chinese, homosexuals are abhorrent persons who should be abandoned and isolated by society. As a result, Chinese gay men and lesbian women have especially abysmal lives. Li Yinhe, China’s most famous sociologist and sexologist, explains her motivation for doing research on homosexuality, which mirrors exactly my purpose in this study: “Meaningful research does not offer moral judgments, but discovers the truth and what we do not know” (Li, 2004).

Through my study in Canada, I came to realize that the aim of teaching cannot just be to improve students’ examination scores, which is the goal of most teaching and learning in China. Education at least should be concerned to develop in students a commitment to pursuing truth and promoting social justice (Peters, 1970). Thus, education has a role to play when a group is oppressed within a society (i.e., denied its bona fide human rights). This would be especially important were the oppression to rest on false beliefs.

There is abundant evidence that in the twentieth century gays and lesbians in China have lived in fear because of negative social attitudes towards them and that the beliefs that support these attitudes may well be false. Thus, in a responsible educational process, students should be brought to question, among other things, whether these attitudes have persisted throughout a country's history, whether homosexuality is a mental illness, whether homosexual but not heterosexual activity leads to AIDS, and whether under normal conditions gays and lesbians can maintain stable, long-term relationships.

For gay and lesbian students, teachers not only should be more understanding and helpful, but also they need to create a safe and welcoming learning environment, and permit gay and lesbian students the right to live and study as happily as other students. No teacher should run away from innocent and helpless students. If I was given another chance to meet Lily, I would hug her warmly. I owe her a sincere apology!

Statement of the Problem

Many studies indicate that homosexuality is a cross-cultural and widespread phenomenon, and that it is not only an issue in western countries but also in China. As a result of his research in the United States, Guatemala, Brazil, and the Philippines, Whitam (1983) reaches the following major conclusions : (1) homosexuality exists in all societies; (2) in these societies, the proportion of homosexuals in the population is very close and remains stable over time; (3) social norms can neither hinder nor encourage homosexuality; (4) if the existence of homosexuals is sufficiently large, there will be a homosexual subculture; (5) homosexuals from different social structures tend to have similar behavioral interests and make similar career choices; (6) all societies have similar

ranges of sexual relationships that include heterosexuals, homosexuals, and bisexuals.

Katchadourian (1989) also points out that, no matter whether the poor or rich, educated or ignorant, smart or slow, or powerful or powerless, homosexuals exist in all races, all classes, every nation, and various people of different religious beliefs.

Chinese official statistics show that there are approximately 30 million homosexuals on the Chinese mainland, but only a very few are willing to acknowledge that they are gay or lesbian (China Online, 2005). Kinsey et al. (1948) estimate that 10% of the general population is homosexual, and we can assume that there are approximately one-tenth of 1.4 billion homosexuals in China, which is much larger than 30 million. It is unnecessary to debate what might be the most accurate number, because no matter how it is calculated, China has the largest number of homosexuals in the world! However, most Chinese homosexuals burdened by ignorance, discrimination, and fear are unable to comprehend their homosexual yearnings, close themselves off from society, and are tormented by self-hate (Zhang, 2003). Zhang also stresses that because of ignorance and guilt reinforced by scant information in the media, homosexuals tend to be associated with either Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) or crime (Zhang, 2003).

Chinese traditional literature is replete with references to male and female homosexuals. It was often viewed as harmless unless it interfered with one's duty to have a family (Li, 2004). Strict control is still in place over gay-related publicity in the media. According to a report from *Chinese Society for the Study of Sexual Minorities (CSSSM)*, homosexuality is still listed together with pornography as taboo subjects in the mass media. Consequently, the general public has strongly negative opinions toward gays and lesbians (CSSSM, 2003). Never strictly illegal in China, homosexuality has always been

taboo. Today, shame still keeps most gays in the closet.

Homosexuality has existed in all human societies throughout all history. However, during the period of European and American colonization of the rest of the world, as well as the later period when Asia rushed to modernize by aping the West, hostility was foisted onto or variously adopted by Asians as part of a Western cultural import (Tan, 2005). In contrast to Western countries, no religion in China condemns homosexuality as most Western religions do. These factors triggered my interest to discover the reasons why Chinese people are intolerant toward homosexuals, and how prevalent this might be among university students.

Researchers in Western countries have done many studies of gays and lesbians in university communities, but little or nothing has been done in China. American researchers have found that gay males, lesbians, and bisexuals often encounter prejudice, violence, victimization, and defamation on college campuses because of their sexual orientation (Berrill, 1992; D'Augelli, 1989a, 1989b; Herek, 1989; Palmer, 1993; Rhoads, 1995). For example, nearly three-fourths of the gay male and lesbian students surveyed in one study reported that they had experienced verbal insults; one-fourth reported being physically threatened; and one-half expressed concerns about their personal safety (D'Augelli, 1989b).

As a future educator, I want to focus my attention on the campus of Chinese universities to ascertain the status of gay and lesbian students. I am interested in finding out how Chinese young adults perceive their gay and lesbian peers, and the reason(s) why lesbian people can/cannot fit into Chinese university society. The understanding of homosexuality by university students is important because they represent China's future.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the overall study was to discover Chinese university students' perspectives on their gay and lesbian peers and whether a Chinese university is a safe and welcoming place for gay and lesbian students. The study probed the perspectives of Chinese university students in order to investigate their understanding of and attitudes toward gay and lesbian students; the reasons why Chinese gays and lesbians are perceived as fitting or not fitting into Chinese society; and what the campus atmosphere is like for homosexual students.

I hope to provide people in both Canada and China with a better understanding of the real world of gay and lesbian students in one Chinese university. Providing a realistic picture of Chinese students' perspectives toward gay and lesbian students may encourage more heterosexual students to be open and tolerant toward their gay and lesbian peers, help reduce discrimination against gay and lesbian students, create a positive campus climate for gay and lesbian individuals, and assist school leaders to develop more effective administrative policies for the future for homosexual students in Chinese university.

Research Questions

This study explored the status of gay and lesbian students in a Chinese university by pursuing these questions:

- 1 What are the reasons why gay and lesbian people fit or do not fit into Chinese society?
- 2 Are Chinese university students open and tolerant on gay and lesbian issues?
- 3 How do Chinese university students perceive their gay and lesbian peers?

- 4 How do their perspectives affect their attitudes toward their gay and lesbian peers?
- 5 Is university a safe and welcoming place for gay and lesbian students?

Significance of the Study

Since the “Opening to the West” policy was promulgated by Deng Xiaoping in 1978, China has undergone a massive economic, social, and cultural transformation. Social attitudes have been moved by these larger currents, especially among the young. There is much evidence that attitudes surrounding sexuality have been changing rapidly. However, very little research has been done on whether a corresponding change is taking place in attitudes towards gays and lesbians.

This study is important, not simply as an indicator of attitude change. Because gays and lesbians have been oppressed since well before 1949, this inquiry seeks to determine whether perspectives—at least among university students—are moving toward greater personal and social freedom, tolerance, and acceptance for gays and lesbians in Chinese society. This research provides a snapshot of perspectives among university students at this dynamic moment in China’s history.

. I hope this study will instill awareness among readers both in China and Canada of the need for more tolerance and acceptance of sexual diversity in a campus community.

Definition of terms

In this study, conceptual clarity is needed. This sub-section will serve as a reference for readers. To that end, I offer the following definitions:

- A Bisexual is an individual who is sexually attracted to individuals of both sexes (Oxford English Dictionary Online 1).

- A Heterosexual is an individual who is characterized by a sexual interest in members of the opposite sex (Oxford English Dictionary Online 2).
- Heterosexism is a belief system that values heterosexuality as superior to and/or more natural than homosexuality. It assumes that non-heterosexuality is deviant and intrinsically less desirable. Heterosexists react to homosexuals as unfortunate, devalued individuals (Mihalik, 1991).
- Homophobia is the irrational fear of, or aversion to, homosexuals and homosexuality as enemies to be feared, hated, and actively repressed. Any belief system that supports negative myths and stereotypes about homosexual people, or any of the varieties of negative attitudes that arise from fear or dislike of homosexuality (Mihalik, 1991).
- A Homosexual is an individual who engages in homosexuality or experiences homosexual desire (Fone, 2000, p. 4).
- Homosexuality describes sexual desire or relationship between people of the same sex (Fone, 2000, p. 4).
- Internal Homophobia refers to learned homophobia biases that individuals including GLB (gay, lesbian, and bisexual) incorporate or internalize into their beliefs (Banks, 2004).
- External Homophobia occurs when overtly observed or experienced expression of internal biases happens such as social avoidance, verbal abuse, physical violence, and civil discrimination (Banks, 2004).
- Cultural Homophobia or Heterosexism refers to social standards and norms which dictate that being heterosexual is better or more moral than being GLB,

and that everyone is heterosexual or should be. While these standards are not written down as such, they are spelled out each day in television shows where the vast majority of characters are heterosexual and most romantic relationships involve a female and a male; or in the assumption made by most adults in social situations that all “normal” children will eventually be attracted to and marry a person of the opposite sex. Often heterosexual people do not realize that these standards exist, but GLB people are acutely aware of them. The feeling that results is one of being an outsider in society (Banks, 2004, p. 11-12).

- A Gay is a homosexual, esp. a male homosexual (Oxford English Dictionary Online 3).
- A Lesbian is a female homosexual (Oxford English Dictionary Online 4).
- A Subculture is a group or class of lesser importance or size sharing specific beliefs, interests, or values which may be at variance with those of the general culture of which it forms part (Oxford English Dictionary Online 5).
- Transgender relates to, or designates, a person whose identity does not conform unambiguously to conventional notions of male or female gender, but combines or moves between these (Oxford English Dictionary Online 6).
- Tongzhi is the most popular contemporary Chinese word for lesbians, bisexuals, and gay people. The word is a Chinese translation from a Soviet communist term “comrade”, which refers to the revolutionaries that shared a comradeship. The term was first adopted by Chinese in Republican China, and then taken both by the Communist and Nationalist Party to refer to comrades struggling for the communist/nationalist revolution. ‘Tong’ literally means ‘same/homo’, which is

the same Chinese word for ‘homo (sexual)’, and the word ‘Zhi’ means ‘goal’, ‘spirit’, or ‘orientation’” (Chou, 2001, p. 27). Terms such as “gay”, “lesbian”, and “queer” are Anglo-Saxon in origin, have specific histories that cannot capture the indigenous features of Chinese same-sex relationships. Tongzhi implies and includes much more. It has a meaning beyond the sexual: it embodies a strong sentiment for integrating the sexual (legitimizing same-sex love), the political (sharing the goals of combating heterosexism), and cultural (reappropriating a Chinese identity) (Chou, 2000).

- Sexual prejudice: “refers to negative attitude toward an individual because of her or his sexual orientation....Given the current social organization of sexuality, such prejudice is almost always directed at people who engage in homosexual behavior or label themselves gay, lesbian, or bisexual” (Herek, 2000, p. 19).

Organization of the Thesis

In Chapter One, a statement of the problem to be investigated is outlined. In addition, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, the definition of terms, and an organization of the thesis are presented. Chapter Two reviews both Chinese literature and Western literature pertinent to the problem that is investigated in this study. Chapter Three outlines the setting and the research methodology, including the selection of participants, data collection methods, validity and reliability of the study, ethical considerations, and data analysis. Chapter Four synthesizes and presents the data into different categories. Chapter Five analyzes the data collected, and interprets data into different related themes. Chapter Six concludes the

thesis with a summary of the study, the findings, implications, and recommendations for further practices.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the literature relating to Chinese university students' perspectives toward their gay and lesbian peers. It also includes some Western literature to help explore and explain gay and lesbian issues in China. Gay and lesbian issues in education are becoming an increasing reality and the focus of more of the current Western literature. Research on gay and lesbian students is drawing more attention than ever before. This chapter is divided into five sections: The reasons G & L (gay and lesbian) individuals fit or do not fit into Chinese society; the openness and tolerance to G & L issues; some understandings about G & L people; the negative attitudes towards gay and lesbian individuals; and Chinese university atmosphere for G & L students.

Perceived Reasons Why Gays and Lesbians Fit or Do Not Fit into Chinese Society

None of Chinese traditional religions condemned homosexuality as a taboo in their codex. In Ancient China, there are sufficient documents to support homosexuality's prevalence especially in Song (960-1279), Ming (1368 to 1644), and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. However, in importing Western sexual morality, Chinese people also imported Western intolerance of homosexuality. After the new China was established in 1949, the Communist government instilled a social and moral order which was an added force causing China's long history of cultural tolerance of homosexuality to fade. In addition, traditional conceptions of marriage, family, and children contributed to a growing intolerance toward homosexual people.

Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist Views about Homosexuality in Chinese Society

Confucianism, the dominant civic ideology in China for 2000 years, makes no judgment about the intrinsic value of sexual behavior as long as sex, like any other personal and social relationship, is regulated and organized hierarchically. Although Confucian Chinese culture laid great stress on the reproductive purpose of marriage, intercourse with the same gender, sex with prostitutes, or a man having several wives and concubines was usually tolerated because the male-dominated family system was not challenged. However, Chou (2000) lists two major restrictions on sexual activities in the Confucian codex: “[First,] follow appropriate family-kinship relationship; and [second,] do not partake in indulgence or excess” (p. 19). Within these two guidelines, sex is supposed to be enjoyed freely. Chou (2000) explains that:

Homosociality and same-sex intimate friendship are socially institutionalized and legitimized as a crucial source of emotional support, with no need for homosexual connotations. Instead of provoking anxiety and guilty, same-sex intimacy is more often a source of comfort. (p. 24)

Even in contemporary China, two men or two women holding hands, resting arms upon the other’s shoulder, or leaning against each other will not cause public discomfort or suspicion. Sometimes two men or two women stay overnight in the same bed in a hotel room or in a private home. In China, it would be upsetting only if a person was to go into a hotel with an opposite-sex person. Chou (2000) concludes that providing “the social space for intimate homosociality, same-sex eroticism among friends could be positively perceived” (p. 24).

Taoism emphasizes maintaining the balance between Yin (woman) and Yang (man). Sexual activities are beneficial to one's health, and they bring longevity when practiced properly. Chou (2000) explains that, in traditional Chinese beliefs, semen is a finite substance containing a man's chi (life essence), and should not be wasted by masturbation or an excessive sex life, and "there are sophisticated guidelines in Taoist sex manuals on the proper ways to conduct sex" (p. 18). Chou further elaborated:

According to Chinese alchemical beliefs, two men who share orgasms were exchanging, rather than losing their essence (semen). Sex between two women was even less problematic, as women were supposed to have unlimited essence....Yet what Taoism developed was not a discourse on sexuality, as neither sexual pleasure nor sexual act constitute an independent domain of sexuality as they do for the modern Western construct, but rather a wider sociocosmological concern for longevity for the individual and reproduction for the human race. (p. 18)

In Buddhism, an Asian religion with a 1400-year history of prominence in China, sexual desire (regardless of being homosexual or heterosexual) is something that prevents a soul from achieving nirvana (Conze, 1959). No matter whether the relationship is heterosexual or homosexual, sex is something to be avoided.

Despite complicated historical differences, it is fair to say that Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist views have supported a relaxed and natural attitude toward sex, and possess no homophobic hostility toward homosexual behavior. Lacking a cultural interest in homosexuality or heterosexuality, none of the Chinese major religions condemn homosexuality as a sin as many Christian religions do (Chou, 2001). In contrast to the sins in Christian culture, the list of sinful deeds in the codex of Confucianism does not

include homosexuality. As long as a person does his/her duty and sires children, it is his/her private matter whether or not to have other male/female lovers.

Homosexuality in Ancient China

Evidence of same-sex sexual activity has been documented in China since ancient times. Li (2004) states that according the scholar Ji Yun of the Qing Dynasty, already at the very beginning Huang Di (The Yellow Emperor, 2697–2597 BCE), the legendary king and founder of the Chinese culture, had male lovers. This claim is unreliable because it is uncertain whether there really was a person called Huang Di. Laurent (2005) has come to the conclusion that nearly every emperor in the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. – 9A.D.) had one or more male sex partners. According to Gulik (1961) and Hinsch (2000), it is said that, during the Han Dynasty, bisexual or exclusively homosexual emperors ruled China for 150 years. Imperial male favorites are mentioned and discussed in official records. In post-Han China, homosexuality spread in other classes and male prostitution flourished, celebrated but also denigrated by poets (Chou, 2000).

It is believed that homosexuality was popular in Song (960-1279), Ming (1368 to 1644), and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. Chinese homosexuals did not experience high-profile persecution compared with what was administered to homosexuals in Europe during the Middle Ages (Gulik, 1961). In some areas of the country, same-sex love was particularly appreciated. Laurent (2005) finds evidence that “[in] Fujian province (south-east China coast), a form of marriage between men developed that could last for many years and was usually terminated for procreational purposes” (p. 179). Chou explains the cultural tolerance of homosexuals in ancient China:

Contrary to modern Western culture, which divides human beings into a homo-hetero binarism, the Chinese sexual world is constructed predominantly along hierarchical class lines. The one with power, stereotypically the upper-class adult male, could sexually dominate social inferiors like his wife, second wife, or concubines. He could also dominate and penetrate younger male servants who were socially inferior to him without carrying the severe social stigma of being a homo/bisexual. From the viewpoint of an emperor or a wealthy lord, there was only a minimal differentiation between his desire for a female and for a young male—the sexual activities of both would equally confirm and exhibit his social power. (Chou, 2001, p. 30)

Same-sex love was also celebrated in the ancient Chinese art, many examples of which survived the book burnings of the Cultural Revolution. Though no large statues are known to remain, many hand scrolls and paintings on silk depicting same-sex relations can be found in private collections (Chou, 2000). In 1944, Sun Cizhou published a work in which he stated that one of the most famous ancient Chinese poets, Qu Yuan (340 BC-278 BC), was a lover of his King (Chou, 2001). Sun cited the poetry of Qu Yuan to prove his claim. In Qu Yuan's most important work, *Li Sao* (Sorrow of Parting), Qu Yuan called himself a beautiful woman. The word he used to describe his king was used at that time by women to characterize their lovers. Laurent (2005) also agrees that “a very rich specialized vocabulary refers to same-sex relations and behavior, coming mainly from poetry” (p. 179).

The first law against homosexuals in China went into effect in 1740 (Chou, 2000). Unfortunately, there was no historical record as to how effectively the law was enforced.

From another document source of homosexuals' legal situation, it is said that, "in the 10th century, under the influence of Confucian moralists, male prostitutes would receive 100 strokes of a bamboo rod and pay a fine, which can however be considered lenient regarding other legal penalties at that time" (Laurent, 2005, p. 180).

The Death of Cultural Tolerance of Homosexuals

Given the cultural tolerance and rich historical records of homosexuals in Chinese history, "it is lamentable to find not only contemporary China's conservatism and negativity toward homo/bisexuality, but also the ignorance of Chinese intellectuals about the continuous prevalence of homoerotic practices in traditional China" (Chou, 2000, p. 42). The fact is that contemporary Chinese, unfamiliar with their own history, continue to regard homosexuality as a Western import, and draw the conclusion that traditional Chinese culture was entirely heterosexual. There are two major influences that might have caused the death of cultural tolerance toward homosexuals.

The Influence of Western Perspectives

Many scholars present the death of Chinese tolerance of homosexuals to "the colonial importation of modern Western sexology, Christian homophobia, and the medicalization of homosexuality" (Chou, 2000, p. 42). Likosky (1992) states:

China, through much of its long history, has had a rich and varied tradition of same-sex love. It was only with the arrival of British colonialism in recent times that stigmatization of homosexuality appeared and prudery began to reign. (p. 24)

Chou (2000) also contends that, "...it is through the encounter with the West in the mid-nineteenth century, which sparked a series of indigenous efforts to modernize China, that same-sex eroticism was gradually defined as pathological" (p. 43). Hirsch (1990) also

supports view that “in importing Western sexual morality, however, the Chinese also imported Western intolerance of homosexuality” (p. 167).

Chou (2000) also points out that, around the 1920s and 1930s, Chinese intellectuals were disturbed by the new trend of Westernization. He explained that “it was Chinese intellectuals’ selective incorporation of Western scientific discourse on sexuality that generated the new attitude of negativity about same-sex eroticism” (p. 43). In other words, the process of Westernization is by no means “a simple transplantation or cultural colonization but an active recontextualization” (Chou, 2000, p. 48). Chou (2000) stresses that, “...Chinese sex reformers witnessed a primal concern for procreation—trying to find the most efficient way of producing a healthy and strong body/nation” (pp. 48-49). Therefore, the Chinese appropriation of Western views was highly selective. Chou (2000) contends that:

Homo-hetero duality and Christian homophobic hostility had never been popular; and their notion of sexual orientation continued to be absent from the Chinese sexual-social scene. It is only through the importation of biological determinism that the medicalization of homosexuality was tacitly accepted as a byproduct. (p. 49)

As a result, Chinese scholars, “enlightened” by Western scientific discourse, began to view homosexuality as an aberration and a mental disease. They began to address homosexuality as a “diseased state” or “metamorphosis”. Chou (2000) concludes that “it was the sexologist’s pathologization of homosexuality rather than the Christian homophobic attitude that was selectively and strategically adopted by Chinese intellectuals who had their own sociopolitical agenda in mind” (p. 49).

The Influence of the Communist Regime

After 1949, the Communist government was so eager to instill social and moral order that China's long history of cultural tolerance of homosexuality began to fade (Chou, 2000). Laurent (2005) points out that the Communist regime persecuted homosexuals, especially during the ten-year Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), at which time oppression was intensified and many homosexuals were punished with long prison terms and sometimes execution. Laurent (2005) states that "thousands of gays and lesbians were publicly humiliated, tortured, exiled to the countryside, given electroshock therapy..." (p. 180). Social tolerance of homosexuality declined sharply. Chou (2000) states that, since 1950s, the Western world has gradually departed from the mental illness model toward greater respect for differences and individuality, but China abandoned traditional tolerance for the outdated Western mental illness model of sexuality. He explains (2000) that "Mainland China in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s underwent a very closed and anti-Western stage, literally stopping most contact with the West, which further hampered China in understanding and learning from the Western Lesbian and Gay (lesbian, bisexual, and gay) civil rights movement" (p. 54). Since the policy of Reform and Opening Up in 1979, the Communist Party has been loosening its control over this kind of behavior.

Chinese Values on Family and Blood Ties

In China, traditional values of children, marriage, and family are regarded as important to most people. Traditional Chinese culture emphasizes the importance of having many children and the continuation of a male's family line. Ng et al. (2003) state:

The preferred mode [in China] is to have five generations living together and under

one roof [...as it is a society] upholding a strong belief of intergenerational family. Therefore, married couples bear heavy social and moral responsibilities to produce new members to extend the family tree. (p. 281)

Traditional Chinese culture emphasized the importance of men sowing the seed for his family to extend the family tree. A Chinese proverb says: “There are three unfilial sins against which a man may commit and to die without offspring (especially, male offspring) is the greatest sin of all” (Lv, 2005). Ng et al. (2003) also offer this explanation:

Blood relationship ties family members together. Relatedness is created through blood and marriage...[In China,] having a son to continue the blood line is the most important function of marriage, indeed, the failure of a wife to give birth to a son was a ground for the husband to unilaterally divorce the wife under customary Chinese law. (p. 282)

There are three guiding principles that reflect the Chinese hierarchical tradition, which are “a minister follows his emperor, a son follows his father, and a wife follows her husband (“San Gang” or “Three Guiding Principles)” (Free Encyclopedia in Chinese.). The social, family, and gender role for a person is strictly regulated in Chinese values. In traditional Chinese societies, nobody is a discrete, isolated being; rather, everyone becomes a full person only in the context of family and social relationships. This tradition causes gay and lesbian people to live in darkness for they dare not to let others know their different sexual orientation, especially to their parents. In the Chinese tradition, children are persuaded to get married in their twenties, which is regarded as a social obligation for adults. Chou (2000) explains this tradition:

...a self-proclaimed gay man who refuses marriage may be disowned by his parents and the entire culture. The hostility is not targeted at same-sex sexuality itself, but at the idea of having a lifestyle that denies the cultural imperative to get married....In other words, one's sexual normality is defined not by the gender of one's erotic object choice, but by one's willingness and ability to fulfill filial piety, particularly the duty to reproduce. (pp. 24-25)

In another publication, Chou (2001) describes the common problem of Chinese parents with a gay or lesbian child:

The problem for parents is not just the acceptance of their child as a *tongzhi*, but how to "face" their relatives, neighbors, and ancestors. Parents would feel wronged and shamed through the loss of face if a *tongzhi* child came out. Traditional Chinese parents like to compare their children with the daughters and sons of other people, in terms of social status, achievement, and extent of filial piety. The closer the family ties and the bigger the extended family network, the more pressure and shame would be felt by parents for having a *tongzhi* child. (p. 34)

The pressure to get married with opposite-gendered persons is heavy and tormenting for Chinese gay and lesbian people: on the one hand, they are extremely unwilling to become involved in a heterosexual relationship because they are not interested in heterosexual love at all; on the other hand, the pressure to reproduce a baby and to fulfill filial obligations to their parents, to their family-kinship leads them step into marriage eventually (Li, 2002).

Openness and Tolerance toward Gay and Lesbian Issues

Technological Enhancement of Gay and Lesbian Space

In Chinese society where the heterosexual marital system, housing policy, and work system together “form a tight web of social control that minimizes any form of social deviance” (Chou, 2000, p. 134), it is very difficult for gay man and lesbian women to find each other and maintain stable relationships in a safe and welcoming environment. The number of homosexuals in China remains unclear. From one source, the number of homosexuals is between 360,000 and 480,000 (Luo, 2005). Compared to the higher proportions of homosexuals in other countries, many find these figures unconvincing (see p. 6 about Kinsey et al.’s (1948) estimation).

For the huge gay and lesbian population in China, the technological innovations in recent years have immensely enhanced the survival space of gay and lesbian people, as Chou (2000) has stated in his study:

...[the Internet] is a highly effective way to break through the oppressive boundaries created by the tight family-kin structure and the social control system of work units and residential arrangements. Given the enormous possibilities to maneuver in cyberspace, the gradual population of the Internet in China has helped prove to be a pioneering force in building up indigenous *tongzhi* discourses in China. Pagers, mobile phones, fax, e-mail, Internet, and other high-tech devices have been appropriated by *tongzhi* to build up an unprecedented space of virtual communities.
(p. 134)

However, although the loosening of restrictions on the Internet use has resulted in a blossoming of gay websites in China, police sometimes intervene and authorities shut

down such sites (Chou, 2000).

In his research of Asian homosexuals' human rights, Laurent (2005) also highlights the importance of the technological enhancement of gay and lesbian space: "Through the 1980s and 1990s, Internet and media coverage played a significant role in building gay community and in making its existence known. There are more than 300 gay Web sites in China, although negative consequences sometimes arise in the form of a public condemnation" (p. 181). Because of the importance of family ties and marriage, Laurent (2005) adds that: "Keeping up appearances and continuing family life are regarded as much more important than self-expression. Gay Web sites may function as a kind of virtual therapy..." (p. 182).

The mainstream media sometimes cover notable gay events abroad, such as pride parades. But some critics charge that the media aims mostly to smear homosexuality. Lacking a film rating system, the Chinese government forbids gay movies to be shown on TV or in theaters because they are "inappropriate". Despite having received much attention in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and other places, the movie *Brokeback Mountain* was forbidden in the mainland China, because it refers to a story of two gay men (Gender/Sexuality Rights Association of Taiwan Website, 2006). However, the popularity of the Internet and the availability of pirated CDs has made this movie available everywhere including Mainland China.

Lesbians are much more invisible than gay men. According to Laurent, "the first lesbian feature film, *Fish and Elephant* (2001), by director Li Yu, won a prize at the Berlin Film Festival, and was shown at more than 70 films festivals around the world, but was screened only once in China" (Laurent, 2005, p. 182).

Chou (2000) offers this overall assessment:

...the rapid socioeconomic development since the early 1980s has generated new forms of social, economic, and sexual desires, identities, and new relations for power and resistance. Same-sex eroticism has taken a new shape. The rapidly opening market economy...the massive usage of pagers, mobile phones, and the Internet, the influx of western individualist and libertarian discourse...marriage and divorce law, and greater respect and emphasis on personal choice and happiness...together with the proliferation of commercial discourses on sexuality, have been vital in generating new spaces for *tongzhi*. (pp. 138-139)

The Legal Situation

Many cases show that gays still have to endure prejudice from the justice system and harassment from police, including detention and arrest. In October 2000, a Beijing court ruled that homosexuality was “abnormal and unacceptable to the Chinese public” (Li, 2004), which was the first time this official attitude had been stated openly. Another notable case occurred in July 2001, when at least 37 gay men were detained in Guangdong Province. In April 2004, the State Administration of Radio Film and Television initiated a campaign to clear violence and sexual content from the media. In April 2005, a gay and lesbian film festival due to be held at China’s Beijing University was forced to move venues after campus officials banned the event (BBC News, 2005). Program involving a homosexual topic, scene, or language were considered to be “going against the healthy way of life in China” (Li, 2004), and were banned.

Some gay bars and nightclubs in big cities like Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Beijing are subject to police harassment. The difficulties surrounding homosexuality in China

make those gays who cannot afford to go to gay bars or nightclubs look for casual sex in public washrooms, parks, and public shower centers (Li, 2002). As everywhere in the world, being gay is a huge problem in the countryside. Laurent (2005) points out that, “in China, this is especially severe for the vast majority of people who live in the countryside with no Internet access and do not have the possibility of moving to a city” (p. 182). Country dwellers do not often speak of homosexuality, and when they do, it is usually considered a disease (Li, 2002).

An Internet survey (Sina Website, 2006) shows that Chinese people are becoming more tolerant towards homosexuality: among the 10,792 surveyed, 48.15% were in favor of greater tolerance, 30.9% disapproved, 14.46% were uncertain, and 7.26% were indifferent. Gay-bashing is rare. Some scholars complain that the government is too indifferent on this issue, doing nothing to promote the situation of homosexuals in China. During the 2002 Gay Games, only two persons from the Mainland were sent to participate, and apart from gay websites the media gave little coverage to the event. Many gay men admit to having unsafe sex, and, when this occurs, having more than one sex partner worsens the spread of AIDS in China. But the government makes little effort to educate citizens about the danger of AIDS among homosexuals *and* heterosexuals. Zhang Beichuang (1998), one of the most famous scholars on gay and lesbian issues, stresses that:

Homosexuals, like their heterosexual counterparts, also look forward to living with their loved ones. But because of sociocultural backwardness, many homosexuals live under severe discrimination, unable to establish stable and healthy monogamous relationships.... “Discrimination” has now been commonly acknowledged by the

international health community as the key factor for spreading AIDS. In the age of AIDS, changing the social environment that discriminates against the homosexual community is pressing obligation and task for academia. (pp 4-5)

The authorities still refuse to promote gay rights in China. Although there is no explicit law against homosexuality or same-sex acts between consenting adults, neither are there laws protecting gays from discrimination, nor are there any gay rights organizations in China. It is believed that the Chinese policy towards the issue of gays remains the “Three Nos”: No promotion, no approval, and no disapproval (Xu Lie, 2001).

The evaluation of the amendment of the marriage law in China in 2003 provoked the first discussion about homosexual marriage (Chinese Sociology Website, 2003). Though this issue was rejected, this was the first time that an item of gay rights had been discussed in China. Not long before the new marriage law went into effect, a government officer stated in a press conference on August 19, 2003 that same-sex marriage is still forbidden in China. Li Yinhe, a well-known sexology scholar in Chinese gay communities, tried to propose the legalization of same-sex marriage during the National People’s Congress. According to Chinese law, at least thirty delegates’ signatures are needed to bring a bill to the floor of Congress. Her efforts failed because she was unable to get enough delegate support. Many scholars and homosexuals do not think it is possible for China to pass such a law in the near future (Yahoo News Website, 2006).

Chou (2000) concludes that:

It is indeed inaccurate to say that the Chinese government oppresses lesbian and gay people. Though PEPS (*People who are Erotically attracted to People of the Same sex*) (Chou, 2001, p. 27) have been oppressed and abused by individual police

officers for having sex, heterosexuals are also oppressed for having extramarital relations. It would be fair to say that both traditional and contemporary Chinese ruling authorities simply do not have the concept of lesbian and gay issues. The Chinese government's concern is obviously not *tongxinglian* (homosexuals) itself but social order and stability. It hits a governmental nerve when the most well-known *tongzhi* in mainland China seeks the help of the American Human Rights Commission to set up a *tongzhi* human rights group, and to attack the Chinese government on the highly sensitive issue of human rights. (p. 136)

According to Borelli (2004), a notable change occurred during the late 1990s and early 2000s, when sodomy was decriminalized in 1997, and the new Chinese Classification and Diagnostic Criteria of Mental Disorders removed homosexuality from its list of mental illnesses on April 20, 2001 (UNESCO). The situation has continued to improve.

Understanding about Gay and Lesbian Individuals

Western Terminology of “Homosexuality”

According to Fone (2000), the German-Hungarian journalist Karl Maria Kertbeny first coined the word “homosexuality” in 1868 in a letter written to the sexologist Karl Heinrich Ulrichs. He used it again in 1869 in an anonymous pamphlet opposing the Prussian anti-sodomy law. Kertbeny argued that the state had no right to penalize or even to control private consensual homosexual behaviour, and that “homosexuals” ought not to be objects of derision and stigma (Fone, 2000).

Fone (2000) believes that “homosexuality” may have been first used in English in 1883, in *A Problem in Greek Ethics*, an essay by the English critic and homosexual

apologist John Addington Symonds, in which he argued that Greeks not only tolerated “homosexual passions” but deemed them of spiritual value. The earliest known use of “homosexual” in an American text occurred in a May 1892 issue of the *Chicago Medical Recorder*, in an article entitled “Responsibility in Sexual Perversion” by the legal psychiatrist Dr. James Kiernan. Kiernan defined an individual whose “general mental state is that of the opposite sex” as a “pure homosexual” (Fone, 2000, p. 4). In later medical studies, “homosexuality” came to mean, more broadly, same-sex desire, and “homosexual” was used to signify such an individual. But “‘homosexuality’ came into popular use in the 1920s” (Fone, 2000, p. 5).

Chinese Terminology Describing Homosexual Individuals

In China, terms for homosexuality included “the passion of the cut sleeve” (Duan Xiu Zhi Pi), and “the bitten peach” (Fen Tao). Other, less obscure terms have included “male trend” (Nan Feng), “allied brothers” (Xiang Huo Xiong Di), and “masculine-dragon preference” (Long Yang Pi) (Chou, 2000, pp. 23-24). The formal word for “homosexuality or homosexual(s)” is “tongxinglian” (literally same-sex relations/love) or “tongxinglian zhe” (homosexual people). Instead of this formal word, “tongzhi”, simply a head-rhyme word, is more commonly used in the gay community. “Tongzhi” (literally means “comrade”), which was first adopted by Hong Kong researchers in gender studies (Chou, 2000), is used as slang in Mandarin Chinese to refer to homosexuals, while in Cantonese “gei1”, adopted from the English “gay”, is used. This term is also somewhat common in Taiwan. “Gay” is sometimes considered to be offensive when used by heterosexuals or even by homosexuals in certain situations. Another slang term “boli” (crystal or glass) is not so commonly used. Among gay university students, the neologism

“datong” (which also refers to utopia in Chinese) is becoming popular. “Datong” is short for “daxuesheng tongzhi” (university students who are homosexuals). In Taiwan, lesbians usually call themselves “lazi” or “lala”. These two terms are abbreviations of the transliteration of the English term “lesbian”. These slang terms are also commonly used in Mainland China now (University Tongzhi website).

Some Explanations on the Origins of Homosexuality

Participants in the interviews presented huge interest in the origins of homosexuality. They believed that, if more Chinese people understood the origins of homosexuality, they might become more open and tolerant to gay and lesbian issues. Various explanations of the origin of homosexuality have been proposed. Some of these explanations invoke biological factors, whereas others rely on social factors; some argue that homosexuality is a chosen lifestyle; some believe that sexuality is socially constructed; and some make a case for homosexuality being multiply determined.

Three Medical Explanations

In the first explanation, homosexuality is caused by hormones. Besner and Spungin (1995) state that “biological sex is determined before the 12th week of fetal development by a process of successive difference” (p. 2). They state (1995) that some researchers have suggested that the prenatal hormones influence which sex the person will be attracted to and that improper hormone exposure before birth results in greater same-sex attraction. However, other researchers have proposed that sex hormones play an important part in the power of human sexual expression, but that they do not determine sexual orientation. Thus, there is an unresolved controversy as to whether hormones directly influence one’s attraction to members of the same sex.

The second explanation centres on the function of X chromosomes. Pool (1993) identifies a link between some cases of male homosexuality and a small segment of DNA on the X chromosome. Hamer et al. (1993) also discover the same result. Statistical analysis revealed a 99.5% level of certainty that there is genetic material on the X chromosome that predisposes a male to become homosexual.

In the last medical explanation, it is believed that homosexual people have different brain structure from heterosexual people. LeVay (1991) studies the brains of 19 homosexual men, 16 heterosexual men, and 6 women whose sexual orientation was unknown. He claimed his study showed that, at least in men, sexual orientation has a biological substrate.

Psychological Perspectives

Besner and Spungin (1995) state that: “Gender identification is not necessarily with one’s biological sex...Gender identification is a psychological rather than anatomic reality” (p. 4). By the age of three, most children have a strong sense of their gender identity.

Freud (1923) views homosexuality as a developmental interruption of the child’s relationship with his or her parents. He believed that homosexuality occurred because of the child’s strong incestuous desires for the parent of the opposite sex. In the absence of a strong male figure, a boy might fall in love with his mother and wish to become her lover. Freud analyzed that this boy might respond emotionally by suppressing his desire for women and developing an attraction for men. He also offered a second explanation which is the child’s strong identification with the same-sex parent. Because the adolescent cannot have the relationship he desires with this same-sex parent, he seeks out

a same-sex partner with whom he can establish a relationship. Freud acknowledged that most adolescents experience a homosexual attraction (1923).

Besner and Spungin (1995) provide another psychological theory: “Some cases of homosexuality develop because of an anti-sex puritanism present in the home” (p. 6). If a young boy is told that it is vile and sinful to defile women, he may develop a repugnance or fear of sex. As he approaches adolescence, he may channel his sexual desires toward other men so that he will not have to defile women (Besner & Spungin, 1995).

Perspectives of Life History Theorists

Besner and Spungin (1995) regard life history theorists’ perspectives as another possible origin of homosexuality. Life history theory purports that birth order can have a significant impact on the sexual roles and behaviour that are adopted by various siblings. Sexual behaviour and responsibility are determined by the role the individual plays in the family system (Besner & Spungin, 1995). These theorists believe that environmental and familial expectations shape sexual orientation. Besner and Spungin (1995) state:

All sexuality is, in part, situational—the product of the interaction of familial and social pressures, social opportunities, and individual temperament and experience. Therefore, homosexual contacts are a component, either mandatory or optional, of that gender or life course definition. Gender rules always dictate the circumstances in which homosexual contact is appropriate. (pp. 7-8)

Dickemann (1993) supports this perspective:

The ultimate guarantee of safety for an openly gay or lesbian lifestyle is only superficially paradoxical: A stable industrial social system providing the most

adequate, most egalitarian support (social, economic, medical, and educational) for reproducing adults, will provide us, as well, the environment of greatest personal freedom in all relations of sex and love. (p. 66)

Conclusion

In this section, different explanations of the origins of homosexuality were presented, including: the effect of hormones and X chromosomes, a difference in brain structure, and some perspectives of psychologists and life history theorists. Whether sexual orientation is as fixed and immutable as gender and skin or hair color is very debatable. Garnets and Kimmel conclude (2003):

The no-choice position is that, if sexual orientation is determined, ...then civil rights protections would be granted more readily. In contrast, persons who believe sexual orientation is a matter of choice imply that people have voluntarily chosen to subject themselves to stigma and oppression and therefore do not require legal protection, since they could choose to conform to the majority position....(p. 25)

Many studies have proposed some biological or biochemical difference between persons with a homosexual orientation and those with heterosexual orientation, but none of them have been replicated successfully, as Garnets and Kimmel (2003) note that “the media reports the findings when they are first discovered, but the lack of replication is seldom reported as prominently and often goes unnoticed” (p. 28).

Some Misunderstandings about Homosexuality

The media perpetuate much social misunderstanding about homosexual people.

Besner and Spungin (1995) present some of the most commonly held misunderstandings.

Homosexuality Is a Mental Illness

The respected American Psychiatric and American Psychological Associations both formally rejected this idea in 1973 (American Psychological Association, 1975). This does not mean that gays and lesbians will not experience serious psychological problems associated with their sexual orientation. As Besner and Spungin (1995) observe:

It is true that many gays and lesbians may become emotionally ill from being persecuted or being forced to hide their sexual guilt about their differences...not being able to express feelings within the family, worrying about not fitting in or being accepted among their peers and forcing themselves to play acceptable social roles causes emotional problems. (Besner & Spungin, 1995, p.14)

Gays and Lesbians Can Change to Become Heterosexuals

Scientific evidence is lacking to support the view that gays and lesbians can change their sexual orientation. Besner and Spungin (1995) explain:

A person's behaviour may change to avoid punitive therapies or the wrath of a hostile society, but the sexual orientation does not seem to change. Today, mental health professionals who try to cure adolescents of homosexuality against their will can be prosecuted. According to the American Psychiatric Association, there is no public scientific evidence that supports the effectiveness of therapy to modify one's sexual orientation. (p.15)

Acting Like a “Sissy” or a “Tomboy” Causes Homosexuality

Both heterosexuals and homosexuals may act like “sissy” or “tomboys”. This type of behaviour does not necessarily reflect a homosexual orientation (Besner & Spungin, 1995). Green (1987) also finds that for some of the boys he studied over a 15-year period, feminine behaviour was an indicator, but not an exclusive predictor, of homosexuality.

Homosexuality Leads to AIDS

There are no known statistics to support the belief that homosexual behaviour leads to AIDS than those in the heterosexual community. Besner and Spungin (1995) explain:

Although there may have been a great amount of unsafe sex practiced in these settings (such as bath houses, restaurants, and bars which were believed to be contributing to the spread of AIDS in gay community), the gay community has been at the forefront of trying to prevent the spread of AIDS, and statistics indicate a decline in the percentage of new cases within the gay community (and an increase primarily in the young heterosexual female population). (Besner and Spungin, 1995, p.17)

Zhang (2003) also points out that sexual life between same-gendered persons, such as oral sex, anal sex, playing with sex toys (like vibrators and dildos, especially for women) should also use protection in order to avoid the possibility of being infected by HIV.

Gays and Lesbians Cannot Maintain Long-Term Relationships

Bell and Weinberg (1978) studied 979 gays and lesbians, and concluded that many gay men and lesbian women lead stable lives without frenetic sexual activity and that

some are considerably happier and better adjusted than heterosexuals as a whole. As sources of evidence, Besner and Spungin (1995) cite Peplau (1983/1984) and Rubenstein (1993):

Peplau (1983/1984) showed that approximately 60% of lesbians and 40% of gay men were involved in a long-term relationship.... In 1981, there was no public or private jurisdiction in the United States that recognized lesbian or gay relationships (Rubenstein, 1993). By September 1993, 25 jurisdictions recognized some type of domestic partnership for lesbians and gay men. And at least 20 private-sector companies and organizations recognize same-sex domestic partnerships in employee benefits. (p. 24)

Conclusion

For homosexuals, the impact of these misunderstandings is destructive, and has led to suicide, depression, alcoholism, substance abuse, and numerous mental conditions.

Besner and Spungin (1995) summarize in this way:

Belief in myths described here takes a great toll on society in various ways.

Individuals who are not free to be who they are live under great pressure, and there is a tremendous loss of potential as they struggle to successfully live their lives.

Crimes against gays and lesbians cost society in terms of economic resources to deal with such crimes. Homophobia has taken its toll by stifling gays and lesbians and inhibiting their creativity, thus undermining the development of potential. (pp. 24-25)

This toll is especially great for gay and lesbian students because they are struggling with many competing issues during their school years. Having to adjust to society's

negative attitudes and misperceptions, gay and lesbian students experience a high truancy rate, substance abuse, suicide, mental illness, academic underachievement, and drop-out rate (Besner & Spungin, 1995). Therefore, it is very important to dispel the misunderstandings that people hold about gay and lesbians. The deleterious effects on self-concept and levels of functioning, the disruption in families, and the financial and emotional strain have an impact in the world. Besner and Spungin (1995) stress that “these myths must be addressed and dispelled through education and personal experience” (p. 24-25).

Attitudes toward Gay and Lesbian Individuals

Western Terminology Describing Anti-gay Attitudes

Homophobia

Fone (2000) observes that “‘homophobia’ is now popularly construed to mean fear and dislike of homosexuality and of those who practice it...It may have been coined in the 1960s...and it was first used by K. T. Smith in 1971 in an article entitled ‘Homophobia: A Tentative Personality Profile’” (p. 5). Fone (2000) also cites Weinberg (1972) and Freedman (1975) stating that:

In 1972, George Weinberg defined “homophobia” as “the dread of being close quarters with homosexuals”. ...In 1975, Mark Freedman added to that definition a description of homophobia as an “extreme rage and fear reaction to homosexuals”.
(p. 5)

Fone (2000) notes that “the basis for this fear, many argue, is the perception that homosexuality and the homosexuals disrupt the sexual and gender order supposedly established by what is often called natural law” (p. 5). He (2000) explains:

Homophobia has links with sexism as well as with anti-semitism and with prejudice against people of color. Like sexism—denigration of women by men—homophobia employs stereotypes. (p. 5)

If men are contemptuous of women because they accept stereotypical notions about women's alleged weakness, irrationality, sexuality, or inferiority, they are also contemptuous of homosexuals because they believe that gay men act like women (Richards, 1999). Skin color, race, and religion create antagonisms that are especially exacerbated when the stigmatized party is gay or lesbian (Goodman, 2001). Therefore, insulting words (such as “faggot”, “dyke”, “homo”, “queer”, or “gay”) and queer-bashing takes place in a society where homophobia is not universally rejected (Fone, 2000).

In China, the family-kinship tradition and the pressure to get married put a limiting boundary to, and pressure on, homosexual behavior. People might gossip but seldom take action against gay and lesbian people in Chinese society. Chou (2000) states:

Homosexuality is not treated as intrinsically evil and sinful. Gay-bashing as seen in America and Britain does not exist in traditional Chinese societies. The phenomenon of a group of young gang members beating up ‘gay-looking’ people is unheard-of. (p. 25)

He explains that:

The notion of homophobia is thus inappropriate to describe traditional Chinese attitudes toward same-sex eroticism, since the condemnation was not a categorical rejection of same-sex conduct per se, but the betrayal of family and social role. “Homophobia”, if the term is used in a non-discriminatory manner, is either

explaining too much—as if Chinese culture rejects homosexuality as sinful or perverse, or too little—as if the Chinese understood homosexuality as a generic or essentialized category. Both fail to capture the unique specificity of the Chinese cultural attitude, which understands the sexual by the social. (p. 26)

Ammon (2006) also supports the view that homophobia in China does not take the same aggressive form as in the West. Among working-class folks, attacking a gay person is almost unheard of, as Howie said, who is out to his family (Howie is one of the people Ammon interviewed):

They may be surprised and confused by it and they will usually just walk away and ignore you. They won't try to harm you because it's not their business. Also, most Chinese people don't know what homosexuality is, so they don't know what you're talking about. (Ammon, 2006)

Ammon noted that another mediating factor is the absence of strong religious influence in China. Communism is a secular social system that demands outward conformity of behavior and imposes less moral evaluation on personal character than religion does. Lacking the virtue/sin debate and the emotional fervor that accompanies rigid beliefs, it is rare to find violent gay bashing (Ammon, 2006).

Cultural Homophobia or Heterosexism

Bank (2004) clarifies two additional terms that connote “cultural homophobia” or “heterosexism”:

It [cultural homophobia or heterosexism] refers to social standards and norms which dictate that being heterosexual is better or more moral than being GLB (gay, lesbian, and bisexual), and that everyone is heterosexual or should be. While these standards

are not written down as such, they are spelled out each day in television shows where the vast majority of characters are heterosexual and most relationships involve a female and a male; or in the assumption made by most adults in social situations that all “normal” children will eventually be attracted to and marry a person of the opposite sex. Often heterosexual people do not realize that these standards exist, but GLB people are acutely aware of them. The feeling that results is one of being an outsider in society. (p. 11-12)

Sexual Prejudice

A third term discussed by Herek (2000) is “sexual prejudice”:

Sexual prejudice refers to negative attitude toward an individual because of her or his sexual orientation...this term is used to characterize heterosexuals’ negative attitudes toward (a) homosexual behavior, (b) people with a homosexual or bisexual orientation, and (c) communities of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people. (p. 19)

Herek (2000) believes sexual prejudice is preferable to homophobia for three reasons:

First, sexual prejudice is a descriptive term. Unlike homophobia, it conveys no a priori assumptions about the origins, dynamics, and underlying motivations of antigay attitude. Second, the term explicitly links the study of antigay hostility with the rich tradition of social psychological research on prejudice. Third, using the construct of sexual prejudice does not require value judgments that antigay attitudes are inherently irrational or evil. (p. 20)

Yang (1997) discovered that the prevalent attitudes toward homosexuals have become more favorable over the past three decades in the United States. Herek (2000) also supports this perspective:

Most Americans believe that a gay person should not be denied employment or basic civil rights. The public is reluctant to treat homosexuality on a par with heterosexuality; however, most Americans favor giving same-sex domestic partners limited recognition (e.g., employee health benefits, hospital visitation rights), but most oppose legalizing same-sex marriage. (p. 20)

Herek (2000) believes that there are “higher levels of sexual prejudice among individuals who are older, less educated, living in the U.S. South or Midwest, and living in rural areas” (p. 20). Gender difference is one of the important factors that should be given more attention. Many researchers have found that that heterosexual women and men differ in their attitudes toward homosexuality. Heterosexual men generally hold more negative attitudes towards homosexuality than do heterosexual women (Herek, 1988; Kite & Whitley, 1998; Kite, 1984). A more specific finding is that heterosexual men hold less negative attitudes toward lesbians than toward gay men, whereas heterosexual women hold approximately the same attitudes toward both groups (Kite & Whitley, 1996). Kite and Whitley explain (1998):

Heterosexual men’s tendency to view women in sexual terms may lead them to erotize the idea of a woman making love to another woman. The positive erotic value thus assigned to lesbianism by heterosexual men may counteract the general stigma associated with homosexuality, resulting in attitudes toward lesbians that are less negative than those toward gay men. Because heterosexual women tend not to sexualize men in the same way; however, they may not sexualize male homosexuality and may therefore hold similar attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. (p.44)

Studies have shown that homophobic behavior is reduced when heterosexual people have homosexual friends or family members (Muraco, 2005; Herek, 2000). Social psychological perspectives address the link between interpersonal contact and prejudicial attitudes, first described by Allport (1954). Allport explain that “prejudice may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals” (Allport, 1954, p. 281). Given Allport’s theory, friendship is a context in which heterosexuals’ prejudice against sexual minority groups can be lessened. Herek and Capitanio (1996) also believes that those heterosexuals having interpersonal contact with gay men or lesbians report more favorable attitudes toward same-sex oriented individuals than those without any contact.

In her study, Muraco (2005) also stresses that “friendship of college students is a context in which heterosexism is resisted” (p. 587). She explains that:

...none of the respondents note an outright refusal to maintain a friendship with a gay male or lesbian friend. Rather, the bond of friendship appears to supersede heterosexist attitudes in being willing to offer support and assistance to a friend in need. Results also suggest that categories of sexual orientation and sex impact the evaluations of friendship behaviors primarily in degrees of appropriateness, rather than categorically, suggesting that beliefs about the importance of friendship can moderate heterosexist attitudes....the findings of this study provide evidence of individuals both reinforcing and resisting attitudes of sexual prejudice. (p. 604)

Herek (2000) also supports this view:

Sexual prejudice is strongly related to whether or not a heterosexual knows gay people personally. The lowest level of prejudice is manifested by heterosexuals who

have gay friends or family members, describe their relationships with those individuals as close, and report having directly discussed the gay and lesbian person's sexual orientation with him or her. (p. 20)

According to Herek and Capitanio (1996), interpersonal contact and prejudice are reciprocally related. Not only are heterosexuals with gay friends or relatives less prejudiced, but heterosexuals from demographic groups with low levels of sexual prejudice (e.g., women, highly educated people) are more likely to experience personal contact with an openly gay person.

Sexual prejudice has multiple motivations. Herek (2000) offers these possibilities: For some heterosexuals, it results from unpleasant interactions with gay individuals....For other heterosexuals, sexual prejudice is rooted in fears associated with homosexuality, perhaps reflecting discomfort with their own sexual impulses or gender conformity. For still others, sexual prejudice reflects influences of in-group norms that are hostile to homosexual and bisexual persons. Yet another source of prejudice is the perception that gay people and the gay community represent values that are directly in conflict with one's personal value system. (p. 21)

Hate crimes and discrimination are unavoidably influenced by sexual prejudice, and recognizing the complex relationship between sexual prejudice and anti-gay behavior further underlies the links between attitudes and behavior (Herek, 2000). However, Herek (2000) admits:

Although more than a quarter century has passed since Weinberg first presented a scholarly discussion of the psychology of homophobia, empirical research on sexual prejudice is still in its early stage....Relatively little research has been devoted to

understanding the dynamic cognitive processes associated with antigay attitudes and stereotypes, that is, how heterosexuals think about lesbians and gay men. Nor has extensive systematic inquiry been devoted to the underlying motivations for sexual prejudice or the effectiveness of different interventions for reducing sexual prejudice. These present promising areas for future research. (p. 21)

Effects of Negative Attitudes toward Gay and Lesbian Individuals

Being gay or lesbian is not genetically or biologically hazardous to one's physical or psychological health (Banks, 2004.). Muehrer (1995) states that "although few studies have directly linked particular stressors resulting from homophobia and their health and social outcomes, most researchers agree that homophobia increases a multitude of risk factors associated with psychological, psychosocial, psychiatric, social and health problems" (p. 13).

Ross (1989) studied homosexually-oriented males in four countries (i.e., Sweden, Finland, Ireland, and Australia) and found that homosexual adolescents are likely to have more problems in the more anti-homosexual countries. This suggests that the level of homophobia manifested in a particular country or culture may be directly linked to the extent of gay and lesbian health and social problems. Some examples of the specific problems that gay and lesbian individuals suffer that are associated with homophobia include higher rates of depression, anxiety, substance abuse, loneliness, and other psychological distress (Ungvarski & Grossman, 1999).

The chronic stress of coping with social stigmatisation and social hatred is the primary reason for the negative effects of homophobia (Ungvarski & Grossman, 1999). Meyer (1995) sees the homophobia gay-lesbian feeling as a component of minority

stress, which is the psychological stress derived from membership in a low-status minority group. He theorized that that gay and lesbians are subjected to chronic stress related to their stigmatization, their internalized homophobia, and actual events of discrimination and violence. More specifically, Banks (2004) summarizes the reasons for the deleterious effects of homophobia.

Lack of Support and Helping Resources

Banks (2004) states that “gays and lesbians feel isolation, alienation and disenfranchisement from the resources and assistance society ordinarily provides in the face of life stressors” (p. 13). Well-being and health are negatively affected when gays and lesbians do not have social and family support and a sense of community. Loss of support is also seen in the workplace: gay and lesbian individuals who experience greater heterosexism demonstrate greater job withdrawal (Waldo, 1999). Banks (2004) stresses that:

Although all people experience health and social problems, GLB (gay, lesbian, and bisexual) are especially vulnerable because of a lack of support, and denial of information and helping resources....Stress caused by homophobia may be worse than other stressors because of the loss of friend and family support systems—these supports are lost because GLB have been rejected or have a need to hide their thoughts and feelings. (p. 14)

Internalized and External Homophobia

Malyon (1982) hypothesizes that GLB feel stress that is the result of internalized negative attitudes toward one’s own homosexuality. Banks (2004) explains: “Internalized homophobia in GLB results in lower levels of community integration and social support,

lower self-esteem, increased feelings of guilt, demoralization, alienation, isolation and other problems” (p. 14). Hershberger and D’Augelli (1995) also find that GLB with higher internalized homophobia had fewer coping abilities.

For Janoff (2005), many of the outcomes of homophobia are related to external homophobia such as hostile attitudes, verbal and physical assaults, and denial of employment, housing, custody and legal representation. Banks (2004) finds that “victims of GLB who hate violence can suffer psychological and emotional outcomes such as phobias, post-traumatic stress syndromes, chronic pain syndromes, eating disorder, headaches, increased agitation, sleep disorders, uncontrollable crying, and depression” (p. 15).

Self-Concealment of Sexual Orientation

As a result of living in a homophobic society, many GLB feels pressure to conform and fear discrimination and reprisals. This, in turn, causes many GLB to conceal their sexual orientation, to be secretive in their lives, and to repress their feelings, which causes unusual stress (Ungvarski & Grossman, 1999). Concealing homosexuality has been found by many researchers to have a negative effect on physical health. Cole et al. (1996) find that in their sample of 222 GB males, the incidence of cancer and moderately serious infectious disease (e.g., pneumonia, bronchitis, sinusitis, and tuberculosis) increased in direct proportion to the degree to which participants concealed their homosexual identity. None of these effects could be accounted for by demographic characteristics, health relevant behavioural patterns, depression, anxiety, repressive coping, or social desirability response biases. Banks (2004) concludes that: “In general, openness to others about sexual orientation is associated with better psychological

adjustment, less fear of exposure, increased choice about where to see help” (p. 14).

Homophobia results in the alteration of behaviour to avoid anti-GLB harassment or violence, such as not speaking about their lives to co-workers, friends or family, altering clothing; avoiding physical contact with partner or lover in public; and altering political involvement in community issues (Banks, 2004). Although these behaviours probably do not directly result in increased health problems, the further isolation that the behaviours entail may indirectly lead to the exacerbation of health and social problems.

Coming-Out Stress and Risk Behaviours

Garnets, Herek, and Levy (1990) find that the process of coming out of secrecy and disclosing one’s homosexuality to friends and family is an emotionally stressful process that often results in social rejection, non-supportiveness, shame, diminished self-concept, intolerance, lowered self esteem, emotional isolation, severe anxiety, loss of loved ones, discrimination, verbal and physical abuse, depression, and other stress related patterns (e.g., dissatisfaction with sex lives, problems in close relationship, feeling overwhelmed, and so on).

Banks (2004) states that “GLB are not usually confused about sexuality, but are often confused about how to express it in a hostile social environment” (p. 15). Sexuality identity was cited as a source of stress in lesbians 3.5 times more frequently than in heterosexual women (Bernhard & Applegate, 1999).

Banks (2004) notes that “the results of revealing ones sexual orientation place GLB at risk of engaging in individual risk behaviours and clusters of risk behaviours (e.g., unsupportive health habits, self-destructive behaviours)” (p. 15). Garofalo, Wolf, Kessel, Palfrey, and DuRant (1998) analyze data from a survey of 4159 Massachusetts’ youth, of

which 104 self-identified as BLB. Results indicate that more than 30 health risk behaviours were positively associated with self-reported GLB orientation including violence-related behaviours, suicidal ideation and attempts, multiple substance abuse, and sexual risk behaviours.

Attitudes towards Gay and Lesbian Students in Western Universities

Lopez and Chism (1993) investigated campus and classroom experiences of gay and lesbian students. The hostile incidents reported ranged from the destruction of posters advertising gay, lesbian, and bisexual events to being subjected to offensive remarks such as “hey, faggot” or “bash them back into the closet” (p. 99). The authors commented that the gay male and lesbian students were surprised at the level of student ignorance regarding sexual identity and the stereotypes held by heterosexual students. Gay male and lesbian students also experienced feelings of alienation by peers in the residence halls and in their academic programs. They related that they were afraid to reveal their sexual identity to their professors for fear of retaliation in how they would be treated and graded and they were frustrated by faculty who failed to react to homophobic remarks.

Understanding the attitudes of students toward gay male and lesbian students is a critical component in understanding the verbal and physical harassment of gay and lesbian students over the past decade (Ficarrotto, 1990). Herek (1988) reports that attitudes of heterosexual peers toward lesbian and gay students have not been favourable. Much research consistently shows that heterosexual men have significantly stronger negative feelings toward gay men than they hold toward lesbian women (Gentry, 1987; Herek, 1988, Kite, 1984; Whitley, 1988). The results concerning heterosexual women’s attitudes toward gay men or lesbians have differed across studies. Some studies reported

that women express more negative feelings toward lesbians than toward gay men (Gentry, 1987; Whitley, 1988), but Herek (1988) and Kite (1984) find that women regarded gay men and lesbians similarly.

The frequently cited works on attitudes toward gay male and lesbian students (D'Augelli, 1989a, 1989b; Herek, 1988; Simoni, 1996) used the Attitudes Toward Lesbian and Gay Men (ATLGM) scale (Herek, 1988). People have been struggling for years to make institutions of higher education more accepting of differences; however, those opposed to differences, especially sexual difference, continue to be outspoken. Generally, it seems that within American society at large and on college campuses in particular homophobia is more widely accepted than either racism or sexism. Although this point certainly is debatable, the fact that negative attitudes toward gay and lesbian students and their concerns are prevalent within college and university communities is not. Harassment, both verbal and physical, remains a fact of life for many gay and lesbian students (D'Augelli 1989b). Some professors are criticized for offering courses in gay and lesbian studies, whereas other professors espouse in the classroom their negative opinions about those who are gay or lesbian, including the opinion that being gay or lesbian is a disorder which can be treated and cured (Gonshak, 1994).

The expression of negative and hostile attitudes toward gay and lesbian students can sabotage efforts made by others to facilitate a campus atmosphere that is hospitable to gay and lesbian students. Measuring the pervasiveness of negative attitudes toward gays and lesbians, identifying the social characteristics of individuals who espouse such attitudes, and determining the extent to which gay and lesbian students are victimized are challenging tasks for colleges and universities—but they are tasks worthy of undertaking.

Unfortunately, relatively few colleges and universities have even conducted research to evaluate the climate that exists for their gay and lesbian students.

Chinese University Atmosphere for Gay and Lesbian Students

Gays and Lesbians on Chinese Campuses

While much of Chinese society rejects same-sex relations, universities in the country are gradually becoming more liberal, according to a recent survey on the levels of homosexuality on Chinese university campuses. Jiang Qiuyu and five of her classmates from the Beijing-based China University of Nationalities had posted information on homosexual websites, held face-to-face interviews, and distributed their questionnaires around 10 universities in Beijing, including prestigious Beijing University and Qinghua University (Wang & Zhou, 2006). According to Wang and Zhou, among the 582 online respondents who were gay, nearly 74 percent were men. The report shows that 68.4% of participants believed that, in recent years, university students have had more access to gay and lesbian issues; 94.5% students regarded the Internet as the most popular way to gain access to gain gay and lesbian information, followed by discussion with friends (36.1%), and then different kinds of literature (34.8%) and media (34.2%). This research also shows that students from larger cities are more willing to accept gays and lesbians (24.5%) than students who are from smaller cities (12.0%) and villages (8.9%). The higher education level a participant has, the greater tendency that he/she accepts gay and lesbian people: 18.05% of graduate students are tolerant on gay man and lesbian woman, but 12.70% of undergraduate students accept gay and lesbian people.

This research indicates that most participants believe that sexual orientation is a matter of choice rather than being innate. When participants were asked what they might do if they found that their friends were gay or lesbian, 10.5% could accept it, and 60.9% felt that they were indifferent to others' sexual orientation. 28.6% indicated that "they fear of gay and lesbian people and repulse them" (Wang & Zhou, 2006). Jiang explained that "we found that university is the place many gay men first identify their sexual orientation, adding that compared with homosexuals elsewhere, university students tend to dream more about pure love and worry less about the future. People with homosexual tendencies believe campus life is more relaxed than the rest of society" (Wang & Zhou, 2006). This research reveals that, although most university students do not understand gay and lesbian people's lives, they believe they offer them respect.

University Courses Related to Gay and Lesbian Issues

Sun Zhongxin, an associate professor of sociology at Fudan University in Shanghai teaches the university's "Introduction to Gay and Lesbian Studies" course, the first of its kind in China. She agrees that campus life can be "more friendly and tolerant" towards homosexuals than the rest of society (Yawei, 2005). Campuses may be liberal places, but according to Sun, they are not "breeding grounds for homosexuality" (Yawei, 2005). She said the number of homosexuals on campus is not growing, even though it can seem that way as more people feel able to reveal their sexual orientation. Sun said she believes homosexuality is biologically determined. She stresses that, "even though society is against it, the reality is that it won't adversely affect society, and being homosexual won't prevent a person from being able to contribute to society's general well-being" (Sheng, 2005). "The previous course mainly focused on how to prevent AIDS in homosexuals.

But now, we will pay more attention to the development of a proper view about homosexuals,” said Gao Yanning, who lectures students in the class, “We will give students equitable information on homosexuals and help eliminate students’ prejudice” (Liu, n.d.).

Summary of the Literature Review

In this chapter, five sections related to five research questions were explored: What are the reasons for gay and lesbian people fitting/not fitting into Chinese society? Are Chinese university students open and tolerant to gay and lesbian issues? How do Chinese university students perceive their gay and lesbian peers? How do their perspectives affect their attitudes toward their gay and lesbian peers? Is university a safe and welcoming place for gay and lesbian students?

In the first section “the reasons gay and lesbian fit/do not fit into Chinese society”, Chinese religious views were first stated. Different from Western religion, Chinese traditional religions including Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism do not condemn homosexuality as a sin. In the ancient Chinese history, the homosexual behavior used to be popular, especially among the upper class. The death of Chinese cultural tolerance of homosexuals happened after Chinese people imported Western perspectives on sexual morality, including the Western intolerance of homosexuality. Especially after the Peoples Republic of China was founded in 1949, China’s long history of cultural tolerance of homosexuality began to fade. In addition, Chinese value on family and blood ties is another reason for anti-gay perspectives and behaviors.

In the second section, “the openness and tolerance toward gay and lesbian issues”, the researcher concluded that the great influence of the Internet, pagers, cell phones, and

all kinds of media played a significant role in building gay community and in making its existence known. Some legal situations related to gay and lesbian issues were discussed in this section as well. In the third part, the researcher explored some understanding about gay and lesbian individuals, western and Chinese terminology related to homosexuality, several explanations on the origins of homosexuality, and misunderstandings about gay and lesbian people.

In the section on “the attitudes toward gay and lesbian individuals”, first, Western terminology related to antigay attitudes was clarified. Second, the researcher listed several negative effects of anti-gay attitudes on gay and lesbian people. And last, some literature related to the attitudes toward gay and lesbian students in Western universities were surveyed. In the last part, the atmosphere for gay and lesbian students on Chinese university campuses was explored, including the discussion of research and courses related to homosexual students in Chinese universities.

Conceptual Framework of Literature Review

The conceptual framework presents a clear relationship between different sections in the literature review chapter. In the central circle is the title of this thesis. Around it, there are five separated circles, which represent five literature review sections related to five research questions in this study. In each peripheral square framework, the subtitles of each literature-review section are listed.

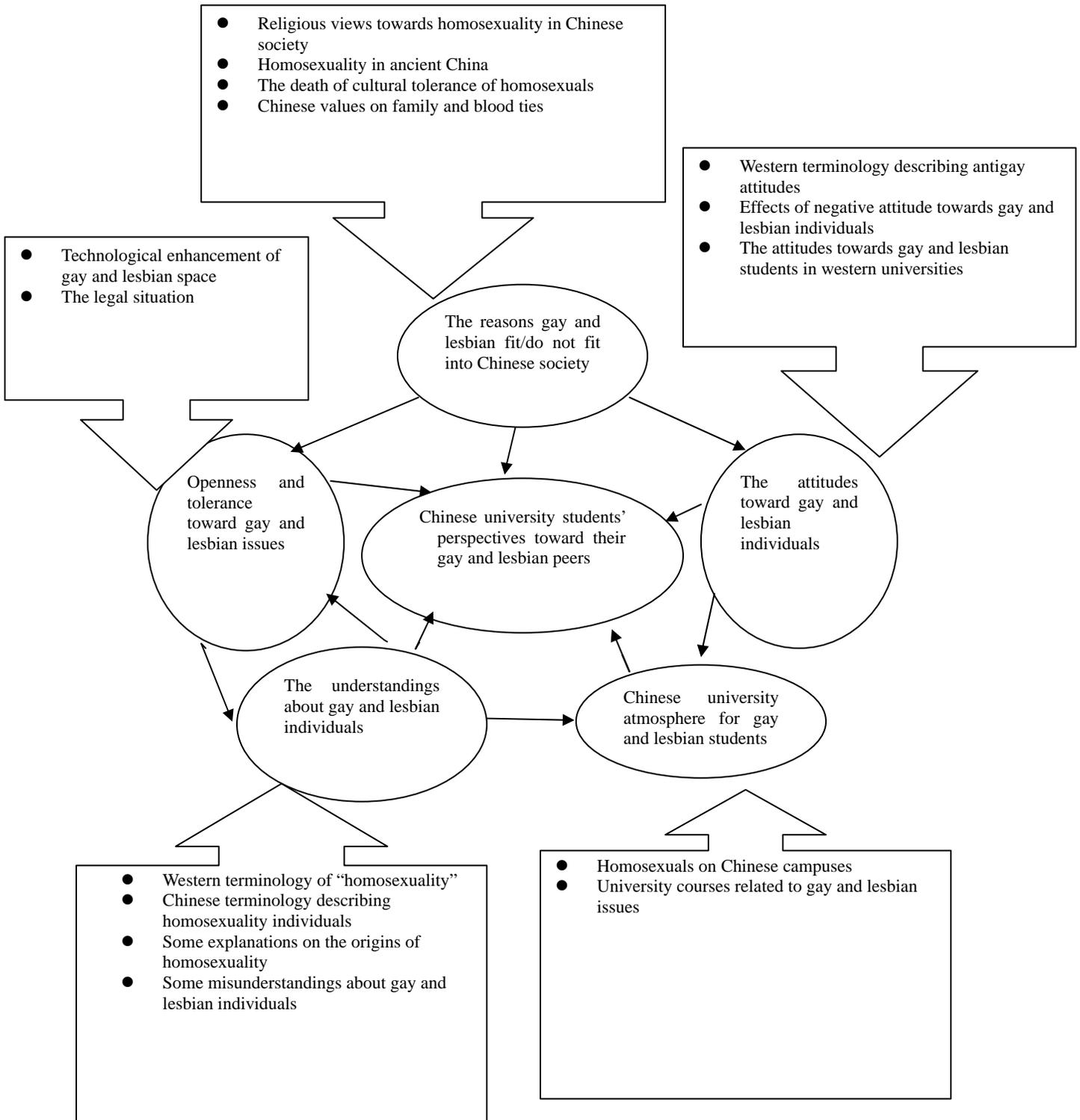


Figure 2.1. Chinese students' perspectives toward their gay and lesbian peers

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the methods that were employed in the study of university students' perspectives on their gay and lesbian peers in China. It includes reasons for selecting these methods, the criteria for selecting participants, data collection procedures, methods of analysis, and ethical considerations.

Background

My trip to China was an interesting adventure. At the end of June 2006, I went to a large university in southeast China. I thought the sample of participants would be provided, as a professor in that university had promised to support this research. However, the guaranteed assistance was withdrawn at the last moment. I was left to gather a sample of 200 students to conduct questionnaires for my professor's survey.

The overall purpose of the larger research was to discover the extent to which Chinese university students observe homophobic behavior in their universities and are prepared to intervene when it arises. The study consisted of two inter-related parts—a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews. The first part of the survey asked students about the extent of homophobic language they hear, where they hear it, and what—if anything—they do about it. The second part sought demographic data that would allow us to explore possible correlations between the willingness of students to intervene in incidences of homophobic behavior and factors such as gender, age, family academic background, international travel experience, school subject specialization, and attitudes on certain policy matters. In this survey, 200 students (Male=117; Female=83) from this large university were asked whether they would intervene were they to hear homophobic

comments and, more importantly, if they would intervene, why they would do so.

From these 200 students, I would also solicit participants for two six-person-focus-groups and six one-on-one interviews that would be central for my own thesis.

Fortunately, I met a student who was very interested in this research and enthusiastic to help me after she learned of my situation. She helped me find 200 students by using her connections with some student associations, and also solicited help from her friends.

Within five days, we finished all questionnaires and interviews. It was beyond my imagination that our research could go so smoothly after such a frustrating start.

Because we were undertaking our research in late June, most year three and four students had finished their examinations and left for home and their summer vacation. It is for this reason that most participants in our research are freshmen or sophomore students.

Avoiding Heterosexist Bias

In 1985, the APA Board for Social and Ethical Responsibility in Psychology (BSERP) convened a Task Force on Non-homophobic Research. The task force was mandated to assemble and prepare materials that could be used to educate psychologists about techniques for preventing homophobic bias in research (Herek, Kimmel, Amaro, & Melton, 2003). Herek et al. (2003) state that “in fulfilling its charge, the task force focused on the problem of heterosexist bias on psychological research, which it defined as conceptualizing human experience in strictly heterosexual terms and consequently ignoring, invalidating, or derogating homosexual behaviors and sexual orientation, and lesbian, gay and bisexual relationship and lifestyle” (p. 740).

Herek et al (2003) offer some important suggestions for avoiding heterosexist bias. First, the research needs to ensure that interview questions do not assume heterosexuality. General questions must not use language that assumes a respondents' heterosexuality. In this research, the researcher could not determine the interviewees' sexual orientation, so she avoided equating "heterosexuality" with "sexuality". Second, the researcher's personal attitudes and feelings must not influence participants' responses. Herek and his colleagues (2003) explain:

Many lesbians, gay men, and bisexual people are justifiably suspicious of all psychological research, which historically has labeled them as sick. Unless researchers are well-informed, candid, and sensitive to such suspicions, they are likely to obtain incomplete or inaccurate responses. (p. 745)

Third, the experimental manipulations must not presume that participants were heterosexuals. Herek et al (2003) suggest that "unless sexual orientation is an explicit variable in the research, procedures should be neutral concerning respondents' sexual orientation" (p. 746). Fourth, the research procedure should not reinforce prejudice or stereotypes among heterosexual respondents, and it should not have negative effects on lesbian, gay, or bisexual participants. Herek et al (2003) state:

Research procedures that explicitly disparage lesbians, gay men, or bisexual people are objectionable on ethical grounds.... [It] can affect respondents' feelings of self-worth as well as their level of respect for psychological research. Such a procedure can reinforce heterosexism by encouraging participants to see the world exclusively in heterosexual terms. (pp. 747-748)

Finally, during the recruitment procedure and interview procedure, the researcher should not intrude inappropriately on potential participants' privacy.

For gay and lesbian related research, there are many implicit and overt prejudices remaining to be overcome. Herek and his peers (2003) conclude that "overcoming these biases will lead to more ethical science, as researcher learn how to better respect the dignity and worth of individuals, to strive for the preservation of fundamental human rights, and to protect the welfare of research participants" (p. 752).

Research Methods

Using focus groups and one-on-one interviews as a qualitative method, I explored and described kinds of understanding that are usually outside the reach of quantitative methods. Qualitative research reports are rich with detail and insight into participants' experiences of the world, and may resonate with the reader's experience. McMillan and Schumacher (2001) state:

Qualitative techniques collect data primarily in the form of words rather than numbers. The study provided a detailed narrative description, analysis, and interpretation of phenomena. (p. 40)

Focus group interviews and one-on-one interviews consist of oral questions asked by interviewers and oral responses by the interviewees. Fontana and Frey (1994) state that "the interview is one of the most common and most powerful ways we use to try to understand our fellow human beings" (p. 361). Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) add that:

Skilled interviewers can follow up a respondent's answers to obtain more information and clarify vague statements. They also can build up trust and rapport with respondents, thus making it possible to obtain information that the individual

probably would not reveal by any other data-collection method. (p. 247)

Qualitative researchers are finding that interaction among participants stimulate them to express feelings, perspectives, and thoughts, and it also help interviewees take major responsibility for stating their views and drawing out the understandings of others in the group (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). Focus group interviews were used in this research. Given that the research questions were related to sexual matters, I feared that interviewees might be too shy to share their perspectives with other interviewees in the group discussion. In order to obtain more personal experience related to gay and lesbian issues, I also carried out one-on-one interviews. In the one-on-one interview, the interviewer collected data from individuals who had interest and related experience on gay and lesbian issues, which would provide richer data for this research. The interview utilized a predetermined sequence and wording of the same set of questions to be asked of each respondent in order to maximize the emergence of consistent themes. In the interviews, besides asking a series of structured questions, I also probed more deeply using follow-up questions to obtain additional information.

Selection of Participants

McMillan and Schumacher (2001) state that the “selection of persons for in-depth interviews begins with a description of the desired attributes or profile of persons who would have knowledge of the topic” (p. 433). Rubin and Rubin (1995) add that, when a researcher selects participants for his/her research:

All the people that you interview should satisfy three requirements. They should be knowledgeable about the cultural arena or the situation or experience being studied; they should be willing to talk; and when people in the arena have different

perspectives, the interviewees should represent the range of points of views. (p. 66)

I sought volunteers from among the 200 students who had taken the survey (participants in the questionnaire survey from our larger research project at a large southeast Chinese university). Because of their experience in answering the questionnaire, students who volunteered for the further research opportunity in the focus groups and one-on-one interviews found it much easier and more interesting to respond. All participants were volunteers, and they were paid a small sum of money at the end of the interviews for their contributions to this study.

I found two groups of six students for focus group interviews, and six students for one-on-one interviews. Based on my personal experience, I believe that Chinese female students would be very shy to talk about sex-related issues when males are present, and vice versa. Therefore, I divided the students into two same-gender groups: a female-student focus group, and a male-student focus group. In order to avoid gender imbalance, the interviews included an equal number of female and male students: six male students and six female students for two focus group interviews, and three female students and three male students for one-on-one interviews.

Procedures

At the beginning of the focus group and one-on-one interview sessions, I shared some of my background including some information about the university where I was studying, the program I was taking, why I was doing this research, and so on. Establishing rapport and gaining trust are important when sensitive topics are to be discussed. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) state that “strong rapport is necessary if the interviewer wishes the respondent to reveal deeply personal or sensitive information” (p.

247). Sexual-related matters might cause interviewees uneasiness and shyness, which unavoidably would likely affect the validity and reliability of the research results. In order to establish a deep level of trust and obtain the desired data, the researcher's previous teaching experience in a very famous private English training school was shared with interviewees. This school is well-known among university students, and teachers from this school have good reputations.

Although most interviewees were proficient in English, the interviews were carried out in Chinese in order to eliminate language misunderstanding. Participants were introduced to the purposes of the study, assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, and provided time to complete the consent form. To preserve the information collected in the interviews, tape recording was used with participants' agreement. Gall, Gall, and Borg explain the advantage of using a tape recorder:

The tape recording provides a complete verbal record, and it can be studied much more thoroughly than data in the form of interviewer notes. A tape recorder also speeds up the interview process because there is no need for extensive note taking. Furthermore, if the interview is tape-recorded, two or more individual who are trained in your data analysis procedures can listen to the tape.... (p. 249)

Only then were questions posed for discussion. I started with warm-up questions before launching into the main interview questions. I employed semi-structured questions both in the focus groups and in the one-on-one interview (see Appendix A and B). Each group discussion lasted approximately an hour; each one-on-one interviews, about 30 minutes. (The consent form had been translated into Mandarin; the discussions were conducted in Mandarin. The tape recordings were translated into English.)

Focus Group Interview (60 minutes)

With students' permission, a tape recorder was used during the whole process. The researcher led the focus group talk by following the focus-group guideline (see Appendix A). Participants in each group were assigned the pseudonyms of A, B, C, D, E, and F. They answered questions one by one, but also discussed the issues with other peers, debated, and were free to direct questions to each other. The researcher took notes when necessary.

Individual Interview (30 minutes)

I interviewed students from the focus groups because I thought they would feel more interested in sharing further perceptions with the researcher. It was easier to gain entry based on the conversations in the focus group. By doing the interview, I could clarify the ideas and explore issues more deeply. A tape recorder was used with the participant's permission. I took notes when necessary.

Validity and Reliability

To establish the validity of the research before leaving for China, I administered a preliminary version of research questions to a pilot group of eight Chinese graduate students who were studying in Saskatoon at that time. The objective was to test the clarity of the questions. Changes were made to questions that were unclear in meaning and some questions were eliminated when they did not add much to the purpose of the study. In this way, it ensured the data which was collected would be more valid and reliable. I developed one focus group guideline, and one individual interview guideline (see Appendix A and B). The original research questions are in an English version which the researcher then translated into Chinese.

During the process of translation, certain conditions needed to be met to strengthen the validity and reliability of this study. First, the concepts, such as “homosexual”, “gay”, and “lesbian”, needed to have a very similar meaning in Chinese. Second, I made sure that the insulting words for gay and lesbian people such as “fag”, “homo”, “queer”, and so on, would have counterparts in Mandarin. After consulting with two colleagues in Chinese universities (one of them is a Chinese professor in the humanities department in a Chinese university, and another is a Canadian who teaches English in China; both of them are completely bilingual), they agreed on the accuracy of the Chinese translations.

In order to make sure that there was no mistranslation in the research questions, a form of double-translation was used: after I translated the English questions into Chinese, I asked a Chinese-speaking sociologist in our university to review the whole translation and to highlight any discrepancies. This led to several revisions.

Data Analysis

Rubin and Rubin (2001) point out that “the purpose of the data analysis is to organize the interviews to present a narrative that explains what happened or provide a description of the norms and values that underlie cultural behavior” (p. 229). McMillan and Schumacher (2001) add that “the ultimate goal of qualitative research is to make general statements about relationships among categories by discovering patterns in the data” (p. 476). In this research, qualitative data analysis was used to organize and identify the pattern of the data collected from focus groups and structured interviews.

Data from the focus groups and individual interviews which consist of open-ended questions for qualitative research purposes, however, are somewhat complicated. According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003), there are three ways to examine such qualitative data: interpretational analysis, structural analysis, and reflective analysis. My approach to analyzing data parallels their systems. First, I read and reread the interviews to note core ideas and concepts, recognize emotive stories, and find themes. Second, I coded the material to find and mark the underlying ideas in the data. Third, I grouped similar ideas together and figured out how the themes related to each other. Finally, I looked at ways that different ideas and themes were related to one another.

Ethical Considerations

Because the participants are human beings, extreme care needed to be taken to avoid any harm to them (Fontana & Frey, 1994). As an ethical consideration (see Appendix C), the participants in this study remained anonymous. I took all necessary precautions to protect the anonymity of participants. They were made aware of the purpose and nature of the study and how the findings would be used and documented. It was also made clear that participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at anytime. Nothing was done to oblige them to engage in the research.

The interviews for this research were conducted with six participants from the 200 who completed questionnaires. I reached them by telephone to arrange an interview time. The participants' busy school work schedules made it difficult to set an interview time so the interview times needed to be changed often. Fortunately, all participants were willing to complete their interview in my quiet hotel room. For focus group interviews, however, all respondents had to be assembled at the same time and place. This was not

an easy task. For these conversations, the time and place was adjusted many times. Participants preferred to have the conversations in their dormitories, so I went to their dormitories and finished the group interviews there.

Prior to the focus group and individual interviews, a copy of the university's ethical approval letter and consent form (Appendix D) was given to each participant to read and to sign. After the interview, the transcript and transcript consent forms were sent to the participants to allow them to review the transcript or to make any changes they wanted.

As for the access to information and the storage of data, only my research supervisor and I had access to them. All data will be stored at the University of Saskatchewan for five years after I finish this thesis.

Summary of the Methodology

Chapter Three outlines the methodology of this thesis. The study focused on Chinese students' perspectives towards their gay and lesbian peers. Qualitative research methods were used in the research. The participants were selected from university students in a large southeast university in China.

The research used focus group interviews and semi-structured one-on-one interviews to elicit specific data about Chinese university students. The questions about gay and lesbian issues provided the participants with an opportunity to reflect on their perspectives on their gay and lesbian peers and to express what they wanted to say about some gay and lesbian issues. Data from the focus group interviews and one-on-one interviews were audio-recorded and translated into English. The participants had an opportunity to verify their responses in the Mandarin version and to make any necessary

changes. The data will be presented in five themes which are related to the five research questions in Chapter Four. Each theme included the relevant topics which summed up the focus group interviews, and one-on-one interviews, as well as the summary of findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION

Introduction of Interviewees

The data embodied in this chapter are a result of focus group interviews and one-on-one interviews conducted with fourteen Chinese students from a large university in southeast China. There were six female students who attended one of the focus group interviews. Three of them were interested in this study, and voluntarily agreed to participate in a one-on-one interview later on. Six male students formed another focus group. One of them joined the one-on-one interviews. In order to have equal number of males and females in the one-on-one interviews (the one-on-one interview needed three males and three females), the researcher found another two male volunteers. Therefore, there were two focus-group interviews, and each group had six same-gendered students. Six individual interviews were conducted including three males and three females.

The interviewees were between eighteen to twenty-six years old. There were six females and eight males in the interviews. The interviewees consisted of one eighteen-year-old interviewee, six nineteen-year-old interviewees, five twenty-year-old participants, one twenty-one-year-old interviewee, and a twenty-six-year-old male student. The twenty-six-year-old male had a masters degree in biochemistry. All the other students had just finished their first or second year in university, and were from several different departments including Chinese, Mathematics, Law, Computer Science, Software Engineering, Microelectronics, and Economics.

Participants in this research were asked to assess through their personal experience and related knowledge what perspective(s) they possessed about their gay and lesbian peers. All of them assured me that it was a pleasure for them to be part of this study. In

these interviews, they willingly shared with me their understanding of gay and lesbian issues, their attitudes toward their gay and lesbian peers, as well as their assessment of the campus climate and administration with respect to gay and lesbian students.

After the interviews, it dawned on me that I selected the “right” persons for this research because these fourteen candid and sincere people assured me that they were not only interested in and cared about this study, but also they had very rich knowledge on gay and lesbian issues—something that was beyond my expectation. All interviewees presented broad hints to me that they were heterosexuals, and that it was from a heterosexual point of view that they perceived their gay and lesbian peers and related issues. However, it is still very possible that some of them were hidden gay and lesbian individuals.

The one-on-one meetings were held in my hotel room, which was very clean, quiet, spacious, and well-ventilated. The group discussions were conducted in students’ dormitories, which were pleasant and quiet, too. The participants provided a comfortable and amiable climate and exhibited extraordinary kindness. During our interview conversations, we sometimes erupted into laughter, providing comic relief. As I alluded to earlier, the rapport between interviewees and me moved from strangers to friends, and then to close trust. Some of the interviewees asked for my e-mail address, and hoped that I could help them learn English in the future.

For my part, I was deeply impressed by interviewees’ openness to this sensitive study, and the whole interview process had a profound impact on me. From these interviewees, I can feel a strong change in Chinese university students—they are open and sensitive to sexual-related social issues. I am compelled to present the interview data

as accurately as I can. And I put myself into each interview with the faith that it will lead me to understand the perspective(s) of the each participant on their gay and lesbian peers. In the following section, I present the data as vividly and orderly as I can by synthesizing them into five different categories. Each category has several sub-sections.

Data Presentation

The purpose of the study is to examine Chinese university students' perspectives toward their gay and lesbian peers. In order to summarize data into categories, I consider interviewees' openness and tolerance of gay and lesbian issues, their perspectives and attitudes toward gay and lesbian peers, their perceived reasons why gay and lesbian people fit or do not fit into Chinese society, as well as the university climate for gay and lesbian students. The following research questions serve as a guide when summarizing data:

- 1 What are the reasons why gay and lesbian people fit or do not fit into Chinese society?
- 2 Are Chinese university students open and tolerant to gay and lesbian issues?
- 3 How do Chinese university students perceive their gay and lesbian peers?
- 4 How do their perspectives affect their attitudes toward their gay and lesbian peers?
- 5 Is university a safe and welcoming place for gay and lesbian students?

Data from the focus groups and one-on-one interviews are summarized into five categories including: perceived reasons why gay and lesbian people fit or do not fit into Chinese society, openness and tolerance to gay and lesbian individuals, perspectives on gay and lesbian issues, attitudes toward their gay and lesbian peers, and campus climate

for gay and lesbian students. Each category contains several subcategories relevant to answering one research question.

Perceived Reasons Why Gay and Lesbian People Do not Fit into Chinese Society

According to the data from the focus groups and individual interviews, all interviewees agreed that gay and lesbian people do not fit into Chinese society. There appear to be seven underlying types of reasons why gay and lesbian people do not fit into Chinese society including: media's negative reports; gay and lesbian people who do not have offspring; gender roles in Chinese society; heterosexism; the lack of legal support; the influence of Chinese religions; and the lack of historical support.

Media's Negative Reports

Six participants mentioned that media's negative reports highly influenced how Chinese people perceive gay and lesbian people. These negative reports linked gay and lesbian people to AIDS, drugs, fights, murder, and so on. Around the 1980s, AIDS began to spread fast in China. Since then, some media have related AIDS with gay and lesbian people, and this casts a stigma on them. Participants heard from TV programs that gay and lesbian people were more easily infected by AIDS than heterosexual people. Interviewees believed that they received so much of this kind of news that many Chinese people were misled into believing that being gay or lesbian meant having AIDS. The media sometimes attributed the rapid spread of AIDS to gay and lesbian people's unsafe sex—something that horrified interviewees. In this kind of negative environment, not many people could welcome gay and lesbian people. Interviewees said that many Chinese people believed that gay and lesbian people were a danger to society.

Gay and Lesbian People without Offspring

The second important reason why Chinese people cannot accept gay and lesbian people is that they could not have their own children. Since ancient times, China has been an agricultural country. Every family needed children to work the land. A childless family meant no labor to work, and it directly affected their harvest. So interviewees believed that Chinese people long ago formed the view that they needed more children to work the land, and especially that they needed male children. There are two old sayings: “More people means more power” and “Without offspring is the biggest sin for a family”. All of these traditional views greatly affected Chinese people’s perspectives toward accepting gay and lesbian relationships. The stereotypical view of a family was ingrained in Chinese people’s minds: Every family should have a father, a mother, and children. The Chinese tradition regards marriage as a way to bear offspring. Obviously, a gay or lesbian would not normally qualify.

One interviewee commented that even if a gay or lesbian couple could adopt children, their adopted children would face great pressure as they grew up. He believed that children who grew up in a gay or lesbian family would inevitably be different from other children, and it was not fair for them.

Gender Roles in Chinese Society

Another aspect that emerged was related to Confucian rules that controlled people’s behavior in performing different gender roles, such as “San Gang” or “Three Guiding Principles” which means “a minister follows his emperor, a son follows his father, and a wife follows her husband”. “San Gang” put Chinese women and men into strict social roles. Gay and lesbian people would break the principles of “San Gang”.

Participants believed that men and women's different gender roles caused sexual oppression for Chinese women. Women were docile and obedient to men during sexual intercourse. In addition, the interviewees claimed that sex was not a topic that was discussed in public—it was only to be raised between two people in private. The interviewees believed that Chinese people did not think that having sex was wrong, but they just felt discussing it openly was. A different sexual orientation was “dirty” and challenging for most of Chinese people. So for that reason, Chinese people could not accept gay and lesbian individuals. They did not like to talk about heterosexual sex, and it was even harder for them to discuss homosexual sex.

The Influence of Chinese Religions

The participants' responses also revealed the influence of Chinese religions. One participant believed that Chinese people had worshiped Taoism—the balance between Yin (woman) and Yang (man)—for thousands of years. A two-man or two-woman relationship was against this tradition. He believed that Chinese medicine was popular which was founded on the yin-yang balance, and if homosexual people were accepted, Chinese medicine theory would be challenged. Most Chinese people believed in Chinese medicine, so they had to abandon gay and lesbian people. In addition, one interviewee believed that Buddhism, the biggest religion in China, forbade same-sex love as well.

Lacking of Historical Support

Some interviewees claimed that, in Chinese history, people always used gays and lesbians as immoral and disgraceful examples. Stories of romantic love between heterosexuals often had a track record, but no touching stories about gay couples were ever mentioned. Interviewees believed that it was hard to find gay and lesbian-related information in textbooks or historical documents.

Heterosexism

The data also showed the influence of heterosexism. Five participants believed that heterosexism was another important reason for an anti-gay society. Heterosexual Chinese people condemn gay and lesbian people for acting against the “law of nature”: only a woman and man can have sex. Interviewees believed that homosexuals challenge the majority’s privilege—heterosexism. In human history, the majority have often wanted to oppress a minority.

Lacking of Legal Support

The students noted the lack of legal support for gay and lesbian people. None of the participants believed that same-sex marriage would be legalized in China. Half of them believed that such marriage might be possible after 50 to 100 years, but the rest thought that same-sex marriage would never be legalized in China. They believed same-sex marriage would need other factors in place, such as, when AIDS was under control in the gay community, medical supports helped gay and lesbian people have a safe sexual life, gay parades were held, gay unions were permitted, and so on. When all basic support systems and institutions were complete, same-sex marriage might work in China.

Summary

Participants offered several reasons to explain why gay and lesbian people do not fit into Chinese society including: media's negative reports, gay and lesbian people without offspring, gender roles, heterosexism, a lack of legal support, the influence of Chinese religions, and a lack of historical support. No participants agreed that gay and lesbian people fit into Chinese society. All of them believed that Chinese people cannot accept gay and lesbian people by referring to some of these types of reasons.

Openness and Tolerance of Gay and Lesbian Individuals

The influence of technological innovation and media, the influence of Western culture, and students' transition from high school to university were the offered explanations for the openness and tolerance of gay and lesbian individuals by interviewees.

The Influence of Technological Innovation and Media

The TV and Radio Programs

Interviewees pointed out that the influence of technological innovation and media was huge on their openness and tolerance to gay and lesbian people. They believed that the Chinese government has reduced control over the media, so Chinese people can watch TV programs from Hong Kong and Taiwan. (These two places were considered by interviewees to be more open on G & L issues). Two famous TV programs from Hong Kong—"Kangxi is Coming" (Kangxi is the combination of two hosts' name) and "Having an Appointment with Luyu" (Luyu is the hostess' name)—were mentioned many times by participants. One of the hosts is an out gay who wrote *The Important Men in My Life*. This book has stories about this host and his boyfriends. Interviewees were

not repelled by him because of his different sexual orientation; on the contrary, this humorous and knowledgeable man was popular among them. The gay and lesbian related programs can be watched on TV channels in Mainland China as well.

Several famous artists, actors, and professors have revealed on TV programs, radio, or the Internet that they have different sexual orientation. This kind of information made awareness of gay and lesbian issues spread more rapidly in China. Words related to gay and lesbian people were heard more often, which means that Chinese people might gradually come to deal with sensitive social issues.

The Internet

Although programs about gay and lesbian issues were rare on TV stations in Mainland China, interviewees could download them from the Internet, and they also could find gay-lesbian movies on the internet. The Internet has become extremely popular in China: Internet cafés are almost everywhere scattered along streets, and they offer Chinese people easy access to information on sexual and gay and lesbian related issues.

Movies

When interviewees watched the Hollywood movie, *Brokeback Mountain*, it gripped their attention and emotions right away. All interviewees strongly supported the view that this movie had quickly accelerated social change on gay and lesbian issues for Chinese people. Although this movie was banned in Mainland China, students could easily find it on the Internet. University students even use “BBM”, the acronym for *Brokeback Mountain*, to describe a gay man or a lesbian, such as “he/she is a BBM”. “BBM” is a newest and most popular word to mean “gay” and “lesbian” among Chinese

university students. Interviewees felt that it was easy to read and much more polite to call gay and lesbian people “BBM” than calling them gay or lesbian directly.

Furthermore, the director of this movie is Chinese, which made university students feel proud to have a famous Chinese director in the Hollywood movie market. Although it was a Western movie, the story was expressed in a very Chinese way by using beautiful scenery full of connotations. This movie made interviewees understand gay love better. Some of them had their minds totally changed about gay and lesbian people. However, although all interviewees offered positive evaluations of this movie, they knew some of their classmates regarded this movie as a disgusting failure.

The Influence of Western Culture

Some interviewees agreed that Western countries were much more open than China on sexual matters and gay and lesbian issues, so they believed that Western countries’ influence on Chinese people’s perspectives on gay and lesbian people was huge.

Significant Influence

In recent years, more Chinese people are willing to learn English. English brings China and Western countries much closer than before. University students learn about Western cultures, traditions, politics, and social issues by accessing English web sites, novels, movies, magazines, newspapers, and so on. Once university students have gained good English proficiency, they often choose to study overseas. Interviewees’ friends who had overseas living experiences (such as knowing about gay marriage, gay festivals, gay parades, and so on) were more open on gay and lesbian issues. Some interviewees admitted that gay and lesbian issues seemed a weird topic for them at the beginning, but the more they had contact with it, the faster and easier it was for them to accept it.

Minor Influence

One interviewee acknowledged that Western culture had had an influence on Chinese people's perspectives, but he believed it was just one minor reason for changes. China was developing very fast economically, and also Chinese people were facing many new issues. Gay and lesbian issues were just some of them. No matter what, social changes (including people's perspectives on gay and lesbian people and other social issues) would happen, and it would happen naturally and gradually when Chinese people's economy and living standard reached a high level. It is an unavoidable social change, especially in a highly economically developed city. Students have more opportunities to contact foreign countries. This interviewee also thought that China's greater openness had more to do with the development of the economy. Western cultures had some influence and promoted China's social change, but that was not the main reason.

Students' Transition from High School to University

Most of the interviewees, compared with studying at high-school, now had less pressure to gain high marks on examinations in university, and they had more access to many new things. They admitted that sex-related topics were more openly and frequently discussed in university compared to high school where sex and love-related matters were taboos. Some professors even recommended some books from which they could read about some sexual matters including gay and lesbian issues. Most interviewees recalled that gay and lesbian issues were seldom mentioned when they were in high-school. But after one or two years studying in university, discrimination against gay and lesbian people was reduced while more and more gay and lesbian knowledge was accessed. One

of the female interviewees had known a lesbian couple at her high school, and as she was intimidated by their “abnormal behavior”, she intended to isolate them at that time. After she gained information and knowledge in university related to gays and lesbians, she became accepting of them.

The transition from high school to university made interviewees more open and tolerant of gay and lesbian people and issues. University life changed them dramatically: they were more open and more willing to talk about gay and lesbian-related issues, and jokes related to sexuality were often heard on campus and between friends.

Summary

In this category, there were three types of reasons to explain why Chinese university students are open and tolerant to gay and lesbian issues, including: the influence of technological innovation and media, the influence of Western culture, and students’ transition from high school to university. In recent years, Chinese university students have had more access to gay and lesbian information and knowledge from the literature, magazines, movies, novels, newspapers, the Internet, and media. Interviewees believed that the more they had access to gay and lesbian information and knowledge, the more open and tolerant they would be toward their gay and lesbian peers.

Perspectives on Gay and Lesbian Individuals

Interviewees provided different perspectives on gay and lesbian individuals: gender difference in perspectives directed toward gay and lesbian people; pressures on gay & lesbian students; “sissy” and “tomboy” stereotypes of gay and lesbian people; expressed need for more gay and lesbian information; and perspectives toward research on gay and lesbian issues.

Gender Difference in Perspectives Directed toward Gay and Lesbian People

When asked whether they could accept same-gendered sexual behavior, half of the male interviewees said that they could accept it, and the other half felt that they could not. For female interviewees, two were tolerant of same-gendered sexual behavior; one remained neutral on this issue; all the other female interviewees still felt it was difficult for them to face this issue. According to a girl who accepted same-gendered sexual behavior, her reason was that she believed that same-gendered sexual behavior should be much more fun than that experienced by heterosexual people, because they did not need to worry about the birth-control issue. Gay and lesbian people would have more freedom and pleasure than heterosexuals.

If they could choose, all the male interviewees except two would accept lesbians more than gays. Most of the female interviewees said they found it easier to accept gays than lesbians. A few female students related to gays and lesbians equally. Compared with male students, they were more tolerant and willing to accept both of them. A male interviewee felt gay and lesbian people were a potential sexual threat to heterosexual people. He believed that that was the reason why males could not accept gays and females disliked lesbians. He believed that, as a straight person, being hit on by a gay or lesbian was an awful experience.

Pressures on Gay and Lesbian Students

One of the pressures on gay and lesbian students would be from their parents. Because no parents want their children to be different from others, and be regarded as a minority, having a gay or lesbian child could be a family disaster. Being without their own children might not be a concern for gay couples, but it is definitely a big concern for

their parents. Chinese people regard their child as a blood carrier and the continuation of their lives. If their children were gay or lesbian, Chinese parents would be hurt and sad just as if they had given birth to an ugly child with a malformed body.

When asked, “If you were a gay or lesbian and told your parents about your different sexual orientation, could you imagine their reaction?”, all interviewees agreed that their parents would not accept the truth. They would definitely break their parents’ hearts and disappoint them deeply. Chinese parents put high hopes on their children, and wanted them to have a bright future and a normal family. They also knew that their parents wanted a grandson or granddaughter. Interviewees stressed that Chinese parents just wanted their children to be “normal”, and they regarded gay and lesbian people as “abnormal”.

The second pressure on gay and lesbian students arises from the process of coming-out. Gay and lesbian people are afraid to be treated differently and isolated by others in school. They knew that they had to face isolation and loneliness if they came out of the closet. Lacking the social support and helpful resources from society would result in a miserable life if they came out.

The third concern is that gay or lesbian students’ love would likely lack support. Because same-sex marriage has not been legalized in China, the relationship between two men or two women does not have support from the society. As a result, gay and lesbian students might not be serious about love, and maybe some of them just wanted to find sexual partners. Interviewees also believed that, if a gay married a heterosexual woman or a lesbian married a heterosexual man, it would be a tragedy for both of the husband and the wife. Interviewees felt sorry for gay and lesbian people because they might never

marry the person they were truly in love with because same-sex marriage was not legal in China.

“Sissy” and “Tomboy” Stereotypes of Gay and Lesbian People

All interviewees believed that both heterosexuals and homosexuals may act like “sissy” or “tomboys”; however, this type of behaviour does not necessarily reflect a homosexual orientation, and a man’s feminine behaviour was an indicator of, but not an exclusive predictor of, homosexuality. A female interviewee saw a gay couple on the street in the downtown area. A male interviewee mentioned a very famous TV program about a singing competition in China. In this show, the champion was a tall girl with a handsome boy’s appearance. She became a fashion leader and made the tomboy appearance popular among young girls. He believed that it was getting harder and harder to judge a person’s sexual orientation purely by appearance.

The Expressed Need for More Gay and Lesbian Information

There are several aspects that interviewees felt uncertain about gay and lesbian people, and wanted to know the answers. Ten interviewees felt curious about the origins of homosexuality. They would like to know what caused a person to have a different sexual orientation, or if they just chose to be gay or lesbian. If all sexual orientations were innate, interviewees felt more tolerant of the existence of gays and lesbians. If they chose to have a different sexual orientation, interviewees thought they were wrong to make such a decision. Seven interviewees wanted to know how gay and lesbian people could keep a long-term homosexual relationship without a marriage commitment, whether their relationship could last forever without social and family support, and how they could run a family life as heterosexual people do.

Some other interviewees wanted to know how homosexual people have sex with same-gendered partner—something that was unimaginable for them.

Finally, interviewees cared about whether gay and lesbian people would cause some social harm: they needed more medical evidence to prove whether gay and lesbian people were more easily infected by AIDS, whether they really caused the rapid spreading of sexual disease, and whether being gay and lesbian people produced more social instability in Chinese society. If they caused no harm to society, interviewees felt that they had no reason to oppose them.

Participants' Perspectives toward the Research

When asked “If I told you that I was a lesbian, how do you feel about me and my research?”, all interviewees agreed that the researcher’s sexual orientation would have nothing to do with this research, and her sexual orientation would not affect their answers to the questions. One female interviewee told the researcher that she admired her because she was brave enough to do research on this sensitive topic. There were so many restrictions for women in China. It is not easy for a woman to carry out a study on a sensitive topic. They only knew Li Yinhe who is the most famous female sociologist and sexologist in China.

Interviewees appreciated that the researcher cared about the social minority. They believed that this study would spread knowledge on gay and lesbian people and eliminate misunderstanding. Social changes toward gay and lesbian people might happen rapidly because of this kind of research. They appraised the researchers on gay and lesbian study as forging social change.

Summary

From the information shared by the participants, there were six subcategories related to Chinese university students' perspectives toward their gay and lesbian peers including: gender difference in perspectives directed toward gay and lesbian people, pressures on gay and lesbian students, "sissy" and "tomboy" stereotypes of gay and lesbian people, expressed need for more information, and perspectives toward research on gay and lesbian issues. From the collected data, the researcher found that Chinese university students' knowledge on gay and lesbian issues was richer than she had thought it would be.

Attitudes toward Gay and Lesbian Peers

I divided students' opinions on attitudes toward their gay and lesbian peers into categories based on their conversation with friends about gay and lesbian issues, their personal experience with gay and lesbian friends, whether there are derogatory terms used in the university context, and interviewees' neutral attitudes toward gay and lesbian peers.

Conversation with Friends about Gay and Lesbian Issues

For interviewees, discussion between friends is one of the most common ways to obtain information about gays and lesbians, including roommates and close friends. They felt more comfortable talking about sex-related topics with same-gendered friends, and they admitted that they could expand on the topics to a considerable extent, but with opposite-gendered friends, they had troubles. They often raised sex-related issues

including gay and lesbian issues before they went to sleep, and they called this kind of discussion “night talk”.

Except for one female interviewee, none of the participants ever talked about gay and lesbian issues with their parents, teachers, or professors. They explained that these people would feel they had problems if they talked about sexual matters with them, and they were afraid that they would be mistaken for gays or lesbians. They also felt that their parents, teachers, and professors cared more about their examination scores, and they would have no interest in this topic. They assumed that these people had different perspectives on many things from them, and that there was a generation gap between them.

Gay and lesbian information often pushed participants into discussion, especially after they had read magazines, books, and watched certain program or movie containing relevant information. However, one of the interviewees pointed out that gay and lesbian issues were just raised in their talk, and they never really seriously went into depth. Some uncertain questions used to be raised in their talk. There were no final answers after they had discussed it, as they had just exchanged their opinions with each other. But she felt that, at least, they received a chance to know what others felt about gay and lesbian issues.

Personal Experience with Gay and Lesbian Friends

Six participants had personal experience with gay and lesbian friends. Among those who did not have personal experience, one of them suspected her classmate was gay, because she felt that he was a sissy and different from other boys, but she was not sure. Those who had personal experience with gay and lesbian friends seemed more positive

toward gay and lesbian issues than interviewees who did not have gay and lesbian friends.

Most interviewees believed that it was very likely that they had gay and lesbian friends, but they did not know. If he/she were a gay/lesbian, he/she would like to keep the difference hidden. Interviewees believed that being hidden means being safe and having less trouble. Two interviewees heard about the ratio between homosexuals and heterosexuals. If it was true, he explained that there would be a lot of gay and lesbian people in China. Most interviewees could understand completely why gay and lesbian people kept themselves hidden: most Chinese regarded homosexual relationships as being disgraceful and unethical, so Chinese gay and lesbian people had to keep their sexual orientation hidden in order to have a safe life.

All female and three male interviewees would like to socialize with their gay and lesbian friends (going to dinner with them, attending a film, and so on) as long as their gay and lesbian friends did not have a sexual interest in them.

When asked “If you found that your friend, roommate, classmate, or schoolmate was gay/lesbian, what would you do?”, four interviewees felt it would make no difference to them as long as their gay friends did not hit on them; all other interviewees admitted that their friendship would be affected when they discovered their friends’ different sexual orientation. They might feel uncomfortable when they were with their gay/lesbian friends. They would very likely keep their distance from them.

Derogatory Terms Used in the University Context

Most interviewees agreed that they seldom heard derogatory words referring to gay and lesbian students in their university. Sometimes, they could hear people use gay and

lesbian stereotypes make fun of each other, and they did not mean to insult gay and lesbian people. They also admitted that gay and lesbian students might be hurt if they heard it. One interviewee pointed out that most students would not insult gay and lesbian students in front of them, but they might have used offensive words behind their backs. Another female interviewee told the researcher that she seldom heard slur words referring to gay and lesbian student, because she believed that there were not many out gay and lesbian people on her campus.

Neutral Attitudes toward Gay and Lesbian Peers

According to the interview data, the researcher found that most interviewees did not support gay and lesbian people, but they did not oppose them, either. Interviewees expressed the view that they would keep their distance from gay and lesbian peers, and they did not welcome gay and lesbian people, but they would not do harm to them, either. Interviewees believed that Chinese university students were indifferent to gay and lesbian people, and most of them would not care about gay and lesbian people as long as they did not intimidate others.

One interviewee mentioned that students who learned subjects related to the humanities might be more objective on gay and lesbian issues, but students majoring in technology and engineering, who had little chance to acquire knowledge about gay and lesbian people in their classes, might be more prejudiced.

Summary

On the basis of the information shared by the participants, Chinese university students are neutral in their attitudes toward their gay and lesbian peers. Although they talked about their gay and lesbian peers very often, derogatory words referring to gay and

lesbian students were not used on campus except for some jokes around friends. Some interviewees would like to socialize with their gay and lesbian friends as long as they could make sure that they were not sexually intimidated by their gay or lesbian friends.

Campus Climate for Gay and Lesbian Students

Interviewees' perspectives on campus climate for gay and lesbian students were divided into several categories: gay and lesbian-related courses offered in university, gay and lesbian students on campus, administrative policies to protect gay and lesbian students, and whether the university is safe and welcoming.

Gay and Lesbian-Related Courses Offered in University

All interviewees knew that their university offered courses (such as literature study and life ethics) that raise gay and lesbian issues. Six of them had taken such a course before. Except for one interviewee, all the interviewees who had not taken a gay and lesbian-related course were willing to take this kind of course if they had a chance. Some of these courses were even too popular for them to be able to register.

Interviewees who had taken gay-lesbian related courses mentioned that they had become more open and tolerant on this issue as a result. Their professors recommended gay-lesbian related books which widened their horizons, and provided them with more gay and lesbian understanding. It helped them reduce discrimination against gay and lesbian people. But in some other courses, interviewees felt that their professor just made them discuss gay issues, and did not provide enough knowledge for them. The interviewees could feel that their professor himself was neutral about gay and lesbian issues.

Gay or Lesbian Couples on Campus

Half of the interviewees had never seen a gay/lesbian couple on campus, and the rest of the interviewees said they were used to experiencing gay/lesbian couples having intimate behavior (kissing, touching each other, and so on). Except for one interviewee who believed that gay and lesbian students could easily find their partners in the university, the interviewees thought it was harder but very possible for homosexual students to find lovers on campus.

Unlike heterosexual students, gay and lesbian people might not know who else was gay or lesbian. It was very possible that a gay man might love a straight male, and it would turn into something humiliating and embarrassing. Some interviewees believed that gay or lesbian people had an “invisible community”. They thought that gay and lesbian students used eye contact to find their lovers—something that is “invisible” for most heterosexual people to see. Interviewees believe that the Internet had become a popular way for gay and lesbian students to find lovers.

Administrative Policies to Protect Gay and Lesbian Students

All interviewees reported that their university administration had no regulations and had taken no actions designed to protect gay and lesbian students. However, there were “invisible” gay clubs and communities in their campus, but they were tolerated by their university administration. As long as gay and lesbian people did not break school regulations, administrators ignored them.

Interviewees mentioned that their university webpage had an online forum called YX BBS (pseudonym) where they could find discussions of gay and lesbian issues, but it was shut down by the administration of his university. A new gay forum online was

established again after this shut-down. But one month later, it, too, was closed. The university administrators did not allow sensitive topics to be discussed on the university webpage.

When asked whether they were interested in joining a gay or lesbian club if their university provided one, the interviewees accepted its existence, but would not join it because they believed that heterosexuals and homosexuals did not share the same interest in the club.

A Safe But Not Welcoming University

All interviewees admitted that their university was a safe place for gay and lesbian students, because gay bashing or insulting seldom happened. But students might talk about gay and lesbian students behind their backs or just joke around with each other. So interviewees believed their university was safe but not welcoming.

Interviewees believed that being gay and lesbian was not ethically wrong, but they just could not totally accept it emotionally. One interviewee believed that, compared with the general society, university was a safer and more welcoming place, because university students were more educated, active, tolerant, and progressive than some people in the society. She felt that the pressure of work competition in society would make some people hurt or offend gay and lesbian co-workers. Some other people in society liked to use others' so-called shortcomings to achieve their selfish goals.

Interviewees believed that, even though they knew that someone was gay or lesbian, nobody would do anything harmful to him or her. They might just treat gay and lesbian peers differently, and perhaps, isolate them. The researcher concluded that interviewees' university was a safe but not welcoming place.

Summary

At the interviewees' university, there were no administrative policies to protect gay and lesbian students, but gay- and lesbian-related courses were available on campus, and these courses were quite popular among students. Not many gay or lesbian couples were seen in the interviewees' university, and they believed it was harder for gay and lesbian students to find their lovers on campus than heterosexuals. Although university was a safe place for gay and lesbian students, it was not welcoming.

Summary of Data

The chapter presented the summary of the data. The findings show that gay and lesbian people were not considered by the study participants to fit into Chinese society, because interviewees believed that media reports, childlessness among gays and lesbians, men and women's different gender roles, heterosexism, a lack of legal support, the influence of Chinese religions, and the lack of historical support are all negative influences on Chinese people.

Although I concluded that gay and lesbian people do not fit into Chinese society, Chinese people are becoming more open and tolerant toward gay and lesbian issues in recent years because of the influence of technological innovation, media, and Western culture. As well, students' transition from high school to university offered them more chances to access gay and lesbian information in university.

Chinese university students' knowledge about gay and lesbian people was much richer than I thought. Not only could they perceive their gay and lesbian peers from a heterosexual point of view, they but also were able to imagine gay and lesbian students' status quo, such as gay and lesbian students' pressure and how they could find lovers on

campus, and so on. They did not judge a person's sexual orientation imprudently by their "sissy" or "tomboy" appearance. They also could tell from the difference between friendship and a homosexual relationship. However, there were some uncertainties about gays and lesbians that interviewees were keen to find answers to, such as, what caused a person to be gay or lesbian, how they could keep a long-term relationship, and so on.

Interviewees believed that Chinese university students' attitudes toward their gay and lesbian peers were neutral. Most of them did not support gay and lesbian people, but they did not oppose them, either. They would love to socialize with their gay and lesbian friends as long as their gay or lesbian friends did not have sexual desire for them. It was mentioned that derogatory terms were not used in the university context, although jokes with friends happened quite often among university students.

In the interviewees' university, gay and lesbian-related courses were available, but there were no administrative policies to protect gay and lesbian students' rights. Although their university was a safe place for gay and lesbian students because nobody would hurt them on campus, gay and lesbian students were not welcomed by most Chinese university students.

CHAPTER FIVE: DATA DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter explores the relationships between the research literature and the findings of the study. The objective of this research was to investigate the perspectives of Chinese university students toward their gay and lesbian peers. Their openness, tolerance, understandings and attitudes toward gay and lesbian students, the reasons why they perceive gay and lesbian people as not fitting into Chinese society, and the university climate for gay and lesbian students were considered. Providing a realistic picture of Chinese university students' perspectives toward their gay and lesbian peers might spread gay and lesbian related knowledge, eliminate misunderstandings about them, encourage more Chinese university students to be open and tolerant of their gay and lesbian peers, and help university administrators create a positive campus climate for gay and lesbian students.

Traditional Perspectives Toward Gay and Lesbian People

From the data collected in the focus groups and one-on-one interviews, I found that interviewees discuss gay and lesbian issues with their friends or classmates very often, they are open enough to attend gay and lesbian related courses, they do not oppose the rights of gay and lesbian people, and they are tolerant about socializing with their gay and lesbian friends. Still they possess inherited, established, and customary patterns of thought for gay and lesbian people.

Every interviewee believed that Chinese people cannot accept gay and lesbian people because they cannot have their own children. They believed that traditional values of children, marriage, and family are deeply ingrained in most Chinese people's

minds. Based on the values of family and blood ties, being childless among gay and lesbian people is one of the most widespread reasons used to explain why Chinese people disapprove of gays and lesbians. “Not having offspring is the biggest sin for a family”, the old Chinese saying, was mentioned many times by different interviewees. Lv Wenhao (2005) and Ng et al’s (2003) findings support my data. Both of them agree that blood relationships tie family members together, and having a child to continue the blood line is the most important function of marriage for Chinese people. Because traditional Chinese culture worships the important role of men in extending the family tree, homosexual relationships are seen as seriously rejecting this view. As a result, childlessness among gay and lesbian people becomes a cultural basis for Chinese people to resist any liberation of gay and lesbian people.

The consideration of traditional gender roles plays a significant part in Chinese people’s life too. Interviewees stated that Confucian rules control people’s behavior in performing different gender roles, such as “San Gang” (which means “a minister follows his emperor, a son follows his father, and a wife follows her husband”). “San Gang”, as the behavioral rules for Chinese women and men, puts Chinese women and men into strict social roles. However, in a homosexual relationship, the gender difference is not so apparent—gay men or lesbian women’s gender roles could be very alterable based on their needs and interests. The more fluid gender roles among gay or lesbian couples appear to break the principles of “San Gang”. The interviewees who supported traditional gender roles manifested more negatively toward gay and lesbian issues—none of them could accept same-gendered sexual behavior. The data suggest that people with more traditional gender beliefs exhibit more negative appraisals of lesbians and gay men.

This confirms the findings of Herek (1988) and Whitney (1987) that those with more traditional sex role attitudes have more negative attitudes toward homosexuality than those with fewer traditional attitudes.

Heterosexism is very dominant in interviewees' minds, too. They had a firm faith that heterosexual Chinese people condemn gay and lesbian people because they act against the "law of nature"—only can a woman and man have sex. Interviewees believed that homosexuals challenge the heterosexist privilege of the majority. The finding is consistent with Banks' (2004) study in which he explains that in a conservative social system heterosexuals were believed to be more moral than homosexuals, and that all "normal" children would eventually be attracted to and marry a person of the opposite sex and most relationships would involve a female and a male. Herek (1988) also asserts that the heterosexist behaviors, though not directed at gay and lesbian persons, would decrease the likelihood of openness about sexual orientation.

Lack of legal support for gay and lesbian people causes interviewees to believe that being gay or lesbian people might be illegal. As one interviewee told me that, "without legal support, I feel there must be something wrong with gay and lesbian people, otherwise why does not our government support them?" (I3). In China, although there is no explicit law against homosexuality, there are also no laws protecting gays from discrimination. Half of interviewees did not think that same-sex marriage would be ever legalized in China, and the rest believed that, maybe after 50 to 100 years, it would be possible. The data here supports Xu Lie's (2001) view: "It is believed that the Chinese policy towards gay and lesbian people remains the "Three Nos": No promotion, no approval, and no disapproval". This finding is also affirmed by Li (2002) and Chou

(2000) who supported the view that the government is indifferent on gay and lesbian issues and does very little to improve the situation of homosexuals in China.

Some interviewees held the opinion that Chinese religions—Taoism and Buddhism—are critical of gay and lesbian matters. They thought that a two-man or two-woman relationship upset the balance between Yin (woman) and Yang (man) and Buddhism forbade same-sex love as well. As one interviewee mentioned: “Chinese people worship the balance between Yin and Yang, and a two-man relationship is contrary to this tradition” (F2). According to studies by Conze (1959), Chou (2000), and Chou (2001), the codex of Taoism and Buddhism possesses no homophobic hostility toward homosexual behavior. These two religions do not present anything to support homosexual behavior; however, none of them oppose it, either. Therefore, Chinese religions should not be a convincing reason to explain why gay and lesbian people do not fit into Chinese society. Interviewees who used Chinese religions as an explanation to oppose gay and lesbian people do not have a correct understanding of Taoism and Buddhism.

Another traditional view toward gay and lesbian people held by the interviewees was that no historical evidence substantiated the existence of gay and lesbian people in Chinese history. Some interviewees told me that it was hard to find gay and lesbian-related information in textbooks or historical documents. They believed that without a historical understanding of gay and lesbian people, Chinese people could know very little about gay and lesbian matters, and that made it more difficult for them to accept gay and lesbian people. Actually, evidence of homosexuality has been documented since ancient times according to the studies of Li (2004), Gulik (1961), Hinsch (2000), Chou

(2000/2001), and Laurent (2005). They explain that many examples of same-sex love were celebrated in the ancient Chinese art, poems, and other documents, but many of these did not survive after the new China was founded in 1949, and especially after the book burnings during the ten-year Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Interviewees did not have opportunities to experience the historical documents of gay and lesbian people; therefore, they mistakenly believed that there were no gay and lesbian people in Chinese history.

In conclusion, interviewees' traditional perspectives toward their gay and lesbian peers all supported the view that gay and lesbian people do not fit into Chinese society because they have been much influenced by this traditional point of view. First, being childless is a big obstacle for gay and lesbian couples because Chinese parents all want their children to have offspring to maintain their blood line. If a couple has no child, it is regarded as a family disaster in the Chinese tradition. Second, Chinese people have an ingrained concept of gender roles: a man should behave as a "man"; a woman should behave as a "woman". In a two-man or two-woman relationship, gay men or lesbian women break the gender role stereotype. Third, heterosexism is very dominant in Chinese society. People are used to the heterosexual relationships, and they regard them as normal. Fourth, there is no law to support gay and lesbian people's rights; for example, there is no same-sex marriage law in China, nor is there a policy to protect gays and lesbians from discrimination in housing or jobs. Without legal support, homosexuals are treated differently from heterosexuals, which makes interviewees believe that there must be something wrong with gay and lesbian people; otherwise, they think that the

government would have supported them. These four beliefs explain why the interviewees think Chinese people hold negative views about gays and lesbians.

However, I also identified opposing traditional perspectives in the literature review. First, interviewees believed that Chinese religions including Taoism and Buddhism are critical of homosexuality; second, China does not have a gay and lesbian history. The literature review revealed that there is no evidence to support these two perspectives. Instead, it provided sufficient evidence to claim that Taoism and Buddhism have not opposed homosexuality; as well, there is adequate documentary evidence to defend the view that gay and lesbian people have existed throughout Chinese history. In some dynasties, gay and lesbian activity was quite prevalent. Interviewees were simply not well acquainted with the codex of traditional Chinese religions, nor were they aware of the history of Chinese gay and lesbian people. These two incorrect views account for the prejudicial traditional Chinese perspectives. If participants were offered opportunities to learn objectively about Chinese religions and the history of Chinese gay and lesbian people, they would gain a more accurate and complete understanding, and consequently, the discrimination against gay and lesbian people might be somewhat reduced.

Influence of Media and the Internet

In a society where gay and lesbian students have little social space to come out, some interviewees thought that they had seldom come across any gay and lesbian students on campus, and so, their conception of gay and lesbian individuals would not come directly from personal experience, but from the media and the Internet. Media reports contain both a negative and positive influence on interviewees' acceptance of gay and lesbian people.

In the early 1980s, AIDS spread quickly among members of the gay community, and homosexuality has caught the attention of Chinese people since then. One participant mentioned that:

I heard that gay people are much more easily affected by AIDS. From the newspapers and other public media, I realized that there were so many negative reports on gay & lesbian people.

This finding reflected the study of Chou (2000) who found that the media's negative reports had been misleading Chinese people into believing that gay and lesbian people were a danger to society, and that these negative reports were intended mostly to smear homosexuals. In fact, there are no known statistics to support the belief that homosexuals are more easily affected by AIDS than those in the heterosexual community. As Besner & Spungin (1995) make this observation on the North American context:

Although there may have been a great amount of unsafe sex practiced....the gay community has been at the forefront of trying to prevent the spread of AIDS, and statistics indicate a decline in the percentage of new cases within the gay community (and an increase primarily in the young heterosexual female population). (Besner and Spungin, 1995, p.17)

If the media reported some positive news about gay and lesbian people, the stigma affecting gay and lesbian people might be considerably erased, and Chinese people might be more tolerant of them. As one interviewee claimed:

I believe there is also much positive news about gay and lesbian people, but it seems that all journalists are interested in is the dark side of our society, and they only report negative news, which made Chinese people believe that all gay and

lesbian people are dirty and nasty. But I do not think so. There are shining examples among them, too, but they are just not reported.

Although the media often aim to smear homosexuals, the mainstream media sometimes cover notable gay events abroad, such as pride parades and gay marriage, which have introduced gays and lesbians to Chinese people. Some interviewees believed that the influence of TV, radio, film, and the Internet promotes openness and tolerance toward gay and lesbian people in China. Several famous artists, actors, and professors have revealed their different sexual orientation on TV programs, radio, and the Internet. These out famous gay and lesbian people made interviewees believe that gays and lesbians can be successful in their careers, which helps interviewees lower their discriminatory attitudes toward gay and lesbian individuals. Chou (2000) and Laurent (2005) agreed that the Internet and media coverage play a significant role in building gay community and in making its existence known.

Interviewees stated that lacking a film rating system, the Chinese government forbids gay movies to be shown on TV or in theaters. The movie *Brokeback Mountain* was forbidden in the mainland China. However, the interviewees told me that they could easily download movies and find gay and lesbian related information on the Internet. Wang and Zhou (2006) also support this finding. In their study, they discovered that 94.5% students regarded the Internet as the most popular way to gain access to gay and lesbian information, and then different kinds of media (34.2%).

The movie, *Brokeback Mountain*, was mentioned many times by participants because it had just been on shown and become popular among university students at the time that I was collecting my data in China. The film had a significant impact on

viewers' attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women, which was in the less-prejudiced direction. As one interviewee said:

“BBM” is the abbreviation of *Brokeback Mountain*, the newest gay movie from Hollywood. “BBM” is a newest and most popular word to take place of “gay” and “lesbian” among Chinese university students. It started being used several months after *Brokeback Mountain* was shown. The director of this movie is Chinese, which makes Chinese university students feel proud to have a famous Chinese director in the Hollywood movie market.

Another interviewee also evaluated this movie highly:

Here, I have to mention the new movie *Brokeback Mountain*, which has been so popular among university students. I have become more understanding of gay love and their life after I watched this movie. I have totally changed my mind about gay and lesbian people.

As noted in the results, a majority of responses contained favorable comments about this movie. Included among the responses were statements such as “I have been very touched and it has really almost changed my view on homosexuals”; “I previously had felt very little sympathy over discrimination against homosexuals, but now I see that I was very closed-minded”; “I feel that the film shows the importance of recognizing the rights of others regardless of personal feelings”; “Coming from the background I do, I had no idea anything like this was going on”; and “This film seemed to show the gay community in a different way than I had ever heard . . . This film really touched me and made me want to support gay rights”.

The impact of the film on individuals' views of gays and lesbians (the film included some interviews with lesbians) supports Muraco (2005), Herek (2000), and Allport's (1954) notion that contact helps dispel inaccurate stereotypes. The relation between media contact experiences and changes in the level of prejudice were evident in participants' conversation.

The media and the Internet have extensive influence and effect on softening interviewees' negative attitudes toward their gay and lesbian peers. From movie, TV, radio, Internet, and other technological innovations, interviewees received both negative and positive information about gay and lesbian people. The popularity of media and the Internet has been offering great opportunities for interviewees to recognize gay and lesbian people's existence and care about gay and lesbian people as a social minority. If Chinese media reports were more positive on gay and lesbian issues, such as, happy same-sex marriage, stable long-term homosexual relationships, good careers that gay people have, and so on, interviewees' understanding about gay and lesbian people might be more fair.

Experiences and Stereotypes

University students are well-educated, open, and tolerant, and they are a group in the vanguard of social change. Although interviewees believed that gay and lesbian people do not fit into Chinese society, they believed that Chinese people have become more open and tolerant toward gay and lesbian issues in recent years. For the interviewees in my study, their transition from high school to university offered them more access to information about gays and lesbians. Interviewees' direct or indirect contact with gay and lesbian people or related information enhanced their understanding

about gay and lesbian issues.

Some interviewees agreed that Western countries were much more open than China on sexual matters and gay and lesbian issues, and they believed that Western countries' influence on Chinese people's perspectives on gay and lesbian people was tremendous. In recent years, more and more Chinese people have been learning English, which brings China and Western countries much closer together than before. University students learn about Western cultures, traditions, politics, and social issues by accessing English web sites, novels, magazines, newspapers, and so on. One interviewee said, "Many students like reading English novels through which we gradually are affected by Western culture and thoughts". Interviewees' friends who had had overseas educational experience influenced interviewees' openness and tolerance toward gay and lesbian issues, such as one interviewee who said:

I have friends who study overseas. From them, I got to know more about gay and lesbian issues, such as gay marriage, gay parades, and gay festivals. Compared with China, Western countries are more open on sexual matters. As international students, my friends experienced a lot of new things, and brought them back to me.

Some interviewees admitted that gay and lesbian issues seemed a "weird" topic for them at the beginning, but the more they had contact with it, the faster and easier it was for them to accept it. This finding supports Muraco (2005), Herek (2000), and Allport's (1954) study that contact helps reduce discrimination against minority groups.

A cause of unhappiness for gay and lesbian students might be their impression of the world of Western homosexuals, which is perceived by interviewees as non-

homophobic, carefree, and liberating. As an interviewee told me:

In Western countries, they have a longer history of gay and lesbian research, and this research has been carried out at a much earlier time than in China. So, Western countries can offer a more complete and objective analysis of gay and lesbian people. Those who have access to Western countries and their culture will not simply regard gay and lesbian people as perverts or mentally ill. They become more objective on gay and lesbian issues.

Another interviewee presented a similar idea:

Western people have more chances to receive sex-related knowledge from TV, newspapers, magazines, and so on, so they are more open to such matters. In China, we are just about to talk about it, and we fall behind other countries on this topic. As far as I know, Western people begin to provide sexual knowledge to their kids when they are young. So Western kids are more objective or open to this homosexual issue. Chinese people feel sexual matters are a taboo. They always feel shy and guilty about sexual matters. I think it is because we have different culture and tradition.

It is very difficult for most Chinese residents to travel to a Western country, so the only images and knowledge they have about Western gay and lesbian people are the media images of same-sex marriages and parades where thousands of gay and lesbian people march openly and proudly. They tend to romanticize the Western world as a haven for homosexual people. Actually, few of them know that traditional Chinese culture was tolerant of gay and lesbian issues. It is almost impossible for both heterosexual and homosexual students to know that traditional Chinese culture was

tolerant of homosexual relationships as it is a world that they have never experienced. Their impressions of traditional Chinese culture are generally negative, and even false. For example, they believe that the codices of Taoism and Buddhism are critical of homosexual behaviors.

Based on the literature review, it is supposed that Westerners' influence is a good servant, but it can also be a bad master (Likosky, 1992; Hinsch, 1990; and Chou, 2000). Chinese university students should not only be aware of Western culture's openness and tolerance toward homosexuality, but also should be aware of the negative attitudes many have toward gay and lesbian people, which result in gay-bashing and other homophobic behavior. However, none of the interviewees talked about this negative side. It seems that China has only imported the positive attitudes and perspectives on homosexuality from Western views, and the negative influences are blocked. This finding runs counter to the position of Likosky (1992), Hinsch (1990), and Chou (2000), who asserted that Western culture on homosexuality generated the attitude of negativity about gay and lesbian people in China. However, from the data, I found that no interviewees mentioned that Western culture had had a negative influence on how they perceived their gay and lesbian peers.

Besides Western culture's influence, the transition from high school to university also made participants more open and tolerant of gay and lesbian people and issues. University life changed them dramatically, and they were more open and more willing to talk about gay and lesbian-related issues. As one interviewees said:

For me, gay and lesbian issues were totally new when I was in high school. Before I went to university, I knew nothing about it. But after staying two years in university,

I think I now know a lot about gay and lesbian issues. After I became a university student, I got more opportunities to learn about this issue.

For the interviewees, university life opened a new era for them; they had less pressure to gain high marks on examinations in university and they had more access to many “taboo” topics such as sex. The literature review revealed that more contact with gay and lesbian issues was associated with greater acceptance of gay persons (D’Augelli, 1989a and 1989b). Wang and Zhou’s (2006) study also supports this finding. Their report shows that 68.4% participants among 582 online respondents believed that, in recent years, university students have had more access to gay and lesbian issues. This may explain the more positive views among Chinese university students who reported being more open to gay and lesbian issues than they thought they were in high school. The increased contact with gay and lesbian individuals and information in university might have caused, in part, a reduction in negative views toward gay and lesbian peers. As they spent more time at the university, they had more opportunities to interact with students who were different from themselves, and these experiences might lead to increased willingness to interact with gay and lesbian individuals, which, in turn, could cause a reduction in anti-gay attitudes.

Interviewees provided three possible pressures that they thought might be difficult for gay and lesbian students to face—pressures from parents, from the process of coming-out, and from a lack of social support. In terms of pressures from parents, previous findings suggested that parental disapproval can adversely impact a homosexual (Chou, 2000/2001 and Li, 2002). Chou (2001) explains that “the closer the family ties and the bigger the extended family network, the more pressure and shame would be felt by

parents for having a *tongzhi* [gay or lesbian] child” (p. 34). About the process of coming out, interviewees believed that it was hard for gay and lesbian students as well. The view is supported by Garnets, Herek, and Levy’s (1990) study. They found that the process of coming out of secrecy and disclosing one’s sexual orientation to friends and family is an emotionally stressful process that often results in social rejection, non-supportiveness, shame, diminished self-concept, intolerance, lowered self-esteem, emotional isolation, severe anxiety, loss of loved ones, discrimination, verbal and physical abuse, depression, and other stress-related patterns (e.g., dissatisfaction with sex lives, problems in close relationship, feeling overwhelmed, and so on). The studies by Banks (2004), Bernhard and Applegate (1999), and Garofalo et al. (1998) all conclude that the process of coming-out had very negative effects on gay and lesbian people. Interviewees also believed that gay and lesbian students felt pressured because the relationship of two men or two women would not receive social help and support. The observation is supported by the study of Banks (2004), in which he concludes that “gays and lesbians feel isolation, alienation and disenfranchisement from the resources and assistance society ordinarily provides in the face of life stressors” (p. 13).

To my great surprise, interviewees did not have a stereotype of gay and lesbian people as “sissy” or “tomboy”. They believed that both heterosexuals and homosexuals may act like “sissies” or “tomboys”, so this type of behaviour does not necessarily reflect a homosexual orientation. They agreed that a man’s feminine behaviour was a possible indicator of, but not an exclusive predictor of, homosexuality. As an interviewee said:

I do not think we can easily judge people’s sexual orientation by the appearance of his/her clothes. I know there are a lot of boys who are sissy, but they are only

attracted to girls. The only way to judge a person's different sexual orientation is by seeing or knowing him/her having intimate physical contact (such as kissing, cuddling, or having sex) with his/her same-gendered partner. But, most gay and lesbian people will not have intimate body contact in front of us, which makes it even harder to identify their sexual orientation.

A male interviewee mentioned a very famous TV program about a singing competition in China:

In this show, the champion is a tall girl with a handsome boy's appearance. She leads the fashion and makes the tomboy appearance popular among young girls. I cannot judge a person's sexual orientation purely by appearance, but I might just suspect it.

Besner and Spungin (1995) and Green (1987) all support the finding. They find that mentioned that acting like a "sissy" or "tomboy" does not necessarily reflect a homosexual orientation.

Half of the male interviewees said that they could accept same-gendered sexual behavior, and the other half felt that they could not. For female interviewees, two girls were tolerant of same-gendered sexual behavior while one girl remained neutral on this issue. All the other female interviewees still felt it was difficult for them to face this issue. If they could choose, all the male interviewees except two would accept lesbians more than gays. Most of the female interviewees said they found it easier to accept gays than lesbians. For a few female and male students, they related to gays and lesbians equally. The literature review consistently showed that heterosexual men have significantly stronger negative feelings toward gay men than they hold toward lesbian

women (Gentry, 1987; Herek, 1988, Kite, 1984; Whitley, 1988). The data concerning heterosexual women's attitudes toward gay men or lesbians reflected in some studies as well. Gentry (1987) and Whitley (1988) report that women express more negative feelings toward lesbians than toward gay men, but Herek (1988) and Kite (1984) find that women regarded gay men and lesbians similarly.

All interviewees agreed that the researcher's sexual orientation would not affect this research, and her sexual orientation would not influence their answers to the questions.

One female interviewee told the researcher that:

Your research will make more people not discriminate gay and lesbian people, and it is meaningful. This kind of research will make people know gay and lesbian people more, and receive more knowledge on G & L people. It is good.

Another male interview told the researcher that:

Whether you are a lesbian or not will not affect my perspectives on this study. I admire you that you can choose this topic for your graduate thesis. Not many Chinese people dare to do research on this kind of sensitive topic.

Chinese university students' perspectives toward gay and lesbian research were very positive, and their high evaluation of this study encouraged the researcher greatly.

During the process of the interviews, interviewees also exhibited a strong interest in understanding more about gay and lesbian life. The most frequently asked questions that interviewees were interested in include: What are the origins of homosexuality? Can gay or lesbian couple keep a long-term relationship? How do homosexual people have sex with a same-gendered partner? For the origins of homosexuality, many studies have proposed medical (Besner & Spungin, 1995; Pool, 1993; Hamer et al., 1993; LeVay,

1991) or non-medical (Freud, 1923; Besner and Spungin, 1995; Dickemann, 1993) explanations for the origins of homosexuality, but none of them have been completely tested (Garnets & Kimmel, 2003). If all sexual orientations were innate, interviewees would feel more tolerant toward gays and lesbians. If gay and lesbian people chose to have a different sexual orientation, interviewees thought they were wrong to make such a decision. If the origin issues could be clarified, it could reduce discrimination against gays and lesbians.

Interviewees also felt uncertain about whether gay or lesbian couples can have a long-term relationship without a marriage commitment. Besner and Spungin (1995) cited the studies of Peplau (1983/1984) and Rubenstein (1993) showing that "...approximately 60% of lesbians and 40% of gay men were involved in a long-term relationship..." (p. 24). If the interviewees knew these statistics, they would probably be convinced that gay and lesbian couples could keep a long-term relationship. Bell and Weinberg (1978) also concluded that many gay men and lesbian women lead stable lives without frenetic sexual activity and that some are considerably happier and better adjusted than heterosexuals as a whole. To answer the question about how homosexual people have sex, Zhang (2003) explains that men can conduct oral sex and anal sex, and women like playing with sex toys (vibrators and dildos), and they also have oral or anal sex. Zhang stressed that both homosexual couples and heterosexual couples should use protection in order to avoid the possibility of being infected by HIV and other diseases. These expressed needs of interviewees about gay and lesbian people have been clarified and informed by many researchers as described above, but interviewees did not have enough opportunities to receive the relevant education. If they could be informed more

knowledge on gay and lesbian matters, they would possibly be more open and tolerant toward their gay and lesbian peers.

From the information shared by the participants, it was easy for me to conclude that interviewees had a good understanding about their gay and lesbian peers. They not only could perceive them from a heterosexual point of view, but also they could assume a gay or lesbian student's perspective to answer the research questions. Western culture is a very important source for interviewees to attain knowledge on gay and lesbian matters. Interviewees' transition from high school to university also offered them more opportunities to access information about gay and lesbian people in university: they became more open to talking about gay and lesbian issues and some of them even took gay- and lesbian-related courses, which influenced their perspectives on gay and lesbian people. I felt surprised that the interviewees did not have a "sissy" and "tomboy" stereotype of gay and lesbian people, and all of them believed that the appearance, gestures, and postures were not the main signs to determine one's sexual orientation. In addition, they acknowledged that they had limited knowledge on gay and lesbian matters, and expressed need for more understanding. Some of them indicated that they were willing to take gay and lesbian related courses in the future if they had opportunities. When I asked them how they viewed my research on gay and lesbian study, and whether they questioned my sexual orientation because of the subject that I had chosen, all of them responded quite positively and were encouraging as well, and they did not feel bothered or any different if they saw me as a lesbian. My sexual orientation did not influence their answers at all.

University Life

The interviewees' university offered a relatively liberal environment for students to gain access to knowledge about gay and lesbian knowledge. Gay- and lesbian-related courses were quite popular among students. Although there were no administrative policies to protect the rights of gay and lesbian students and although gay and lesbian students were not warmly welcomed on campus, interviewees claimed that their university at least was a safe place for gay and lesbian students.

Gay and lesbian-related content was mentioned in some courses offered in the interviewees' university. Interviewees believed that these courses helped reduce discrimination against gay and lesbian people. This finding showed that in specific courses some students were introduced to different facts and issues involving homosexuality, and that these courses helped correct their ignorance about and discrimination toward their gay and lesbian peers. It was also likely that there was a cumulative influence of different courses, particularly general education classes, on students that led to a softening of their views of gay and lesbian people different from themselves. University education might liberalize interviewees to be more open-minded, empathic, and tolerant individuals. Wang and Zhou (2006) arrive at the same conclusion. They believed that the more education one receives the greater tendency that he or she will accept gay and lesbian people. In their study, they found out that 18.05% of graduate students are tolerant of a gay man and lesbian woman, but only 12.70% of undergraduate students accept gay and lesbian people.

Gao and Liu (2006) found that, in 100 university students they studied, there were four homosexual couples among them, which showed that the number of gay or lesbian

couples on university was not miniscule. However, most gay and lesbian students still lived in the closet, and they hid their sexual orientation and did not want others to find out, which might be the reason why interviewees could not easily identify gay or lesbian couples on campus. Half of the interviewees had never seen a gay or lesbian couple on campus. The rest of the interviewees who had experienced couples exhibiting intimate behavior such as kissing, touching each other, and so on, were still not sure whether they were really gays or lesbians. One interviewee said:

I saw two boys walking on the campus holding hands. When they saw people, they just tried to pretend that they were not so close and let go of their hands, but after people passed by, they held hands again. I suspected that they were gays.

Another interviewee also believed:

I went out with my gay friend. I saw two boys on the campus, and my gay friend told me that they must be gays, but I did not notice that.

By the end of 2006, China's first gay student group had been established in Sun Yat-Sen University. It is the first legally registered student group, which will perhaps set a precedent for similar groups at Chinese universities that are still informal or unregistered (Zhang Jing, 2006). In the interviewees' university, the administration had no regulations and had taken no actions designed to protect gay and lesbian students. However, there were "invisible" gay clubs and communities on their campus, which were ignored by their university administration. As long as gay and lesbian people did not break school regulations, administrators turned a blind eye toward them. Obviously, "ignoring" is not the same as "supporting".

Interviewees stated that discussion between friends was one of the most common ways to obtain gay and lesbian formation for interviewees, especially with roommates and close friends. They felt comfortable talking about sex-related topics with same-gendered friends, but with opposite-gendered friends, they had difficulty. As one interviewee said, “All my roommates are very OK with gay and lesbian people, so we talked about this issue a lot in our dorm”; “Love is a main topic among university students. Sometimes, when we are talking about heterosexual love, we will mention homosexual love, too”. One of the interviewees pointed out that gay and lesbian issues were raised in their conversation, but they never really seriously went into depth. As she said: “Gay and lesbian issues are nothing new to us, and we used to talk about it often, but we never seriously discussed this topic, and we just mentioned it in our talk or joked around to each other”. This research finding is supported by the study of Wang and Zhou (2006). They report that 36.1% of 582 university students discussed gay and lesbian issues with their friends, which was one of the most popular ways to gain access to information about gays and lesbians.

A third of the fourteen participants had personal experience with gay and lesbian friends. All female and three male interviewees would like to socialize with their gay and lesbian friends (going to dinner with them, attending a film, and so on) as long as their gay and lesbian friends did not have a sexual interest in them. The finding showed that personal acquaintance should function to discourage the blind acceptance of stereotypes. The results of this research are in keeping with the research of Muraco (2005), Herek (1988/2000), and Herek and Capitanio (1996). They have found that positive personal contacts with gay and lesbian friends were associated with more positive attitudes toward

gays and lesbians.

However, if they discovered their close friends were gay or lesbian, some interviewees believed that, while they might still want to be friends with them, they would very likely keep their distance from them to make sure that they were sexually safe. As one interviewee answered when asked what she would do if she found out that her close friend was a lesbian:

Although I would keep my friendship with her, you know, her different sexual orientation would more or less affect our friendship. I would not take shower with her in the public showering place, sleep on the same bed with her, or hold hands. If she was straight, we could do all these things together.

Although the positive personal contacts with gay and lesbian friends produce positive attitudes toward gays and lesbians, the fact that having gay or lesbian friends makes one more tolerant and accepting is not surprising. Interviewees were more tolerant of gay and lesbian friends who were not so close with them, but less tolerant of those who were close to them. For this finding, it is a pity that I have not found related literature to support it.

Most interviewees agreed that they had seldom heard derogatory words referring to gay and lesbian students in their university. The finding is different from the American study of D'Augelli (1989b): he reports that harassment, both verbal and physical, remains a fact of life for many gay and lesbian students. However, according to those interviewed gay and lesbian students in Chinese universities did not have this problem. They felt they were living in an environment with little harassment both verbal and physical. It is an inspiring finding. However, we need to be more skeptical about this finding. If things are

so good, why do most gay and lesbian students remain in the closet? This issue needs further research.

Interviewees admitted that they could hear people using anti-gay and anti-lesbian language to make fun of each other. Although they did not mean to insult gay and lesbian people, it would likely be hurtful when gay and lesbian students heard it. One interviewee also pointed out that most students would not insult gay and lesbian students in front of them, but they might use offensive words behind their backs or on the Internet. The findings supported the study of Wang and Zhou (2006) who believe that the importance of freedom of speech was significantly associated with minimization of the harm and offensiveness of hate speech. However, they also point out that freedom of speech was a double-edged sword: it protects gays and lesbians and it indirectly contributes to tolerance of harmful speech as well. Burn (2000) also believes that heterosexual individuals often do not realize the negative repercussions of their words and would modify their language if they were more cognizant of its effects.

When interviewees talked about the university atmosphere, they believed that their university was safe for gay and lesbian people because no bashing or abusing was heard of on campus. However, they felt uncomfortable being with gay and lesbian peers. They admitted that gay and lesbian students were not welcomed in their university. As one interviewee said:

My university is a safe place for gay and lesbian students. No one offends gay and lesbian people in front of them, but they might talk about them behind their backs. I do not mind being with gay and lesbian students, but to be frank, no one openly welcomes them. They are a kind of different after all.

The finding is different from the Western studies of Lopez and Chism (1993), Ficarroto (1990), Herek (1988), Gentry (1987), Kite (1984), Whitley (1988), D'Augelli (1989a/b), and Burn (2000). They conclude that universities in the West were possibly not safe for gay and lesbian students because of physical or oral harassment. However, the data in my study show that gay and lesbian students are quite safe in a Chinese university. This finding is supported by the study of two Chinese researchers, Wang and Zhou (2006) who report that people with homosexual tendencies believed campus life is more relaxed than in the rest of society.

Responses from the participants in the focus groups and interviewees are different from Western studies of Lopez and Chism (1993), Ficarroto (1990), Herek (1988), Gentry (1987), Kite (1984), Whitley (1988), D'Augelli (1989a/b), and Burn (2000) about the attitudes toward gay and lesbian students in Western universities. The findings in Chinese universities on students' attitudes toward gay and lesbian students are not as negative as Western researchers report. The expressions of negative and hostile attitudes toward gay and lesbian students in Western universities are more serious than in a Chinese university. Chinese university students seldom offend gay and lesbian students verbally and physically, though they discuss gay and lesbian information with friends, and sometimes, they might joke with one another. They also would like to socialize with gay and lesbian peers as long as they felt sexually safe. Most university students' attitudes toward their gay and lesbian peers are neutral: they do not support them, and do not disapprove of them, either. They try to ignore gay and lesbian students as long as they are not sexually bothered by their gay and lesbian peers.

From the research data and literature review, I could conclude that the climate of Chinese universities for gay and lesbian students is safe but not welcoming, which was different from the studies of Western universities where they were seen as neither safe nor welcoming (Lopez & Chism, 1993; Ficarrotto, 1990; Herek, 1988; Gentry, 1987; Kite, 1984; Whitley, 1988; D'Augelli, 1989a/b; Burn 2000). Although there are no administrative policies to protect gay and lesbian students' rights, the gay and lesbian related courses help interviewees reduce discrimination against gay and lesbian peers and higher education possibly offers a better university atmosphere for gay and lesbian students. Although lacking administrative supports, the changing attitudes toward gay and lesbian matters in university are an indication of social change in China. Concerning the gay and lesbian related courses, some Western universities may even fall behind when compared to this Chinese university's breakthrough on gay and lesbian issues.

I cannot draw the hasty conclusion that the attitudes of Western university students toward their gay and lesbian peers are more hostile or negative than those of Chinese university students. Perhaps "better" attitudes among the Chinese students are simply the product of ignorance of gay and lesbian issues or the denial of the existence of gay and lesbian people. This situation might be similar to that in some Western countries fifty years ago. At that time, not many gays and lesbians were "out", and so, negative attitudes toward gay and lesbian people were milder or unnoticeable. In this decade, China may be in the same stage of a developing process. The current limitation on understanding gay and lesbian people could be lifted in the near future when more of them come out of the closet and this situation may result in more severe anti-gay attitudes. This situation needs to be watched carefully over the next several years.

A Snapshot of Changing Life in China

The data substantiate Chinese university students' openness and tolerance of gay and lesbian people. But there is a huge gap between tolerance and acceptance.

Homosexuality is easily tolerated only when it is hidden, but is challenged when a person publicizes his or her homosexual relationship. As one interviewee told me:

It is very likely that I have gay and lesbian friends, but I do not know. If I were gay, I would like to keep my difference hidden as well. Why should I find myself more trouble? Being hidden means being safe and having less trouble. All in all, China is not ready for gay and lesbian people.

This gap between tolerance and acceptance could be a source of oppression for Chinese university gay and lesbian students. When compared to gay and lesbian people in other periods of Chinese history, contemporary Chinese homosexuals have greater difficulty. In ancient China, as marriage was not required to be passionate and intimate, the marital relationship was more like dealing with the household chores and the kin network (Chou, 2000). Therefore, a homosexual relationship could coexist within a marriage without conflict, especially among rich, upper-class people (Li, 2004). With the acceptance and popularization of romantic love in the twenty-first century in China, marriage has become a personal pursuit of emotional and physical happiness based on one's choices. Instead of pleasing their parents, Chinese adults feel they should satisfy their partners. Nowadays, most Chinese people date each other before they get married, and they choose their own lovers instead of allowing parents to make the choice for them. This social trend has resulted in increased pain for gay and lesbian people, who have to pretend to be "turned on" by an opposite-sex person. Marriage is now an important social relationship

in which husband and wife must be very intimate and passionate with each other. A monogamous relationship in contemporary China does not allow a homosexual relationship to coexist as was the case in ancient China. For this reason, many gay or lesbian people suffer from artificial heterosexual marriages, while at the same time they take on a secret same-sex lover. Therefore, marriage has become a difficult relationship for gay and lesbian people.

Although gay and lesbian university students do not face the marital problem immediately, this kind of potential pain never disappears among them. When asked what their parents' reaction would be if they told them that they were a lesbian or a gay, an interviewee answered:

My parents would be very disappointed. The biggest compromise they could make would be to force me or beg me to have a wife and get a baby. They would not care what I would do as long as I got married and gave them a grandchild.

Having a grandchild is a son's biggest obligation for most parents.

This statement indicates that, if Chinese homosexuals fulfill the cultural expectation of getting married, her or his private life can be relatively free. The primary concern of parents is not so much the child's intimate relationship with people of the same sex, but whether he/she is going to be childless.

Gay and lesbian students who live in cities might be worse off because of the pervasive exposure to Western ideas of romantic love and individualism. They are enlightened and inspired by Western images of individual freedom, especially freedom in sexual matters and relationships. However, their parents and society still want them to marry an opposite-sex person. Homosexual students can foresee that the social pressure

of marriage will be disastrous sooner or later, which may lead them to irresponsible and unsafe sex just to fulfill temporary sexual desire. If same-sex marriage remains illegal in China, homosexual people will continue to suffer from unhappy and artificial marriages. If homosexual love is not accepted legally, there will be endless pain for gay and lesbian people, their parents, and even their children.

Public discussion of topics related to sex was absent from China during the period 1949—1980 (Evans, 1997). Especially during the Cultural Revolution, all social relationships including marriage were viewed as political bonds. The Cultural Revolution promoted a most extreme repression of the sexual culture—the slightest suggestion of sexual interest was seen as bourgeois corruption and anti-revolutionary (Chou, 2000). Following the economic reforms promulgated by Deng Xiaoping in 1978, China has made crucial changes, including the right to choose and change jobs, a trend toward delayed marriages, less rigid policies on housing allocation, increasing opportunities to live away from one's family, and greater tolerance toward sexual expression in the media (Chou, 2000). At the same time, China has undergone dramatic social and economic change. Meanwhile, there has been a massive exploration of sexuality: nudes, erotica, and seductive images are displayed in magazines, posters, newspapers, videos, calendars, periodicals, radio, and TV advertisements. Chinese people were getting more open about sex-related topics including gay and lesbian issues. As one interviewee said, “Because of some TV programs [about sexuality], [most Chinese people] have very open talks on sexual matters, and also gay and lesbian issues”. Another interviewee also declared:

Years ago, I believe not many Chinese people knew about gay and lesbian issues, or what gay and lesbian people are like. Now, in some parts of China, people have begun to discuss gay and lesbian issues....social changes provide Chinese people with chances to discuss gay and lesbian issues. More and more people care about gay and lesbian people's social status, and what Chinese people's perspectives on them are.

With the development of a free market economy, highly sexualized westernized erotic images have become a marketing strategy. Such drastic social and economic changes open up a new era of desire, identities, discourse, and spaces for gay and lesbian people (Chou, 2000; Laurent, 2005). All of these have had a significant impact on the survival space and gay and lesbian people's recognition of their identity. While Chinese people concentrate on economic construction, sex-related issues gradually become open and are not a taboo any more. This has highly influenced university students' perspectives on their gay and lesbian peers. They have become more open and tolerant on gay and lesbian issues, and are showing interest in learning gay and lesbian related information. University students are pioneers for social changes—they are more keen, sensitive, and liberal about the new social issues and easily accept or judge them. They have more opportunities to access knowledge about gays and lesbians based on their ability to use high-tech innovations such as Internet and mobiles. In addition, their excellent English proficiency affords them access to Western sources of information.

The emergence of social and economic change has affected Chinese people's openness to sexuality for it is no longer a private realm always associated with and confined to domestic and marital matters. Although the emergence of homosexual

culture in the Chinese context is seen by some as a threat to the social order and stability, public morality, family values, and Chinese culture, the space for homosexual people has been enlarged making room for more and more open discussion of gay and lesbian issues, and related media reports. Undoubtedly, the development of a gay culture is double-edged—it is empowering to the identified homosexual people, but simultaneously it may quickly provoke a level of homo-hetero duality and homophobic consciousness that has never before prevailed in China. .

The social changes have been enhanced by academic contributions. In the late 1980s, some positive discussion of sexual matters in the academic arena began to emerge in China. Many Chinese scholars on gay and lesbian studies, such as Ruan Fangfu, Fang Gang, Li Yinhe, Wang Xiaobo, Zhang Beichuan, Wan Yanhai, and Qiu Renzong dedicated themselves to spreading knowledge about gay and lesbian matters to Chinese people. Professors Li Yinhe and Zhang Beichuan were mentioned many times by the interviewees because of their countless lectures on gay and lesbian issues on different Chinese campuses. These sociologists and sexologists who have made prominent contributions in gay and lesbian studies have promoted China's social change toward gay and lesbian people. As an interviewee told me, "Li Yinhe is a forerunner for gay and lesbian issues, and China needs more people as Li Yinhe to spread gay and lesbian knowledge...the more we get to know gay- and lesbian-related knowledge, the more tolerant and open we can be...".

In contemporary China, human rights are a most sensitive issue that can cause disaster for public advocates. For this reason, this kind of research underwent unexpected obstacles while it was being carried out. Research on homosexuality in a

Chinese university could possibly be perceived as a threat to stability and order on the campus. Research of this kind is closely related to the Chinese social and cultural background—homosexual liberation is tied up with the wider social development of economic reforms, housing policies, technological innovations, marriage and divorce laws, academic attention to gay and lesbian studies, and a greater respect and emphasis on personal choice and happiness. All of this is providing gay and lesbian people with greater and freer spaces to live based on their own choices.

As Chinese people have never treated “sex” as a separate domain from social and family life, Chinese gay and lesbian people may not pass through the same historical development of gay movement as in other societies. For centuries, Western societies have been concerned about homosexuality: law considered homosexuality a crime; medicine marked it as a disease; religion called it a sin; psychology regarded it as a perversion; and general social mores stigmatized it as a disgusting deviance. However, traditional Chinese culture was not hostile to homosexual intimacy. I had expected that China might be a haven for homosexuals based on its historical and cultural tolerance of homosexuality, yet it is not so positive. To do research on gay and lesbian issues in China, it is necessary to consider the social and family relationship as a network, which makes Chinese gay and lesbian people’s situation different from Western countries.

As China has not yet fully accepted homo-hetero duality and adopted a homophobic consciousness, it is an urgent task to explore and vitalize multiple perspectives, strategies, and assistance for Chinese homosexuals. At a time when China is moving toward greater diversity, it is the right time to critically examine different indigenous perspectives that may respond to the needs of homosexuals in China, and to explore the struggle of

homosexuals in their own unique context.

Conclusion of the Findings

The interviewees all believed that gay and lesbian people do not fit into Chinese society for a number of different reasons. Some are described in the literature review: the media report negatively on gay and lesbian people; gay and lesbian people cannot have their own offspring; Chinese people have a heterosexual stereotype of gender roles; the influence of heterosexism is very dominant in Chinese society; and there are no legal supports for the rights of gay and lesbian people. Two other reasons also play a part: many Chinese people believe their religions condemn gay and lesbian people and, as well, they lack sufficient, accurate historical knowledge to challenge some of the reasons given by many who think gay and lesbian people do not and should not fit into Chinese society.

Data analysis revealed that Chinese university students are open and tolerant on gay and lesbian matters because of their extensive explorations through technological innovation and different media, the influence of Western countries on Chinese people's perspectives on gay and lesbian people, and more opportunities to access gay and lesbian information in university. However, no interviewees seemed have relevant legal knowledge of gay and lesbian people, although gay and lesbian people's legal situation has changed within recent years; for example, sodomy was decriminalized in 1997 (Borelli, 2004).

I felt surprised that the interviewees did not have a “sissy” and “tomboy” stereotype of gay and lesbian people. They were eager to learn about gay and lesbian

matters, and expressed need for more understanding related to these issues. They seemed very open to my study and did not question my purpose in carrying out this research.

A major discovery in this study is that responses from the interviewees and the participants in the focus groups were different from Western studies—the findings on these participants about their attitudes toward gay and lesbian students were not as negative as Western researchers report on their university students. It seems that the expressions of negative and hostile attitudes toward gay and lesbian students in Western universities are more serious than at a Chinese university. However, I am very hesitant to draw a firm conclusion here because the “better” attitudes toward gay and lesbian students in Chinese universities might arise from ignorance about gays and lesbians or neglecting their existence altogether. This situation might be very similar to that in Western countries fifty years ago. At that time, students would not have known many out gay or lesbian, so the negative attitudes toward gay and lesbian people were milder or unnoticeable. A similar pattern may emerge in China. This issue deserves further research to clarify it.

The interviewees’ university is very safe but not welcoming toward gay and lesbian students. Although there were no administrative policies to protect gay and lesbian students’ rights, gay and lesbian related courses may have reduced discrimination against students’ gay and lesbian peers and higher education may have bettered the university atmosphere.

Indeed, the findings suggest a degree of acceptance of gay men and lesbians by their peers; however, the participants simultaneously distanced themselves from their homosexual peers. To better understand Chinese university students’ perspectives, the

data should be analyzed based on Chinese cultural, social, and economic background.

Only then would one get a full picture of the gay and lesbian students' situation and their peers' perspectives toward them.

CHAPTER SIX: REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

In this chapter, I briefly discuss some of my reflections on this research project, provide a synthesis that highlights its most significant findings, and offer research recommendations for university students, educators, and administrators of educational systems. As well, I outline the strengths and limitations of this study and draw out the implications for practice and future research. I conclude with a few of my own final thoughts.

Reflections

I have been involved in this study for almost a year. When I look back, I have very complex feelings. As a graduate student who started with little knowledge of gay and lesbian issues, I have gone through a challenging, beneficial, and wonderful journey.

The research offered me a chance to achieve wide personal understanding and self-development. The transition from being a student in mechanical engineering to education was a big change for me. Working together with people and trying to understand how they think and feel were totally new experiences. However, with help and instruction from my supervisor and committee members, I gradually realized that my desire to love and care for the needs of different students and my eagerness to explore a new realm in a Chinese university made it easier for me to travel through this transition. My commitment to seek human equality was a challenge when social justice was at stake. The fact that the outcome of the research was very unpredictable added excitement and intrigued me throughout the entire process.

During this research, I had the wonderful opportunity to listen to fourteen Chinese university students share their perspectives on their gay and lesbian peers, and their understanding of some gay and lesbian issues. These young adults were passionate, caring, loving, and well-educated. I was moved and inspired by them during the interviews. They craved new knowledge and were so eager to receive more information about their gay and lesbian peers. During the interviewing process, especially in the focus-group interviews, participants related to, made sense of, and eventually, learned from each other's personal understanding and perspectives. The focus group interviews became for them a process of learning from others about sensitive sex-related issues and exchanging opinions to achieve a common understanding. Indeed, these fourteen interviewees had opinions to share and experience to tell, and priceless lessons to teach to me.

I was very sensitive about my own sexual orientation, and I did not want my sexual orientation to bias the data. If I myself were gay, I would have given even more priority to conducting this research. The shared understanding, communication, and contact might have improved this research, and my interview questions might have been hugely different. Possibly, I might have achieved better results. However, I cannot deny my heterosexism totally having experienced some twenty-plus years of social and cultural influence. As a heterosexual person, it is very hard to reject the influence of heterosexism, although I thought I had totally accepted homosexuality. It was one of my biggest concerns when I conducted this research. An earlier generation of Chinese researchers on gay and lesbian studies conducted gay and lesbian studies by referring to gay and lesbian people as social deviants who were suffering from a sickness. They

appealed to Chinese society to offer more tolerance to gay and lesbian people, but this kind of tolerance was more like charity. I tried as much as I could to be unbiased, but it is inevitable that I may have made mistakes during the research when creating the research questions, analyzing data, and other details that I may not even have noticed.

Limitations of the Study

The findings of this study are limited in several ways. First, participants included in this research were not selected at random. Fourteen interviewees were self-selected, so they are likely to be more liberal than other students. Being young and educated, the interviewees may be more open to perspectives toward sex and sexual orientation than the general population. Surveying a population more representative of the larger Chinese society could bring different results.

Also, because of the costs of travel and the time limitations, only one university was included. Therefore, universities in other parts of China and different kinds of universities were automatically excluded.

The findings may be related to the hypothetical nature of the study: the interviewing questions were about supposed scenarios rather than actual relationships, such as “if you had gay and lesbian friends, would you socialize with him or her?”, or, “if you told your parents you were a gay, can you imagine their response?” Although interviewees provided insight on hypothetical perspectives, they have reflected what people do, think, or feel in their real lives. Heterosexuals’ prejudicial attitudes toward sexual minorities should not be conflated with attitude outcomes. There might be the inconsistencies between their perspectives and their actual attitudes.

In addition, another limitation is that I did not capture information regarding the sexual orientation of the respondents and whether they have had previous interactions with homosexual individuals. Their sexual orientations remained a mystery to me. Future attempts to investigate this topic could perhaps take into account these variables.

Strengths of the Study

Although there are limitations to the present study, they are outweighed by the overall contribution it makes. The use of both focus group interviews and one-on-one interviewees in this study design is a particular strength in that it allows inconsistencies in attitudes to be exposed. After the focus-group interviews, the order of the individual interview questions were adjusted. Some of the interview questions were retouched, and new questions were added based on the answers from the focus-group interviews. As a result, the revised one-on-one interviews offer much richer and useful data.

Most participants in one-on-one interviews had attended the focus-group interviews. Their qualitative comments in one-on-one interviewees clarify the focus-group findings and provide insight into why and under what circumstances a particular perspective or attitude is deemed appropriate. The respondents' comments in one-on-one interviews illustrated a subtlety in the expression of their perspectives toward their gay and lesbian peers. Students seemed more relaxed and comfortable to share their opinions related to homosexuality when no other participants were present.

Implications for Further Research

I hope this research will provide the people of these two countries and elsewhere with a better understanding of the real world of university homosexual students and encourage them to understand and support this sexual minority, and to correct society's prejudices

against them. Providing a realistic picture of heterosexual students' perspectives might encourage more heterosexual students to reduce discrimination against their gay and lesbian peers, and to create a better learning environment for both heterosexual and homosexual students.

However, I feel that a more extensive study about heterosexual students' perspectives should be undertaken. This further investigation could focus on the following topics:

1. This study contained a relatively small sample. It would be beneficial to use a larger population of Chinese university students to see if the findings extend to a larger population (transferability).
2. An international comparative study between China and Canada could examine university students' perspectives toward their gay and lesbian peers to see if the findings extend to a larger and more international population (transferability).
3. Future research should include participants from a smaller sized university located in rural areas. The participants in this research were from a very large city, and their perspectives may be overly homogenous.
4. The interviewees' sexual orientations remained unknown to me. Future attempts to investigate this topic could perhaps take into account this variable.
5. Quantitative research is recommended. Such research could follow a large cohort of students from their freshman through senior year, collecting data annually on these students' attitudes towards gay people as well as information about their academic experiences.
6. This study was conducted during a relatively short period of time. Further qualitative studies could be conducted to incorporate a more longitudinal process

of data collection to measure if the perspectives change over time.

7. In order to understand how attitudes toward gay and lesbian peers are affected by interpersonal contact, additional research is necessary to examine how the number of actual gay and lesbian friends a person affects his or her evaluation of behavior. Given Herek and Capitano's (1996) findings that heterosexuals having close interpersonal contacts with gay men and lesbians have more favorable attitudes toward gay men and lesbians as a group, future research examining the causality between friendship and attitudes would broaden our understandings of this connection.

Epilogue

As a female teacher, I have experienced many pressures because I decided to do research on gay and lesbian issues. Many people questioned my intentions in doing this research. Even now, some of my Chinese friends and relatives cannot understand why I conducted this research. They thought I traveled a long distance to North America and I should learn something really “meaningful” and “helpful”. However, they do not know that in doing research on Chinese students’ perspectives on their gay and lesbian peers has been the most meaningful and helpful thing that I could have been devoted to. As I explored the literature, I realize that I was struggling to uncover, make sense of, and better understand things I was ignorant about. I permitted myself to entertain various perspectives on gay and lesbian issues, and I have experienced so many things to which I was once numb. Indeed, by involving myself in the process of this research, I have gradually been changing and becoming more critical, understanding, and informed. All in all, I have become more humane, which would never have happened if I had not

conducted this research. Now, I am thinking about what I want to say most before I conclude. All of a sudden, a young girl's innocent eyes come into my mind. It is Lily! My cowardly running-away behavior hurt her very much a couple of years ago when she came to me and ask for help with her sexual orientation. I was so ignorant and shy that I ran away from her and that led her to drop out from school. I have been feeling guilty and my heart has been bleeding every time I recall Lily. Although I was young at that time, I still cannot forgive myself. I know my work on this thesis can never erase what I have done to Lily, but I sincerely wish she might read this thesis someday, and know that I have presented a sincere apology to her based on my efforts on this thesis. Lily, I do not know where you are now and whether you have a chance to read my thesis, but please forgive my ignorance and irresponsibility—this thesis is a work for you and all the other gay and lesbian students who deserve their teachers' apology, care, and understanding!

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Appendix A Focus Group Questions

Opening Questions

1. Is it difficult for you to talk about sexuality? Why is it difficult?
2. With whom do you talk about it? (friends, roommates, parents, or teachers/professors)
3. Compared with Chinese people, Western people are more open on sexuality. How do you feel about it?

Questions about Students' Perspectives of G & L Students

1. Do you think that Chinese peoples' perspectives on gays and lesbians have been changing over the past several years? What evidence?
2. From any of these sources—internet, films, literature, television, university courses, newspapers and magazines, other, did you learn anything about gays and lesbians?
3. What do you think is (are) the important reason(s) why Chinese people cannot accept G & L people? Explain your answer.
4. How can you judge that a man is a gay or a woman is a lesbian?
5. Are there some aspects of gays and lesbians that you would want to understand better?
6. Can you accept same-gendered sexual behavior?
7. If you can choose, do you prefer to accept gay or lesbian?
8. Do you have any gay or lesbian friends or relatives?
9. Would you feel free to socialize with your G&L friends (going to dinner with them, attending a film, etc.)?
10. Which traditional Chinese view(s) is (are) against G & L people?

Questions about Campus Climate

11. Does your university offer courses on G&L issues or deal with such issues in any already established courses?
12. Do you ever see gay or lesbian couples in your campus? If not, why not?
13. In your opinion, what is the attitude of most university students towards gays and lesbians?
14. (a) Are slur words referring to gay and lesbian students used frequently or seldom?
(b) When it happens, does anyone intervene? Yes? Who? No? Why not?
15. If you found your friend, roommate, classmate, or schoolmate was gay/lesbian, what would you do?
16. Does your university administration have any regulations or actions designed to protect G&L students?
17. If your university offered gay/lesbian club or organization, would you accept it?
18. If I told you that I was a lesbian, how do you feel about me and my research?

Appendix B Interview Questions

Opening Questions

Do you think that Chinese peoples' perspectives on sex-related issues have been changing over the past several years? What evidence?

Interview Questions

1. Do you think Chinese people have become more open to talking about issues related to gays and lesbians in recent years, in particular? Why?
2. In recent years, China becomes more open and has more accesses to Western cultures; do you feel the contact with Western countries is an important reason for Chinese people to talk about G & L issues?
3. (a) Have you ever discussed G&L issues with your friends? If not, why not?
(b) If yes, tell me how these issues arise and what topics you discuss.
4. What interests you and your friends to talk about G & L issues? What do you guys like to talk about most?
5. Does your university offer courses on G&L issues or deal with such issues in any already established courses?
6. (a) Do you mind sharing your own experience related to gays or lesbians if you have some?
(b) If you have gay or lesbian friends, how did you find out?
(c) Do you think it is likely that you have gay and lesbian friends but you don't know because they have kept this aspect of their lives hidden?
(d) If you suspected a boy is a gay or a girl is a lesbian, would you try to find out whether they were really G & L people or just ignored them?

7. How can you judge that a man is a gay or a woman is a lesbian?
8. (a) Can gays and lesbians fit into Chinese society or not?
(b) If not, what's the reason(s) for Chinese people not to accept G & L people?
(c) Will gay/lesbian marriage be possible in China in the future?
9. What is the biggest concern for gays and lesbians in Chinese society?
10. If you told your parents that you were a lesbian or a gay, could you imagine their reaction?
11. (a) Is difficult for gay and lesbian student to find their partners in university?
(b) Do you know what kinds of access that they can use to find their partners?
12. Is your university a safe and welcoming place for homosexual students?
13. If you found that your close same-gendered friend is a gay/lesbian, what you will deal with your friendship?
14. Why do some Chinese people dislike G & L people?
15. If I told you that I was a lesbian, how do you feel about me and my research?



Certificate of Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
Don Cochrane

DEPARTMENT
Educational Foundations

BEH#
06-93

STUDENT RESEARCHER(S)
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INSTITUTION (S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT
University of Saskatchewan
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SPONSORING AGENCIES
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TITLE
Chinese University Student's Observations of Behaviour Affecting their Gay and Lesbian Peers and their Willingness to Intervene

CURRENT APPROVAL DATE
23-May-2006

CURRENT RENEWAL DATE
01-May-2007

CERTIFICATION

The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named research project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this research project, and for ensuring that the authorized research is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol or consent process or documents.

Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

The term of this approval is five years. However, the approval must be renewed on an annual basis. In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month of the current expiry date each year the study remains open, and upon study completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions:
<http://www.usask.ca/research/ethical.shtml>.

APPROVED.

Valerie Thompson, Chair
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